



LIVED EXPERIENCES AND INTERVENTION RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC): A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN SAMPALOC, MANILA

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ABSTRACT

Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) remains a persistent social and public-safety concern despite the legal protections established under Republic Act No. 9262. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of VAWC survivors in Sampaloc, Manila, the challenges they encountered in seeking help, the coping and support systems they used, their perceptions of community-level interventions, and their aspirations for recovery. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five adult survivor-mothers and five Barangay VAWC Desk Officers purposively selected using established inclusion criteria. The interview guide underwent expert content validation, and the data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis. Findings showed that survivors experienced multidimensional abuse involving physical, psychological, emotional, and economic harm, accompanied by fear, shame, isolation, and constrained agency. Help-seeking was impeded by anticipated retaliation, stigma, financial dependence, limited shelter options, resource constraints, and uneven inter-agency coordination. Survivors relied on children, family, faith, supportive peers, Barangay VAWC Desks, and personal resilience. Immediate barangay responses, including protection orders and legal guidance, were generally perceived as helpful, but long-term psychosocial, economic, shelter, and case-monitoring support remained insufficient. The study concludes that sustainable recovery requires legal protection to be integrated with trauma-informed care, safe-space pathways, economic empowerment, and coordinated case management. These findings informed the development of Project L.I.G.T.A.S., a localized survivor-centered intervention framework.

KEYWORDS: Violence Against Women and Children; Lived Experiences; Barangay VAWC Desk; Phenomenological Inquiry; Sampaloc, Manila

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) remains a pervasive and complex social problem that can involve physical, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse. Its effects extend beyond immediate injury because repeated violence can undermine safety, dignity, mental health, relationships, and economic autonomy. In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 provides legal protection against abuse committed within intimate and familial relationships and establishes remedies such as Barangay Protection Orders, Temporary Protection Orders, and Permanent Protection Orders. Nevertheless, the continuing occurrence and underreporting of VAWC indicate that the existence of a legal framework does not automatically guarantee access to protection, sustained recovery, or freedom from re-victimization (Philippine Commission on Women, 2019, 2024; Republic Act No. 9262, 2004).

The problem is particularly complex in densely populated urban communities. Sampaloc, Manila combines residential communities, transient populations, educational institutions, and areas affected by poverty, overcrowding, and uneven access to social and legal services. These conditions can shape the forms of violence survivors encounter, their ability to leave abusive relationships, and their willingness or capacity to seek formal assistance. Urban VAWC therefore requires attention not only to

legal remedies but also to the social, cultural, psychological, and economic conditions in which survivors make decisions about safety (Guedes et al., 2016).

Existing VAWC research in the Philippine context has often emphasized prevalence, demographic patterns, awareness of laws, and institutional implementation. Such evidence is essential for estimating the magnitude of the problem, but it cannot fully explain how survivors interpret abuse, how fear and shame influence disclosure, how they negotiate relationships with family and community, or how they experience frontline intervention. A qualitative approach is necessary when the research purpose is to understand the meanings attached to violence and recovery from the standpoint of people directly affected by it (World Health Organization, 2021; Balahadia et al., 2022).

A further concern is the gap between immediate legal protection and long-term recovery. Barangay VAWC Desks are designed to function as accessible frontline mechanisms for receiving complaints, issuing or facilitating appropriate protective action, making referrals, and guiding survivors. However, local studies cited in the thesis identify continuing concerns involving limited resources, inconsistent training, inadequate follow-up, shelter shortages, and fragmented coordination among barangay offices, law enforcement, social welfare, health services, and other referral partners (Hadap, 2014;



Mendoza, 2025; Tomondog et al., 2025). These limitations are especially consequential when survivors are economically dependent on abusive partners or require secure temporary accommodation while a case is ongoing.

The study was informed by complementary theoretical lenses. A feminist perspective directs attention to gendered power relations, patriarchal expectations, victim-blaming, and family-privacy norms that can normalize or conceal abuse. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory situates survivors within interconnected family, peer, community, institutional, and societal environments, helping explain why both informal and formal support systems matter to recovery (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bandura's Social Learning Theory further provides a basis for understanding how repeated exposure to violence within the home may shape learned behavior and why survivors place strong importance on creating safe environments for their children (Bandura, 1977). Phenomenology, meanwhile, supports close attention to the meaning of lived experience rather than reducing violence to a set of numerical indicators (van Manen, 2016).

Against this background, the study examined the lived experiences of VAWC survivors in Sampaloc, Manila together with the perspectives of frontline program implementers. It sought to understand not only what forms of violence occurred, but how violence altered survivors' sense of self, safety, relationships, and agency; what prevented or enabled help-seeking; how survivors evaluated barangay and related interventions; and what conditions they believed were necessary to rebuild their lives. The study also used these findings as the empirical basis for a localized intervention framework that connects immediate legal remedies with psychosocial recovery, economic empowerment, safe-space access, and coordinated case management.

Objectives of the Study

1. Describe the lived experiences of women who encountered VAWC in Sampaloc, Manila and the effects of violence on their safety, identity, relationships, and daily life;
2. Identify the personal and institutional challenges encountered when seeking help and accessing intervention services;
3. Determine the coping mechanisms and informal and formal support systems used by survivors;
4. Examine survivors' perceptions of intervention responses provided by barangay-level institutions and other support agencies;

5. Describe survivors' aspirations for recovery, transformation, safety, and self-sufficiency; and
6. Develop an intervention program, based on the findings, to strengthen survivor-centered and community-based responses to VAWC in Sampaloc, Manila.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Method

The study used a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design to obtain an in-depth understanding of survivors' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, support systems, perceptions of intervention, and aspirations after violence. Qualitative description was appropriate because the research required detailed, context-sensitive accounts expressed in participants' own words, while phenomenology directed the analysis toward the meaning and essence of those experiences (Sandelowski, 2000; Kim et al., 2017; van Manen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design was also consistent with the study's survivor-centered orientation because it privileged participants' narratives while situating them within broader social and institutional contexts.

The study was conducted in selected barangays in Sampaloc, Manila. The locale was selected because it is a densely populated urban district with diverse socioeconomic conditions and an established barangay-level VAWC response structure. Each barangay is expected to maintain mechanisms for responding to domestic and gender-based violence under Republic Act No. 9262; however, the thesis identified resource limitations, uneven training, and variable coordination as continuing concerns relevant to the research problem.

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who could provide direct and information-rich accounts of the phenomenon. The final study involved ten participants: five adult women or survivor-mothers who had experienced abuse covered by Republic Act No. 9262 and five Barangay VAWC Desk Officers or frontline implementers with direct experience handling VAWC cases. Direct participation was limited to adults aged 18 years and above; minors were excluded from interviews. Consequently, the child-protection dimension of the study was represented through the experiences of survivor-mothers and through the intervention responsibilities described by implementers.

Table 1. Participant Groups

Participant Group	Number	Description
VAWC survivors	5	Adult women, including mothers with children, aged 18 and above, residing in Manila, who experienced abuse under RA 9262 and had sought assistance from VAWC desks, LGUs, or related agencies.
Program implementers	5	Barangay VAWC Desk Officers/frontline implementers with at least one year of direct experience managing VAWC cases and providing community-level assistance.



Inclusion criteria for survivor participants required that they be adult women residing in the study locale who had experienced physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse as contemplated under Republic Act No. 9262 and who had sought help from a VAWC desk, local government unit, or related agency. Implementers were required to have at least one year of direct involvement in VAWC case management. Individuals below 18 years old, survivors undergoing an acute crisis or psychiatric treatment that could be aggravated by participation, and personnel without direct VAWC case involvement were excluded.

Research Instrument and Validation

The primary data-gathering instrument was a semi-structured interview guide. Its contents were anchored on the study's research questions, the recognized forms of violence and protective mechanisms under Republic Act No. 9262, guidance from the Philippine Commission on Women and the Department of the Interior and Local Government, and relevant local and international literature. Open-ended questions covered experiences of violence, effects of abuse, help-seeking, coping, support systems, legal awareness, intervention experiences, barriers, and aspirations for recovery. A separate set of questions elicited implementers' perspectives on procedures, recurring cases, service limitations, and recommended improvements.

The interview guide underwent content validation by three experts: a licensed social worker experienced in VAWC cases, a faculty member with expertise in qualitative research and gender studies, and a lawyer knowledgeable in women's and children's rights. Their review focused on relevance, clarity, cultural appropriateness, alignment with the objectives, and trauma-informed sensitivity. Revisions were incorporated before data gathering.

Data Gathering Procedure

After approval from the research adviser and Graduate School, formal permission was sought from relevant barangay offices and institutions in Sampaloc, Manila. Potential participants were screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Before each interview, the researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality safeguards, possible emotional discomfort, and the participant's right to decline any question or withdraw without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained before data collection.

Semi-structured interviews were then conducted at a time and place considered safe and convenient for participants, or through an appropriate online platform when necessary. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded; otherwise, detailed field notes were taken. A trauma-informed approach was used throughout, allowing participants to pause, skip questions, or end the interview whenever discomfort arose. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy and completeness before analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the six-step thematic analysis process identified by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and interpretation and writing. Coding was primarily inductive and focused on meaningful segments related to lived experience, barriers to help-seeking, coping and support systems, perceptions of intervention, and aspirations for recovery. Themes were refined for internal coherence and alignment with the study's research questions. The final interpretation connected participant narratives with the theoretical framework and the Philippine social and institutional context. Trustworthiness was strengthened through careful documentation of the analytic process, reflective attention to researcher interpretation, and transparent presentation of supporting participant excerpts.

Ethical Safeguards

Because VAWC survivors constitute a vulnerable research population, the study emphasized informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from psychological or social harm. Participants were identified through codes rather than real names. Interviews were conducted privately and in a trauma-informed manner, and distress was treated as a reason to pause or discontinue the interview and provide appropriate support or referral information. Digital files were password-protected, printed materials were secured, and access was limited to the researcher and adviser in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and institutional research requirements.

Scope and Limitations

The study was limited to a small purposive sample in selected barangays of Sampaloc, Manila. Its findings are therefore context-specific and are intended for analytic understanding and transferability rather than statistical generalization. Data were self-reported and may have been influenced by recall, sensitivity, fear of disclosure, or personal interpretation. No minors were directly interviewed. Variations in access to participants and implementer availability may also have limited the breadth of perspectives represented. These limitations were addressed through clear sampling criteria, ethical safeguards, expert validation of the interview guide, and systematic thematic analysis.

III. RESULTS

The thematic analysis produced a set of interrelated themes corresponding to the six research questions. Across survivor and implementer accounts, a recurring pattern emerged: barangay-level interventions were capable of providing important immediate legal and emotional support, but sustainable recovery depended on resources and services that extended beyond the initial response. The main themes and core findings are summarized below.



Table 2. Summary of Emergent Themes and Core Findings

Research Focus	Emergent Themes	Core Finding
Lived experiences	Multidimensionality of Abuse and Trauma; Cultural Paralysis and the Burden of Silence; Catalyst for Resilience	Violence altered daily safety, self-trust, relationships, and agency; survivors later described a gradual reclamation of voice and autonomy.
Help-seeking challenges	Personal Barriers (Fear and Shame); Institutional Barriers (Insufficient Resources)	Retaliation, stigma, financial dependence, family concerns, shelter shortages, slow processes, and coordination gaps delayed or obstructed formal help-seeking.
Coping and support	Reliance on Informal Support Networks; Formal Institutional Assistance; Personal Resilience	Children, family, faith, trusted people, barangay assistance, counselling, work, and growing self-confidence formed a continuum of support.
Perceptions of interventions	Responsiveness of Immediate Interventions; Enhancement of Legal Literacy; Institutional Gaps in Long-Term Support	BPOs, guidance, and listening were valued, but sustained counselling, financial support, shelter, follow-up, and case monitoring were insufficient.
Recovery aspirations	Emotional Recovery and Reclaiming Self-Worth; Safety and Environmental Stability; Economic Independence	Survivors sought dignity, a fear-free home, stable work, and financial self-sufficiency as conditions for preventing re-victimization.
Proposed output	Project L.I.G.T.A.S.	The intervention model links legal literacy, trauma-informed capacity building, safe-space pathways, economic empowerment, and coordinated case management.

Lived Experiences of VAWC Survivors

The first research question produced three themes: the multidimensionality of abuse and trauma, cultural paralysis and the burden of silence, and the catalyst for resilience. Survivors did not describe violence as isolated incidents. Their accounts showed that physical, psychological, emotional, and economic abuse interacted to turn expected spaces of intimacy and security into environments of uncertainty and control. Participants described learning to monitor their words and behavior to avoid escalation. One survivor explained that the abuse reached a point where she was “afraid to speak up or even make a mistake,” illustrating how fear became anticipatory and embedded in ordinary life.

Shame and silence were also experienced as part of the abuse itself. Survivors described confusion, social withdrawal, and reluctance to make their suffering visible because of family concerns, anticipated judgment, and hope that the partner would change. In this context, silence was not merely the absence of reporting; it was a lived condition in which violence eroded self-worth and weakened social connection. At the same time, survivors did not remain defined solely by victimization. Several narratives described a gradual recovery of agency. A participant stated that the experience “made me stronger” and that she learned to stand up for herself. Resilience therefore emerged as a process of rebuilding voice, boundaries, and the ability to make decisions for personal and family safety.

Challenges in Seeking Help and Accessing Services

Two themes explained the barriers to formal help-seeking: personal barriers involving fear and shame, and institutional barriers involving insufficient resources. Survivors anticipated retaliation, public exposure, disbelief, family disruption, loss of income, and difficulties attending hearings or appointments. One participant described herself as “afraid, ashamed and worried about my children and finances,” while another feared losing employment if case requirements interfered with work. Help-seeking was therefore a constrained decision in which the potential benefit of protection had to be weighed against immediate threats to income, childcare, privacy, and safety.

Participants who reached formal institutions encountered a second layer of difficulty. They identified limited financial assistance, inadequate counselling availability, slow processes, and lack of safe temporary shelter. One survivor summarized the gap by saying that counselling and non-judgmental listening were helpful, but what was missing was “financial assistance and a safe shelter” while the case was ongoing. VAWC Desk Officers likewise pointed to insufficient resources and delayed inter-agency coordination. These findings indicate that a survivor’s willingness to report does not necessarily translate into continuous access to protection when service capacity is limited.



Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems

Three themes described how participants endured abuse and moved toward recovery: reliance on informal support networks, utilization of formal institutional assistance, and development of personal resilience. Family members, children, trusted friends, and spiritual faith were repeatedly identified as sources of strength. One participant stated that “my children, faith and family support gave me strength to continue,” while another described close friends and prayer as important to her recovery. These relationships served as immediate emotional anchors before or alongside formal intervention.

Barangay VAWC Desks, counselling, legal guidance, medical referral, shelter referral, and livelihood assistance represented the formal layer of support. Survivors especially valued being listened to without judgment, having their rights explained, and receiving direction about the next steps in a case. Over time, some survivors also described internal coping strategies such as focusing on work, reducing conflict while still in the abusive situation, seeking counselling, and developing stronger personal boundaries. Informal support, formal assistance, and internal resilience thus operated as a continuum rather than as separate processes.

Perceptions of Barangay-Level and Other Intervention Responses

Survivors generally viewed immediate barangay interventions as responsive and useful. They cited listening, reporting assistance, explanation of rights, referrals, and the issuance or facilitation of Barangay Protection Orders as practical measures that created a sense of direction and safety. Implementers similarly described receiving complaints, conducting initial assessments, documenting cases, explaining legal remedies, monitoring compliance, and coordinating with law enforcement and social welfare partners. This immediate response was especially significant for participants who had previously been unsure where to seek help.

Intervention also improved legal literacy. Several participants reported that they knew only generally that a law protected women before their experience, but barangay staff and social workers helped them understand Republic Act No. 9262,

available protection orders, and reporting procedures. The positive assessment of immediate response was nevertheless accompanied by dissatisfaction with longer-term assistance. Survivors described slow or intimidating processes, insufficient financial support, limited follow-up, and a shortage of safe shelter options. The overall pattern was therefore one of strong initial response but weaker continuity of care.

Aspirations for Recovery, Transformation, and Moving Forward

Survivors’ aspirations were organized around three themes: emotional recovery and reclaiming self-worth, safety and environmental stability, and economic independence. Participants described becoming more aware of their worth and more determined to protect themselves and their children. Recovery was not defined simply as the absence of violence; it involved regaining dignity, confidence, and the ability to make independent decisions.

A safe and predictable home environment was a recurring goal. Participants wanted their children to grow without fear and viewed a peaceful household as central to breaking the cycle of violence. Economic independence was equally important. Stable work and the ability to provide for children were understood as practical conditions for remaining free from an abusive partner. One survivor expressed the hope for “a peaceful life, stable work, and a safe environment for my children.” The findings therefore link psychological recovery with material security: survivors wanted both internal healing and the resources needed to sustain autonomy.

Research Output: Project L.I.G.T.A.S.

The principal research output was Project L.I.G.T.A.S. (Localized Intervention Guidelines and Trauma-Assisted Support), developed from the convergence of survivor narratives and implementer observations. The model responds to the study’s central finding that immediate legal protection, although essential, is insufficient by itself to secure long-term recovery. It organizes the proposed community response into five operational pillars.

Table 3. Core Pillars of Project L.I.G.T.A.S.

Pillar	Core Action
1. Legal and Rights Awareness	Localized information, education, and communication activities on RA 9262, forms of abuse, protection orders, safe reporting, and referral pathways.
2. Institutional Capacity	Continuous trauma-informed, survivor-centered, gender-sensitive, confidential, and standardized case-management training for frontline personnel.
3. Immediate Support and Protection	Confidential safe-room and temporary-shelter referral pathways, emergency transport, psychosocial first aid, medical referral, and child-protection coordination.
4. Economic Empowerment	Financial literacy, skills assessment, TESDA/DOLE/PESO linkages, job matching, livelihood support, and follow-up for economic recovery.
5. Multi-Agency Case Management	Secure case tracking, consent-based referral directories, assigned case focal persons, regular case conferences, follow-up, and closure protocols.



IV. DISCUSSION

VAWC as a Multidimensional Lived Condition

The findings demonstrate that VAWC is experienced as more than a collection of discrete abusive acts. The combination of psychological intimidation, physical harm, emotional degradation, and economic control reorganized everyday life around uncertainty and caution. Participants' descriptions of monitoring speech and behavior indicate that control operated even in the absence of an immediate assault. This interpretation is consistent with research linking prolonged domestic abuse to anxiety, trauma-related effects, and diminished social trust (Veronese et al., 2025) and with Walker's (2016) emphasis on restoring voice and autonomy within survivor-centered recovery.

The study's feminist lens is especially relevant to the theme of cultural paralysis. Shame, self-censorship, and pressure to preserve family unity show how social expectations can become part of the mechanism that keeps violence hidden. The findings do not imply that culture alone causes abuse; rather, they show that family-privacy norms, fear of judgment, and unequal power can shape how survivors interpret their options. Bernabe (2005) similarly emphasizes the role of social perceptions in women's experiences of violence in the Philippine setting.

Help-Seeking as a Risk Calculation

The distinction between experiencing fear and using fear as a basis for deciding whether to report is important. Under the lived-experience findings, fear and shame described the psychological condition created by abuse. Under help-seeking, the same emotions became decision factors because survivors anticipated retaliation, loss of income, family disruption, and public exposure. Balahadia et al. (2022) likewise identify fear, economic dependence, and shame as barriers to formal help-seeking. The current findings extend this point by showing that reporting can represent a simultaneous pursuit of safety and a threat to the survivor's immediate material stability.

Institutional barriers intensified this dilemma. Resource shortages, limited shelter availability, delayed coordination, and weak follow-up meant that survivors could take the difficult step of seeking help and still encounter uncertainty. Mendoza (2025) and Tomondog et al. (2025) similarly identify capacity and operational gaps in barangay VAWC services. The implication is that interventions should not be evaluated only by whether an initial complaint is received or a protection order is issued; the continuity, accessibility, and coordination of services are equally important measures of effectiveness.

Recovery as an Ecological Process

The coping findings support an ecological understanding of recovery. Survivors first relied heavily on the microsystem closest to them—children, family, trusted friends, and faith—before or while engaging formal institutions. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework helps explain why these immediate relationships can buffer trauma, influence disclosure, and shape a survivor's willingness to continue with formal action. Bernabe (2005) also points to the importance of family and social

structures in the Philippine context.

Formal assistance became most meaningful when it complemented rather than displaced these informal supports. Participants valued VAWC Desk Officers who listened without judgment, explained legal options, and connected them to protection or counselling. This is consistent with Boeckel et al. (2014), who emphasize the value of coordinated community-based responses. At the same time, the development of personal resilience should not be interpreted as a substitute for institutional responsibility. Survivors' growing confidence was strengthened by supportive relationships and access to practical options; it was not evidence that survivors could or should recover without sustained services.

Immediate Protection Versus Long-Term Recovery

One of the clearest findings is the contrast between relatively effective immediate response and inadequate long-term support. Barangay Protection Orders, initial guidance, and referral can create an essential first layer of safety under Republic Act No. 9262. Hadap (2014) and the Philippine Commission on Women (2024) underscore the role of local implementation in translating legal protection into accessible community mechanisms. Participants in this study recognized that function and often described the first barangay contact as helpful.

However, legal literacy and emergency action did not resolve the problems of safe housing, continuing psychosocial care, financial dependence, employment, and case follow-up. This gap explains why a survivor may be legally protected but remain practically vulnerable to returning to an abusive environment. The findings therefore support a shift from a primarily reactive service model toward a recovery pathway that links legal measures with social welfare, health, livelihood, and coordinated case management.

Safety, Children, and Economic Independence

Survivors' aspirations show that recovery is both psychological and material. Emotional healing and reclaiming self-worth were necessary for regaining agency, but survivors also identified a fear-free home and stable income as conditions for maintaining that agency. Their concern for children is consistent with Social Learning Theory, which recognizes that behavior and relational patterns can be learned through observation and repeated exposure (Bandura, 1977). Peled (2000) likewise highlights the consequences of abusive family environments for parenting and children. The desire for environmental stability can therefore be understood as an effort to protect both the survivor and the next generation from continued exposure to violence.

Economic independence was not treated merely as a livelihood preference. It was described as a practical safeguard against re-victimization because the ability to leave, secure housing, provide food, and care for children depends on access to resources. Kumar and Casey (2020) associate work and financial autonomy with empowerment among women in abusive relationships, while Murphy et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of community-based approaches that strengthen



protective capacity. The present study similarly indicates that economic recovery should be considered part of VAWC intervention rather than an optional service after legal proceedings.

Implications of Project L.I.G.T.A.S.

Project L.I.G.T.A.S. translates the study's empirical themes into an integrated local response. The legal-literacy pillar addresses the knowledge gap identified by survivors; the institutional-capacity pillar responds to the need for trauma-informed and standardized frontline practice; the safe-space pillar addresses the immediate protection gap; the economic-empowerment pillar targets financial dependence; and the case-management pillar responds to fragmented referrals and weak follow-up. In this sense, the model is not an additional stand-alone program but an organizing framework intended to connect services that survivors already encounter across the barangay, police, social welfare, health, livelihood, and legal-support systems.

The model also reflects the public-health and multisectoral principle that gender-based violence requires coordinated prevention, protection, and recovery responses rather than isolated institutional action (Guedes et al., 2016). Its proposed monitoring cycle, referral mechanisms, secure case tracking, and institutional partnerships are designed to reduce the discontinuity identified in the interviews. Because the study was localized and qualitative, implementation should begin as a context-sensitive pilot and be evaluated before broader adoption.

V. CONCLUSIONS

First, the lived experiences of VAWC survivors in Sampaloc, Manila were characterized by multidimensional abuse that affected physical safety, emotional well-being, self-worth, relationships, and everyday decision-making. Fear, shame, and silence were embedded in the experience of violence, while resilience emerged as a gradual process of reclaiming voice and agency.

Second, help-seeking was obstructed by both personal and institutional barriers. Anticipated retaliation, stigma, economic dependence, and family concerns constrained survivors' decisions to disclose, while resource shortages, shelter limitations, slow processes, and coordination gaps reduced the continuity of formal assistance.

Third, coping and recovery depended on multiple layers of support. Children, family, trusted people, and faith provided immediate emotional grounding; Barangay VAWC Desks and other agencies provided legal and service pathways; and survivors gradually developed stronger internal resilience and personal boundaries.

Fourth, barangay-level interventions were most effective at the point of immediate response. Survivors valued protection orders, legal guidance, listening, and referrals, but identified persistent gaps in long-term psychosocial care, financial support, safe accommodation, and case monitoring.

Fifth, survivors defined meaningful recovery in terms of

dignity, safety, a stable and fear-free environment for their children, and economic independence. Sustainable freedom from abuse therefore requires more than legal relief; it requires the material and psychosocial capacity to remain safe over time.

Finally, Project L.I.G.T.A.S. provides a study-derived framework for connecting immediate protection with legal awareness, trauma-informed frontline capacity, emergency safe-space pathways, economic empowerment, and coordinated case management.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local government units and barangay VAWC mechanisms should intensify localized RA 9262 education and stigma-reduction activities while expanding access to community-based counselling and trauma-recovery services.
2. Sampaloc barangays and partner agencies should establish clear emergency shelter and safe-space referral pathways, supported by transport and immediate-needs assistance, so that survivors are not forced to choose between reporting abuse and remaining without a safe place to stay.
3. Continuous professional development for VAWC Desk Officers and referral partners should cover trauma-informed care, gender sensitivity, confidentiality, child-sensitive practice, risk assessment, standardized documentation, and inter-agency referral procedures.
4. Structured aftercare should extend beyond the issuance of protection orders. Secure case tracking, assigned focal persons, regular follow-up, and inter-agency case conferences should be institutionalized to reduce lost referrals and improve accountability while protecting confidentiality.
5. Economic empowerment should be integrated into survivor recovery through financial-literacy programs, skills development, job matching, livelihood assistance, and partnerships with agencies such as TESDA, DOLE/PESO, and social-welfare programs.
6. Project L.I.G.T.A.S. should be considered for localized pilot implementation with defined resources, monitoring indicators, survivor-feedback mechanisms, and periodic evaluation. Any broader adoption should be based on documented implementation outcomes and the continuing needs of survivors and frontline providers.

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