



Spiritual Conversion as an Inward Pilgrimage Toward Filipino Family Transformation: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore the factors that influence family dynamics, growth, and transformation during spiritual conversion. By recounting participants' lived experiences during and after spiritual conversion, these experiences contribute to shifts not only in one's inner perspective but also in family relationships and the overall quality of family life.

A descriptive phenomenological approach was used to investigate the meanings individuals attribute to their lived experiences of spiritual conversion while acknowledging the complexity of their relational contexts. This enabled the articulation of the essential structures underlying the experiences of individuals who underwent spiritual conversion and the subsequent changes that unfolded within their families.

Seven (7) participants, along with a family member serving as a corroborator, shared their narratives of spiritual conversion. Their family members were subsequently invited to validate the narratives and describe how the individual's spiritual conversion was consistently lived in their family relationships. The emerging framework highlighted the unfolding process of spiritual conversion in the individual and its influence on every participant's Filipino family, regardless of the Christian denominations they came from.

Findings indicate that a spiritual encounter with the sacred initiates a process of inner reorganization within the individual, which gradually extends to influence and improve the family's relational system. Spiritual conversion, as an inward journey, reveals systemic relational change. This research offers a phenomenological understanding of a known but less-studied phenomenon: spiritual conversion, and how the unique spiritual experience may contribute to family adaptation and the transformation of the Filipino family within the Philippine cultural context.

KEYWORDS:

spiritual conversion, family dynamics, homeostasis, family transformation, family adaptation

INTRODUCTION

In my observations as a counselor, some individuals yearn for something that we might not even be able to name. Whatever we are searching for, it is something that will help us feel all right and at home, as though we belong. If we could find that feeling, we might no longer feel lonely. We would know what it is like to be loved and accepted, and we would be able to love in return. We would be happy, fulfilled, and at peace with ourselves, our lives, and the world. We could start embodying freedom, expansiveness, and joy.

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Recent studies in family spirituality suggest that individuals often settle for immediate, transient pleasures, overlooking deeper, enduring sources of fulfillment that family spirituality can cultivate. For instance, the importance of integrating spirituality into family therapy highlights how spiritual awareness can lead to more meaningful and lasting satisfaction within family relationships (Çetintaş & Eksi, 2020). Spiritual approach can also help families move beyond superficial gratifications toward more profound, enduring joys (Kutuk, 2020). These perspectives align with the notion that humans are often too easily pleased with fleeting pleasures, failing to pursue the greater, lasting joy that a spiritually enriched family life can offer.

It is important to know the difference between religion and spirituality. Religion can be defined as an organized, institutionalized faith system with shared traditions, doctrine,

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practices, and a community of followers. Through sacred scriptures and teachings, religions provide standards and prescriptions for personal virtue, relational conduct, and family life. Congregational affiliation provides clergy guidance and a community of shared faith and family functioning providing support in times of need. Rituals and ceremonies carry profound significance, connecting families with their larger community, its history, and its survival over adversity. Religious belief systems provide faith explanations of major events, personal experiences, and passage to an afterlife (Walsh, 2016, pp. 347-348).

On the other hand, spirituality, a broad overarching construct, refers to transcendent beliefs and practices lived out in daily life and relationships. Spirituality is “the heart and soul” of religion. It refers to the individual’s personal experience of meaning, transcendence, and connection with the sacred. Spirituality transcends the self: It fosters a sense of significance, wholeness, harmony, and connection with all others—from the most intimate bonds to extended kinship and community networks, and to a unity with all life, nature, and the universe (Walsh, 2016).

In the Philippines, religiosity is profoundly intertwined with culture. In rural communities, religious beliefs, rituals, and devotions shape daily life, family structures, and communal practices. Faith functions as a shared cultural framework that shapes values, moral decision-making, social relationships, and collective identity, rather than existing solely as a private conviction.

Jocano (1967) examined the embeddedness of religion in Filipino life, mentioning that Filipino Catholicism constitutes a dynamic process of religious change rather than a simple transplantation of Western Christianity. Spiritual conversion in the Filipino context should not be understood solely as an individual theological or spiritual event. Instead, it happens within a culturally and socially saturated religious environment in which family members engage in shared rituals and collective meaning-making. Consequently, conversion of a member may initially disrupt and eventually transform existing relationships within the family system.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its shift from an individualized view of spiritual conversion to a deeply systemic and relational one. While existing literature heavily documents the psychological changes within a single convert, this research uniquely positions the family as the primary site of transformation.

By utilizing descriptive phenomenology within the culturally rich and highly relational Filipino context, this study offers unparalleled insights into how an individual's inward spiritual pilgrimage acts as a catalyst for collective healing, intergenerational resilience, and the reshaping of family dynamics. Consequently, the value of this research extends beyond academic discourse; it provides highly relevant, evidence-based frameworks for family therapists, counselors, and community leaders seeking to understand and

support the powerful intersection of faith and systemic family healing.

To fully understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand several core concepts used in this study. For instance, spiritual conversion is classically defined as the process by which a previously divided self becomes unified around a spiritual center (James, 1902). Spiritual conversion is operationally understood in this study as an inward reorientation of the self toward transcendence that initiates the transformation of the self and the family system. Initially, when the family system perceives a change in a member, homeostasis is disrupted. This is called homeostasis, a family’s natural, systemic tendency to maintain stability and resist change to preserve established relational dynamics. (Calatrava, 2021). The system must then recalibrate. It can employ adaptive coping—positive strategies to manage stress and foster resilience (Pudjiati, 2021). Such adaptive processes reflect the capacity of families to reorganize and grow through adversity, a central principle of family resilience (Walsh, 2016). Ideally, the negotiation of these changes leads to growth, characterized by improvements in emotional understanding, communication, and problem-solving (Dell’Osso, 2022), as well as transformation, which involves profound changes in identity and values, such as shifts in priorities or relationship dynamics (Spencer, 2020). Ultimately, these processes aim to enhance the family's quality of life, defined as the person's sense of well-being derived from their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with important areas of their life (Dewi & Hamzah, 2019).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of individuals who have undergone spiritual conversion and their contribution to their well-being. It seeks to understand how these spiritual experiences influence their families in terms of emotional dynamics, relational patterns, adaptation to change, and the perceived transformation in family life.

To achieve the aim of this study, the researcher seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of an individual relating to spiritual conversion?
2. What are the emerging themes describing the experiences of spiritual conversion?
3. What are the patterns in the spiritual conversion of a member within the family?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to explore and understand the experiences of individuals who have undergone spiritual conversion and to gain insight into the lived experiences of their families, particularly in terms of family homeostasis, family adaptation or maladaptation, and perceived benefits.

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To further expand on the study, the specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To describe the process of the spiritual conversion of a family member.
2. To report on the lived experiences of individuals and their family members prior to, during and after the process of spiritual conversion.
3. To explore ways in which a family member perceives changes in their dynamics following a member's spiritual experience.
4. To illuminate the benefits of the family from a member's conversion experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spirituality is fundamentally interwoven with psychological health and human development. It is not merely an external cultural affiliation, but a core developmental task that shapes an individual's internal landscape. Classic theorist Abraham H. Maslow (1970) posited that every individual possesses inherent spiritual needs and a profound longing for transcendent experiences, noting that the most self-actualized and healthy individuals integrate a deep sense of spirituality into their worldview. Similarly, a foundational concept of "mature religion" highlights how deeply internalized faith moves beyond self-serving motives to foster self-acceptance, empathy, and continuous personal growth. In the context of phenomenological inquiry, these classical frameworks establish that spirituality provides the structural scaffolding for how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences. When spirituality is activated, it transforms the individual's baseline perception of themselves and their relation to the broader world.

The review of related literature moves logically from the individual to relationships. It starts by highlighting spirituality as key to psychological well-being, identity, and meaning-making. Then it examines how spirituality affects quality of life. Next, it examines how these inner changes affect family systems, including dynamics, coping, and the transmission of values. It concludes by discussing spiritual conversion as a process that combines and expands these changes to foster personal and family transformation.

Building upon these foundational developmental theories, contemporary literature emphasizes that integrating spirituality into daily life significantly enhances overall mental and emotional health. Individuals with strong, active spiritual practices tend to experience markedly lower levels of depression, anxiety, and existential dread. Spirituality acts as a psychological buffer; it regulates the nervous system and provides cognitive clarity by offering a broader perspective on temporal problems (Johnson & Williams, 2022). In phenomenological contexts, active spiritual engagement—such as consistent prayer, meditation, or participation in faith communities—provides individuals with an internalized

locus of control and a profound sense of peace. This spiritual grounding enables individuals to manage emotional turbulence, socio-economic stressors, and relational conflicts far more effectively than those who lack a transcendent framework to contextualize their struggles (Pudjiati, 2021).

Identity is an evolving, dynamic construct rather than a static trait. Erikson (1968) emphasized that identity is a sense attained and maintained over time; however, for those undergoing profound spiritual shifts, this maintenance involves a radical, active revision of old beliefs to fit a newly awakened self-concept. Narrative identity theories suggest that human beings construct a cohesive "life story" to make sense of their fragmented experiences. Recent studies show that spiritual narratives provide a powerful, redemptive framework for this identity reconstruction (Smith et al., 2023). When an individual embraces a spiritual worldview, they are empowered to rewrite their past—viewing former traumas, failures, or maladaptive behaviors not as permanent stains, but as necessary precursors to their current spiritual awakening. This reshaping of the self-concept allows individuals to discard prior destructive habits and establish highly motivated, spiritually aligned life goals.

Walsh (2016) notes that spiritual belief systems empower individuals to find coherence in otherwise chaotic and devastating situations, fundamentally altering their psychological relationship with pain. By reframing adversity through a sacred lens, the individual moves from a state of victimhood to a state of spiritual agency, viewing challenges as invitations for deeper reliance on the transcendent.

The psychological benefits of meaning-making directly correlate with an individual's perceived quality of life. Recent empirical studies consistently demonstrate a significant, positive relationship between spiritual engagement and subjective life satisfaction. Older adults and working professionals, in particular, show a strong connection between spiritual depth and overall emotional fulfillment, regardless of their immediate socioeconomic status (Lima et al., 2020). Furthermore, Borges et al. (2021) found that individuals who prioritize spiritual well-being report higher daily functioning and greater resilience against occupational and familial burnout. In deeply religious contexts, such as the Philippines, this spiritual engagement provides a steady, enduring baseline of life satisfaction that acts as a counterbalance to external societal or economic hardships.

Because the family operates as a highly interconnected, emotional, and systemic unit, individual spiritual shifts inevitably affect the broader family matrix. Family homeostasis refers to a family's natural, systemic tendency to maintain stability and resist change to preserve established relational dynamics, even when those dynamics are dysfunctional (Calatrava, 2021). When one member experiences a profound spiritual awakening or sudden behavioral shift, this homeostasis is severely disrupted. The

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system must then recalibrate. This recalibration period can temporarily induce significant relational tension, confusion, or resistance as unconverted or differently believing members navigate the new spiritual realities, ethical boundaries, and altered priorities of their transformed relative.

As the family system responds to the disruption of spiritual change, members may employ a wide spectrum of coping mechanisms. Adaptive coping involves utilizing positive, constructive strategies—such as open communication, shared prayer, boundary negotiation, and empathy—to manage systemic stress and foster collective resilience (Pudjiati, 2021). Conversely, some members may feel threatened by the changes and resort to maladaptive coping. These negative strategies can include emotional withdrawal, avoidance, outright hostility, or a regression to substance use and conflict in response to the shifting dynamics (Smith, 2024). A family's long-term relational health and successful transformation heavily depend on their collective ability to pivot away from defensive, maladaptive reactions toward adaptive, understanding strategies

When families successfully navigate spiritual transitions, meaningful spiritual beliefs and practices strengthen the unit by fostering shared, transcendent values across generations. Research indicates that families operating within faith traditions that emphasize community cohesion and shared rituals tend to raise more religiously inclined children, demonstrating a strong intergenerational transmission of faith (Bengtson, 2017). However, literature notes that this transmission is most successful when parents authentically model their beliefs through consistent, loving actions rather than relying on forced, external compliance. When spirituality is lived out authentically, it becomes a shared familial language that shapes the moral and ethical compass of the next generation.

Within the family system, parents often consciously or unconsciously utilize their spiritual beliefs as a primary framework for raising children. Pope Francis (2016), in *Amoris Laetitia*, highlights the family as the "domestic church" and the primary sanctuary for spiritual formation, where every day acts of love, patience, and forgiveness become profound spiritual exercises. Devout families frequently view active religious engagement as a foundational moral commitment. They tend to prioritize authoritative (rather than authoritarian) parenting rooted in faith, which structurally strengthens parent-child bonds, encourages open dialogue about morality, and fosters a highly secure, emotionally supportive familial environment (Dewi & Hamzah, 2019).

In the context of severe adversity—such as poverty, illness, or loss—spirituality acts as a vital anchor for collective family resilience. Systemic resilience is not merely the ability to "bounce back" to the previous status quo, but the capacity to "bounce forward" and grow through the crisis

(Walsh, 2016). Studies involving diverse populations reveal that families who frequently reference a shared relationship with God report significantly higher life satisfaction and solidarity, even when overcoming severe systemic traumas or adverse childhood events (Howard et al., 2023).

A profoundly vital aspect of family transformation is the capacity for post-traumatic relational healing. The integration of genuine faith into a family system recovering from past trauma, neglect, or dysfunction generally promotes virtues such as forgiveness, gratitude, and radical hope. These spiritual virtues are absolutely essential for overcoming profound relational crises and breaking cycles of generational pain (Çetintaş & Eksi, 2020).

Classic theorist William James (1902) famously described conversion as the psychological process by which a deeply divided, consciously unhappy self becomes unified, integrated, and profoundly happy through a firmer, lived grasp of religious realities.

The paradigm of a sudden, revelatory spiritual transformation is classically illustrated in St. Augustine's *Confessions*. In Book VIII, Augustine recounts a period of intense emotional and intellectual turmoil that culminated in a deeply personal crisis in a Milanese garden. Weeping beneath a fig tree, trapped in his own destructive habits, he heard the voice of a child from a neighboring house chanting, "Tolle, lege; tolle, lege" ("Take up and read; take up and read"). Interpreting this as a direct divine command, Augustine opened the scriptures to Romans 13:13-14. This singular, transcendent moment of textual engagement catalyzed an immediate and total spiritual conversion. It instantly resolved his internal dividedness and solidified his lifelong, unwavering commitment to the Christian faith (Augustine, trans. 2006). This narrative remains a foundational touchstone for understanding sudden, dramatic conversion experiences, powerfully demonstrating how faith refuses to relinquish individuals to despair, intervening when they cannot save themselves.

While classical accounts often highlight the miraculous suddenness of conversion, contemporary psychological frameworks frequently approach it as a nuanced, systemic process that unfolds over time. Foundational to this perspective is Lewis Rambo's (1993) comprehensive stage model of religious conversion, which continues to be validated and heavily utilized in recent empirical phenomenological literature (Keller, 2023). Rambo posits that conversion is a dynamic, multifaceted process comprising seven interactive stages. The progression begins within a specific context, referring to the overarching ecological, social, and cultural background that sets the stage for the individual's life. This baseline is eventually disrupted by a crisis—a potent catalyst, such as intense suffering or failure, that deeply disturbs the individual's psychological or spiritual equilibrium. This disruption inevitably prompts a quest, characterized by an active and often desperate seeking

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of meaning, solutions, or relief. During this search, the individual experiences an encounter, which serves as the critical point of contact with a new religious option or a spiritual advocate. This catalyzes a period of interaction, involving learning, relationship-building, and systemic negotiation with the new belief system or faith community. Following this exploration, the individual reaches the stage of commitment, making a formal, internal, and often public decision to fully invest their life, ethics, and identity in the new spiritual path. Finally, the process culminates in the consequences stage, encompassing the ongoing, permanent effects of the conversion on the individual's daily life, ethical behavior, and systemic identity.

Post-conversion, individuals routinely experience greater emotional maturity, a robust reduction in previous vices, and an immensely increased sense of purpose. However, as noted in systemic literature, they may also face a temporary "identity crisis" as they navigate the loss of old social habits and are forced to renegotiate their systemic roles within their existing family matrix (Kutuk, 2020). Through these rigorous stages, spiritual conversion acts as an ultimate bridge to a richer, more relationally connected life, fundamentally and permanently altering both the phenomenological reality of the individual and the structural trajectory of their surrounding family.

In summary, the literature unequivocally underscores that spirituality is a fundamental, structurally necessary component of psychological well-being and identity formation. Foundational theorists and contemporary phenomenological researchers alike demonstrate that active spiritual engagement dramatically enhances personal resilience, life satisfaction, and emotional health. Furthermore, these individual psychological benefits do not exist in a vacuum; they ripple outward into the systemic family unit. Shared spiritual practices and integrated beliefs foster intergenerational cohesion, adaptive family coping mechanisms, and profound collective resilience in the face of adversity. Ultimately, the powerful lived experience of spiritual conversion—whether experienced as a sudden, transcendent revelation, as in classical accounts like St. Augustine's, or as a structured, multi-stage developmental process outlined by Rambo—serves as the catalyst for both personal and familial transformation. By radically redefining an individual's core values and identity, spiritual conversion initially disrupts previous, often dysfunctional family homeostasis, but ultimately paves the definitive way for deep relational healing, sustained systemic growth, and a profoundly improved overall quality of family life.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The design used a qualitative, phenomenological, descriptive design, as described by Paul Colaizzi in 1978. The purpose of Colaizzi's phenomenological research was to uncover the essence of human lived experience through a

disciplined, systematic process of qualitative inquiry. This approach positions lived narratives of participants as the primary source of knowledge, prioritizing their subjective realities over pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Colaizzi, 1978). This study begins with the spiritual conversion of a family member, the effects on family homeostasis, and the responses that follow.

According to Colaizzi's method, the process begins with familiarization, where the researcher repeatedly reads all participants' narratives to gain a holistic sense of their lived experiences, setting aside personal assumptions to approach the data with openness. This immersion allows the researcher to engage with the lifeworld of participants in its fullness. Hence, including seven families in this research, coming from a variety of spiritual conversion experiences and resulting effects on the nuclear family, with each family having two members participating in the interview.

To strengthen the ecological validity and credibility of the findings, the study included seven (7) family members as secondary informants. These individuals served as triangulation sources who corroborated observable behavioral and relational changes in the participants following their conversion. As supported by Denzin (2012), triangulation through multiple data sources enhances trustworthiness. Family members were therefore included to confirm external manifestations of change—such as communication patterns, and relational dynamics—without altering the phenomenological focus on the primary participants' lived experience.

Each of the seven primary participants was paired with one family member who directly observed the participant's behavioral, emotional, and relational changes following spiritual conversion. These family members served as secondary informants whose accounts provided ecological and relational corroboration of the participants' narratives. While Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological analysis was applied exclusively to the primary participants, the family members contributed supporting insights through triangulation. This one-to-one pairing strengthened the depth, contextual grounding, and trustworthiness of the findings."

Participants

Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique in this research study, in which participants were selected based on the researcher's judgment. Snowball sampling was also used. The participants were typically referrals from colleagues in the guidance and counseling field. Snowball sampling is useful for identifying individuals with specific traits who might otherwise be difficult to locate. In this study, two members from each of 7 families were interviewed: (1) the person who underwent a spiritual conversion experience, and (2) another family member was chosen by the person who experienced spiritual conversion.

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Participants were selected based on factors such as being Catholic or Non-Catholic Christian, aged 40–65 years, and residing in the National Capital Region. According to Erik Erikson's (1982) psychosocial theory of development, middle adulthood typically spans ages 40 to 65. They have undergone a spiritual conversion and are either connected to or living with their families of origin or nuclear family. Spiritual conversion must have occurred within the last twenty-five years, accompanied by consistent changes in behavior, emotion, and social relationships. The member of the family has lived with the person who underwent spiritual conversion even before the experience itself, and for a minimum of five years after. Participants who do not meet the specified selection criteria have been excluded from the study. Individuals who are non-Catholic or non-Christian, those residing outside the National Capital Region (NCR), and those outside the age range of 40–65 years were not considered.

Additionally, those whose spiritual conversion lacked consistent external manifestations—such as noticeable behavioral, emotional, or social changes—were excluded. Furthermore, participants whose families had not observed or experienced any significant effects of the conversion were eligible to participate. A chosen family member who has not lived with the person who experienced a spiritual encounter for at least five years was not included.

Instruments

A **demographic questionnaire** was administered to gather basic information about participants. The demographic questionnaire was given so they can provide their general background, including their ages, educational attainment and occupation.

Interview guides were followed so that participants were asked questions on their lifestyles and perspectives before their encounter with God, on spiritual conversion experience, change in outlook in life, relationships and lifestyles, reactions of family members – resistances or acceptance, and how conversions affected their family dynamics, among other questions.

Data Gathering Procedure

Participants were given a letter detailing the purpose of the research, the selection criterion, and their rights to anonymity, confidentiality, and to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. After which, they were given the Informed Consent Form. This was done to ensure that the participants understood the information and made an informed decision about their involvement with the research.

Because the participants are approached with *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* methodology, in which they will be made to feel at ease first using "*pakikipag-palagayang loob*" (confidence building), some interviews extended up to two hours. Participants underwent face-to-face interviews so that non-verbal cues are recognized, there is a presence between

the researcher and interviewees, and proper rapport-building is attained. Hence, the researcher went to locations agreed upon by the participants and the researcher.

Data Analysis

This research study used Paul Colaizzi's Descriptive Phenomenological Method follows a structured approach to analyzing lived experiences.

First, the researcher engaged in familiarization by repeatedly reading all participants' accounts to gain a holistic understanding of their lived experiences. Second, significant statements directly related to the phenomenon were identified and extracted from the data. Third, the researcher formulated meanings from these statements, interpreting their underlying significance while consciously bracketing personal biases. Fourth, the formulated meanings were clustered into themes, revealing common experiential patterns across participants' narratives. Fifth, these thematic clusters were integrated into an exhaustive description that portrays the phenomenon in its full depth and richness. Sixth, this comprehensive description was distilled into the fundamental structure, capturing only the essential defining elements of the experience.

Finally, the researcher returned this fundamental structure to the participants for validation, ensuring that it accurately represents their lived experiences. In this study, Colaizzi's method was applied to explore spiritual conversion experiences, their effects on family homeostasis, and the benefits of family members.

Based from the above steps in Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological approach, the initial stage requires several close readings of the transcribed interviews for overall meaning. Listening to the audio-recorded interview at the start enabled the researcher to imagine and listen with complete attentiveness to the voice and the content shared by the participant for a more complete analysis. The researcher read the protocol in order to catch the sense of the whole of it, trying to understand the meaning of the experience in terms of the standpoint of the participant.

The researcher then entered the participant's world with a sense of openness and discovery with active engagement with the data. The inclination to impose meaning will be avoided by engaging in the phenomenological reduction—that is, "describing what appears to the consciousness, horizontalizing that which appears, engaging in imaginative variation and finally verification throughout the analytical process" (Langdridge, 2007, p.88). Every point, either a phrase, sentence or whole passage in which there is a transition of meaning will be marked.

Colaizzi (1978) mentioned that uncovering the essence of lived human experiences' strength lies in how it stays faithfully anchored to participants' own narratives, ensuring that findings emerge from the data rather than from imposed theoretical frameworks because it allows researchers

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to access deep, rich, and authentic insights that might otherwise remain hidden beneath surface-level descriptions.

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to the principles and standards outlined in the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board Code of Ethics. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Miriam College Higher Education Unit Ethics Committee.

In conducting this study on the experiences of families with a member who has undergone spiritual conversion, the rights of interviewees or participants were respected at all stages: before, during, and after the interviews. Informed consent was sought and obtained. Participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the research, their right to decline, participate, or withdraw, any potential benefits, risks or discomforts, anonymity, confidentiality, incentives for participation, contact persons for questions about the research, and their opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.

Finally, participants were made aware of their contribution to the body of knowledge and were assured that they would gain valuable insights from their participation.

In the event that participants experience triggered emotions resulting in distress, they were referred to a registered guidance counselor or a registered psychologist in good standing and a member of the Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association, Inc. (PGCA) and Psychological Association of the Philippines respectively (PAP).

The data obtained from this research were securely stored and used solely for the purposes of this study. It is important to note that all data collected will be disposed of after five years from the date of the final publication of the study. For physical notes and drafts, this disposal will be done through shredding, ensuring the complete destruction of any identifiable information. Similarly, for soft copy notes and drafts, all data will be permanently deleted to ensure the utmost privacy and confidentiality of participants.

The interviews were conducted in designated counseling rooms to ensure privacy, a safe environment, and a professional setting. Specifically, one venue was the counseling room at the Center for Family Ministries at Ateneo de Manila University, while the other will be the counseling room at the RCW Foundation in Varsity Hills, Loyola Heights, Quezon City. These locations have been chosen to provide a secure and confidential space for participants to share their experiences comfortably. The privacy of the rooms in these professional settings was intended to ensure that confidentiality is strictly maintained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the effects of spiritual conversion on family dynamics by examining the experiences of a family member who underwent a spiritual conversion and a witness from the family. Through qualitative interviews, we

strive to understand the emotional, relational, and social implications of spiritual transformation within the family context. After narrating the experiences of the convert and family member, the researcher analyzed their responses to the open-ended questions according to similarities. Based on this, the themes were identified. To adhere to the laws on confidentiality, the direct transcription of the conversations conducted during the interviews with the members of the family is attached as Appendix A. However, copies of this will not be affixed in the succeeding copies of this research study, especially those that will be used for public consumption.

For the first part, the researcher shared a brief narrative of each pair. This included basic information about being converted, family dynamics, resistance and acceptance, and finally, the adaptation.

The second part is a discussion of their responses, which are organized thematically based on the frequency of answers. The reactions are presented in tabular form, followed by a brief narrative of the participants' experiences in various topics given to them. The researcher took extra care in protecting the identity of the participants by using pseudonyms and altering circumstances.

Narratives of the Respondents

The researcher gathered from the participants' responses based on their interviews: a profile of their narratives, their family dynamics, parenting experiences, and their engagement in their child's education.

In the pre-conversion phase, participants experienced struggles, inner conflicts, and crises, which became the ground from which spiritual transformation gradually emerged. William James described it as the divided self which means the struggle between the ideal self and the flawed self (James, 1902). "The divided self is conscious of a deep discrepancy between the inner life and the ideal; the individual experiences an inward conflict, often accompanied by despair, self-reproach, and a sense of helplessness." (James, 1902).

The participants' lives began with a deep, problematic past that individuals reflect on in retrospection. While the premise is that loved ones are hurting, identifying the struggles and crises is a fundamental driving force that enables the conversion to begin. As participants shared the dark moments in their lives, it is not without question that they still feel hurt about their past. But as seen with the family members, there is always a driving force: faith has healed them and allowed for change. In acceptance of one's wrongs does healing begin and the path towards forgiveness is laid out.

Participants have idealized selves that are basically good and able to respond to and contribute to family relationships. However, the gap between the self being experienced, broken, addicted to drugs, alcohol, or women, and self-entitled is not congruent with the ideal self. The

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flawed self contributes to sadness, frustration, emptiness, confusion and even despair. When such inner division remains unresolved, it can impair relational functioning. In family contexts, this separateness of selves may fail to foster harmony, instead becoming a strain on the family system and, in some cases, contributing to relational rupture.

Consistent with the participants' experiences, Walsh says: "A crisis occurs when a stressful event or transition overwhelms an individual's or family's customary ways of coping, creating a sense of disorganization, distress, and uncertainty.... what makes a situation a crisis is not the event alone, but the meaning it holds and the extent to which it disrupts functioning and belief systems." (Walsh, 2016, p. 27-28).

Crisis is often framed as a problem. However, it can also produce a situation where change can begin. As Walsh puts it, "Crisis situations pose risks, but they also present opportunities for growth, transformation, and resilience, depending on how individuals and families respond." (Walsh, 2016, p. 29).

This also validates Lewis R. Rambo 7-stage model that adversity can become a channel for conversion. The process of conversion is as follows: Context, Crisis, Quest, Encounter, Interaction, Commitment, and Consequences. Context refers to "the total environment in which conversion occurs—personal, social, cultural, religious, and historical." This is related to the Philippine religious culture, where family and tradition are strong. (Rambo, 1993, pp. 20–22)

A crisis is a period of dissatisfaction, dilemma, or struggle that makes change seem desirable or necessary. Crisis destabilizes identity and creates openness to transformation. On the other hand, Quest is the person passionately seeking answers or a resolution to the crisis (Rambo, 1993, pp. 51–56).

Participants' experiences of internal suffering, which included addiction to drugs, alcohol, or bouts of womanizing, entitlement, and even grief. External events also play a part in suffering such as the sudden death of three family members due to natural causes, abuse from a parent, which caused the person to hate religious persons, disagreements due to nagging, and financial problems compounded by the health condition of her child. All these are difficult to endure because of the "divided selves" that cause rupture in their relationships with family members. Or for one participant, a father who made him an identified patient in the family.

Crisis has been widely understood as a destabilizing force that disrupts established identity and opens the way to transformation. As participants experienced, periods of deep psychological or moral crisis often precede religious or spiritual conversion, as the collapse of one's habitual self allows new meanings to emerge (James, 1902). Similarly, intense suffering can shatter previously held assumptions about life and the self, prompting individuals to reconstruct their identity through a search for meaning (Frankl, 1963).

From a trauma-informed perspective, crisis can fragment the sense of self at both psychological and bodily levels; however, this fragmentation also requires the renegotiation and possible reintegration of identity during the healing process (van der Kolk, 2015).

Furthermore, from the participants' lived experiences, a crisis compels individuals to revise their life narratives, often transforming suffering into a significant turning point (Frankl, 1963). Collectively, these perspectives support the view that crisis destabilizes identity, opening individuals to profound personal, existential, and spiritual transformation.

Once there is some space for reflection, participants step into conversion as a means of finding meaning in one's life. Whether seeking change or being saved, conversion resonates as a form of self-actualization that there must be something bigger than oneself. This realization creates the pathway for change in terms of taking the first step in finding the presence of God's love. From the lived experiences of the participants, spiritual conversion, which begins in crisis, reorganizes the individual's intrapersonal beliefs, perspectives, and attitudes and progresses through a transformative understanding of others, leading to lasting relational and familial transformation. Unhelpful patterns within families are replaced with life-giving practices, including prayer, participation in faith communities, and intentional, consistent, and affirming habits. Eventually, families themselves begin to share in these practices, creating a shared rhythm of faith, well-being, and resilience, improving communication, emotional healing, and relational unity. These enabled families to explore challenges with hope and trust.

As the transformation deepens, family life becomes characterized by greater acceptance, better communication, mutual support, and a renewed sense of purpose. Grounded in the lived experience of spiritual conversion, it unfolds through three interrelated phases: pre-conversion, spiritual conversion, and the ripple effects in family life.

Consistent with the participants' lived experiences, spiritual conversion marks a profound transformation in an individual's beliefs, priorities, and sense of purpose. It often involves turning toward the sacred, a shift that redefines what one sees as most meaningful in life. Mahoney describes this process as not just a change in values but also in the pathways used to achieve those values, with a central focus on the sacred. This transformation leads to transcendence, where individuals rise above personal limitations and connect deeply with the divine or the universe. Through this experience, they gain a new sense of purpose, often anchored in their spiritual beliefs, which helps them find clarity and meaning beyond the immediate challenges of life.

"Conversion is the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self-hitherto divided, and consciously wrong,

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inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”

Participants turned toward the sacred or God during the very difficult times. Each convert shared his or her own experience with God during the spiritual experience and how life was filled or changed in different ways. Participants described being spiritually rescued from addiction, self-destruction, trauma, guilt, and purposelessness, often experiencing this as a profound lifting from despair into renewed hope and meaning.

At the end of the conversion phase is the experience of transformation and the ripple effects it has on the family

life of the participants. In this phase, there is trust building and acceptance. All of the participants and their family members have shared how much faith has changed their lives.

Categories and Themes

Further expanding the formulated meanings, there can be themes that can capture the essence of these statements and meanings. This is to allow categories to form so the proponent can navigate participants' phenomenological experiences. The following categories and themes can be drawn out:

Table 1. Clustered Themes

| Formulated Meanings | Themes | Categories |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| There is a low point in every person’s life that makes one believe that change may not be possible. | Hitting Rock Bottom | <i>Struggles and Crisis</i> |
| Entitlement can be tragic and can transform one’s life. | Entitlement Meets Tragedy Loss as Catalyst for Change | |
| Childhood affects a person deeply, and inconsistent support from a parental figure can damage faith severely. | Growing Up in Pain and Pushing God Away | |
| Selfishness can lead to regrettable decisions and eventually a family’s breakdown | When Self-Focus Destroys a Family | |
| Addiction, gambling, and other vices are used to deter oneself from being a responsible person. | Addictions, Fights, and Running Away from Responsibility | |
| Financial problems can lead to family implosions, especially when not addressed properly. | When Finances Collapse and a Crisis Hits the Family | |
| Alcoholism disrupts family ties when not addressed and can lead to problems. | Long-Term Alcoholism in Marriage and Intergenerational Wounds | |
| From the lowest point in life, transformation can begin. However, it is important to look within and recognize the internal brokenness one can feel. | Inner Awakening | <i>Changing Perceptions</i> |
| A sudden shift can happen when met with accidents or near-death experiences. This can trigger a sudden shift in which one seeks God. | Rescued by God | |
| Hope can manifest through the perseverance of faith in one’s heart that can also be shared in the family | Experience of Hope | |
| The initial point of personal longing can transform into an active role in the church and community. | From Personal Renewal to Active Ministry | <i>Purpose and Calling</i> |
| Pain is transformed to a renewed purpose towards faith. | From Pain to Purpose | |
| Some individuals may open themselves to serving the church full-time and share how they have been transformed. | From Profession to Mission | |
| Individuals put their future in faith-based optimism, which can lead them to better opportunities. | Divine Direction and God-Given Opportunities | |
| Hesitance from loved ones can be expected due to the status quo and former bad experiences. | Doubts from Family | <i>Challenges in Conversion</i> |
| Conflicts can arise when families try to reform, as other loved ones may remind those affected of past bad experiences. | Conflicts | |
| Acceptance would come eventually once there is consistent evidence of improvement. | Gradual Acceptance | |

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| | | |
|---|---|--|
| A supportive community is key to creating a warm, accepting environment for those wanting to change. | Faith Communities and Social Support Groups | <i>Sustaining Consistency</i> |
| Consistency has been a key factor in participants' transformation, as it has reminded them of their devotion. | Spiritual Disciplines and Habitual Practices | |
| In a supportive environment, participants found communication easier because judgment was not the core feeling, but God's acceptance. | Improved Communication and Openness | <i>Effects on Personal and Family Well-Being</i> |
| Through consistent change, and by being broken down and made again, participants sought redemption and reconciliation from those they had hurt. | Reconciliation and Forgiveness within Families and Loved Ones | |
| The families started to lift themselves up as the participant had done. They followed the participant in the church life since they saw the changes it had brought. | Spiritual Maturity and Harmonious Family Life | |
| Faith became a cornerstone for the participants' families, providing comfort and unity. | Faith as Anchor | <i>Family Resilience</i> |
| Through past challenges, the participants' love and family values grew as they showed actual change. | Strengthened through Trials | |
| Love, faith, and God positively healed and transformed the lives of the participants and their families. | Family Transformation | |

The following table presents the summary of the clusters and the emergent themes:

Table 2. Themes and Categories

| Themes | Category |
|---|--|
| Hitting Rock Bottom | <i>Struggles and Crisis</i> |
| Entitlement Meets Tragedy | |
| Loss as Catalyst for Change | |
| Growing Up in Pain and Pushing God Away | |
| When Self-Focus Destroys a Family | |
| Addictions, Fights, and Running Away from Responsibility | |
| When Finances Collapse and Crisis Hits the Family | |
| Long-Term Alcoholism in Marriage and Intergenerational Wounds | <i>Changing Perceptions</i> |
| Inner Awakening | |
| Rescued by God | |
| Experience of Hope | <i>Purpose and Calling</i> |
| From Personal Renewal to Active Ministry | |
| From Pain to Purpose | |
| From Profession to Mission | |
| Divine Direction and God-Given Opportunities | <i>Challenges in Conversion</i> |
| Doubts from Family | |
| Conflicts | |
| Gradual Acceptance | <i>Sustaining Consistency</i> |
| Faith Communities and Social Support Groups | |
| Spiritual Disciplines and Habitual Practices | <i>Effects on Personal and Family Well-Being</i> |
| Improved Communication and Openness | |
| Reconciliation and Forgiveness within Families and Loved Ones | |
| Spiritual Maturity and Harmonious Family Life | <i>Family Resilience</i> |
| Faith as Anchor | |
| Strengthened through Trials | |
| Family Transformation | |

Overall, the themes resonate with the description of struggles, hardships, and desires for something bigger than

themselves. Through a retrospective lens, the participants were able to retrace their pasts and retell their pain and initial

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journey towards conversion. In clustering the themes, the description of the participants' pre-conversion can be summarized as Struggles, Pain, and Crisis.

While the thematic analysis can also point to seeking something bigger or having faith, it is important to note that this was not what the participants initially sought; it was a matter of happenstance. Amongst all participants lies the description of having struggles, pain, and crisis. This is apparent as participants found themselves in a problematic or dysfunctional situation prior to conversion. From being lost in life's purpose, womanizing and adultery, drug abuse, gambling, narcissistic/selfish tendencies, and other such issues, the participants, in one way or another, have been through a complicated upbringing.

These themes of struggle and crisis reflect the initial point in the participants' lives, when they are in a state of pre-conversion. This is relevant because there is usually a painful experience that leads to the need for God and faith. In analyzing these themes, it is important to note that the participants reflect on these experiences in retrospect and may not be entirely accurate, but they nonetheless speak to their lived experiences through the lens of themselves and a family member.

Struggles and crises are the foundational reasons why participants see themselves as people who need change. Although this realization is retrospective in nature. This is why it is important to trace their pre-conversion journeys so that their transformation makes sense.

The conversion stage can be divided into three (3) phases. First, there are changing perceptions that manifest in interpersonal relationships. This means that there was a shift towards meaning and purpose and eventually finding faith. Within this phase lie the themes of (1) Brokenness, (2) Rescued by God, and (3) Experience of Hope. These three themes show the gradual change of the participant through either a life-changing experience or a realization of a higher calling.

The second phase is **purpose and calling**, in which the participants enter the church life. They are introduced or reintroduced to their faith. They start building communities and change their personal views and actions. This phase captures the themes of (1) From Personal Renewal to Active Ministry, (2) From Pain to Purpose, (3) From Profession to Mission, and (4) Divine Direction and God-Given Opportunities. Whether all participants captured these themes or not, it is important to interpret all their statements as part of their purpose and calling, since this was the catalyst for change.

The next phase is **challenges to conversion, where loved ones start to doubt the participants' initial change** due to the expected status quo. Family members shared their hesitation to accept that the participants had indeed changed and began to wonder whether this was temporary. However, they do develop acceptance further down the line, given the

consistency of the participant. The themes in this phase encompass (1) Doubts from Family, (2) Conflicts, and (3) Gradual Acceptance.

The descriptions that formed the final stages of conversion can be grouped into three distinct phases. The first phase was **maintaining consistency, since it was the next step** towards growth and forgiveness. The participants felt a sense of responsibility to show up for their communities and to seek forgiveness from their loved ones. This manifested into consistency. The themes clustered in this category are (1) Faith Communities and Social Support Groups, and (2) Spiritual Disciplines and Habitual Practices.

The next phase focused on the effects on personal and family well-being, since the transformed life assessed growth by looking both inward and outward. The participants struggled through their lives and transformed through faith. This led them to become entirely different people throughout the journey. With that, their familial relationships also changed and grew over time. The themes in this category are (1) Improved Communication and Openness, (2) Reconciliation and Forgiveness within Families and Loved Ones, and (3) Spiritual Maturity and Harmonious Family Life.

The final phase involves the family's growth as they also adopt the participant's chosen faith practices. This is encompassed within family resilience, as it reflects the participant's enduring faith, which is now central to their family. The themes in this category are (1) Faith as Anchor, (2) Strengthened through Trials, and (3) Family Transformation.

Themes in the Pre-Conversion Phase

Hitting Rock Bottom

Rock bottom is a term or phrase that depicts the final baseline of having a problematic or negative life. Rock bottom usually depicts life-altering decisions such as sorrow, grief, and pain, which manifest in behaviors such as womanizing, addiction, and gambling.

These behaviors can undermine cognitive decisions and disorient personal decision-making. This relates to the participants who had addictions. They would suffer from addiction and this would affect their relationships with their families. The seriousness of the participants' intrapersonal difficulties, which also affected their relationships, feels like a night without dawn.

In the case of Participant 1, adversity enabled conditions for conversion. Participant 1, who had been an addict for 12 years and who was abandoned by his wife because of his addiction problem, acknowledged that there was a profound void within him. It became worse because of cross addiction, and there was no way out but to go deeper into a seemingly bottomless pit. He realized his emptiness when his wife and daughter left him. It was the worst time in his life.

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Additionally, Participant 1 was left by his family when he was addicted to substances. He acted rashly and oftentimes was hot-headed and violent. They had a deep sense of distrust of him. But when all seemed lost, he was brought to the Lord and humbly asked for forgiveness. This was the start of his transformation and conversion.

Participant 6 shared his womanizing tendencies and how they affected his personal life. He admitted that this affected his marriage and his eventual separation. Like participant 1, he longed for something different that could anchor him, though the transformation was not without its struggles. Participant 7 shared how smoking and partying were an escape from the hardships of life. This can be counted as rock bottom since vices can lead to damaging consequences.

Rock bottom is the shared experience of the participants as they realized that their lives had no purpose. For whatever life decision, rock bottom emerges as a way to look back at what they were before conversion. It speaks volumes, as it shows acceptance of one's former position and serves as a grounding experience. This was seen in retrospect and served as a reflection on how far they had changed since accepting God into their lives. This shows how conversion affects people's internal struggles and helps them change and become better every day.

Entitlement, Tragedy, Loss Meets Grace

Tragedy and grief are strong drivers for change. Specifically, relative to Participant 2, she shared how much she was entitled growing up; she never expected that it would ever transform into tragedy, loss, and grief. Participant 2's opening/introduction statement discerned the need for something greater, a purpose or calling. Though she had accepted that she was spoiled, there still lies a longing for healing. Though it had not yet manifested until tragedy struck her home.

The death of parents and siblings, who were one's anchor, in a powerful typhoon can shatter one's emotions because parents are the anchor of the family. With the loss of her parents came the death of her eldest sister and some relatives. Gone were the home she grew up in and even the pets that she once cared for and loved. It was a loss of cherished relational anchors. However, the loss of important persons became a way for Participant 2 to seek and lean on God.

For Participant 2, her conversion was ultimately an encounter with God's unconditional love. She emphasized that it was not about formal religion but about a relationship with God. A life offered to God and a daily morning prayer, attendance at masses, thoughts, words, and actions that she aligns with God's will.

Her position as the entitled person radically shifted due to a natural disaster. This brief escalation of entitlement to tragedy struck Participant 2 hard. It was a dark moment, and it made her doubt how she could transform into someone

who was hateful and bitter. However, she shared her experience of returning to God. She shared that she had formed better relationships with her brother and thanked God every day. In this experience, God became a sense of hope and safety for her. Her tragedy was mended with God's grace, and she was thankful for that.

Growing Up in Pain and Pushing God Away

Childhood trauma often plays a critical role in developing into a wayward adult. Participant 4 had a rocky childhood. His father, who was a pastor, had beaten him and his siblings. He translated this as a way to reject God while growing up. It was evident that if a eucharistic minister, who is expected to espouse the Lord's teachings, was violent, then God must not be protecting him.

Childhood trauma from the abuse of a parent leads a participant away from religion. Trauma from the primary and secondary caregivers can disrupt the attachment system, leading individuals to avoid beliefs and relational contexts associated with the abusive parent. This includes religion and religious practices associated with the parent (caregiver) (van der Kolk, 2015). His disillusionment with his father led him to reject his Catholic faith. And ultimately, his distancing from God and being an atheist. For the participant, he would want what his father is not – the opposite. And he carried this hurt within his family because he was easily angered. He detached and became busy with work.

Participant 4 was starting to shy away from God. His life had shown so much pain to the point that it would have been understandable that he would shy away from God for the rest of his life. But during an incident in diving, his faith started to call to him. He started to open up to God and tried once again to find a connection. This was when he found a counseling center.

Participant 4's longing for acceptance and hurting people in the process was a struggle that manifested due to his upbringing. It was difficult for him to have a sense of purpose due to the inconsistencies of his life. This struggle reflects the inner person's desire to be cared for and be accepted, which, when not properly addressed, manifests as pain and anger.

Although, Participant 4 still found the Lord in a sense of community. When he joined Ateneo's counseling center, he continued in spreading the gospel and helping other people find the Lord. As if his trauma transformed into passion, Participant 4 found himself doing the same evangelical work his father had once done. But unlike him, Participant 4 promised that by the Grace of God, he would not be the same. This experience radiated hope and change in one's heart.

When Self-Focus Destroys a Family

Participant 6's narrative shows how the pursuit of achievement, pleasure, and happiness outside the marital and parental relationship can at first provide a sense of

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fulfillment, yet gradually turn the relationship within the family system. While his career successes and extramarital relationships offered instant gratification, they were sustained at the cost of trust within his marriage and his presence to his son.

Gradually, the wife's continuous emotional pain and Participant 6's increasing absence as a father led to his wife and child leaving him. It was only in the aftermath of this separation that Participant 6 realized that his decisions and actions had contributed to the breakup of his own family.

When Participant 6 started his conversion, he was a womanizer. He would cheat on his wife and this caused deep pain and hurt with his wife. This caused their eventual separation. He was also faced with career setbacks and work allegations. His life proved tumultuous and felt like it led to a dead end.

His focus on himself initiated dysfunctional patterns within the marital and parent-child subsystems. Consistent with family systems theory, the unsustainable emotional availability and disrupted relational stability led to withdrawal and eventual rupture. Participant 6's experience underscores how an overinvestment in achievement can displace the quality time, attunement, and presence necessary to sustain marital intimacy and nurture a secure father-son relationship.

His story reflects the ways selfishness can endure in oneself and how it can direct oneself to crisis. But when he started to really take in the Bible, he started to find hope in the passages. He was typically religious, he went to mass and prayed, however it was not until the Bible Fellowships that he really started to show change.

As he accepted God, he started to turn his life around. He asked for another chance with his wife, who at first did not believe him. But as they grew together in God, they found peace and stability in their marriage. Participant 6's story showed how even his sinful lifestyle can be changed and while it takes time, showed how it can lead to a better life.

Addictions, Fights, and Running Away from Responsibility

As stated in Rock Bottom, addiction can lead to many problems for the person and those he/she loves. But it can also have an added layer of addictions in gambling and violence. It can also add to womanizing and other vices. This can regress further until the individual is at a loss and has their entire lives destroyed. This was the situation of Participant 5.

Participant 5 didn't bother to commit to anyone, even when he had gotten his partner pregnant. This showed his lack of responsibility from himself and the people around him. But when he started to show up in a Catholic church group, he started his journey to change.

Even if he didn't seem irredeemable, he found that God had plans for him. Slowly, he started to be more devoted to his well-being than choosing drugs, women, or gambling. He started to commit and take care of his children. This

transformation was one of the biggest amongst the participants and that this was the proof that conversion can lead to a better life for oneself and the people around.

Participant 5's narrative was a pattern of moving from one romantic relationship to another, including leaving his wife for another woman while she was pregnant. At the time, these decisions were experienced as gratifying personal desires, yet they increased emotional distance in his marriage and relationship with his son. Despite his wife's agreement to continue the relationship and consent to marriage, this pattern continued.

The unexpected death of his father, who was a significant figure in his family of origin, made Participant 5 experience a profound pain in his life. This loss of the person he admired left him feeling empty and prompted him to realize his growing distance from God. During this period of grief, Participant 5 came to realize how his relational choices had resulted in the division in his family relationships and a disconnect from God.

When Finances Collapse and a Crisis Hits the Family

In times of crisis and great need, individuals need comfort and guidance. When Participant 7 turned to God to pray for her problems, she was met with the Holy Spirit and the feeling that everything would work out.

The financial crisis resulted from relational fragilities. The lack of communication between Participant 7 and her husband, and the inability to meet each other's needs, led to an economic problem they could not handle. They had frequent misunderstandings and quarrels. The difficulty in communication resulted in Participant 7's discovery that they were having a problem with finances because her husband was mismanaging funds. In addition to their financial crisis, there is the condition of her daughter who had glaucoma. Participant 7, in her helplessness, searched for divine intervention in a Catholic Community.

Participant 7 had seen how God provided solutions in times of need. That her faith, along with their family's abundance from the Lord, was enough to get them through troublesome times. This hopeful approach towards a challenge showed how resilience and faith manifested in their hearts as they asked God for guidance. This was after they had conversion experiences, so their faith had been tested multiple times.

"It was only when he had lost everything that he could begin to hear the truth about himself" (Nouwen, 1992, p. 56). Participant 7's complex difficulties showed that crisis can be a threshold for meaning. Old ways no longer work, and one can be pushed to the wall. Eventually, one becomes open to God, which allows an encounter with Him.

Long-Term Alcoholism in Marriage and Intergenerational Wounds

After many years of a problematic husband and wife relationship, the husband's alcoholism created deep emotional wounds in the family. This was felt by the spouse

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and the children. A pilgrimage became a place for a spiritual encounter toward healing and reconciliation. Participant 3's marriage was distraught because of her alcoholic husband. They found themselves at a point where their marriage was in such bad shape. Their children were affected and she saw no hope in her husband changing. But through pilgrimage in Israel, they found God in the Holy Land.

At the time, they experienced God in a local retreat center. It was as if the Lord's presence guided them. From that point, they slowly changed their lives. The alcoholism was addressed day by day. Their emotional wounds started to heal. It took time, but their marriage was being rebuilt. And with their journey to God's grace, they found themselves humbled and carried on with devotion.

All participants had different struggles and emotional hurts that were difficult for them to overcome on their own. These inner difficulties affected their relationships with the members of their immediate families, causing divisions, strife, disharmony, and separations in marriages. For some, the heaviness of addiction, womanizing, and resentment led to strained marital dynamics, parent and child misunderstanding. In short, their inner brokenness did not remain internal—it manifested outwardly, disrupting family harmony and weakening the very relationships they valued most.

Conversion is a meaning-making encounter that restructures the self by reorganizing beliefs, emotions, and purpose. It involves a reconstitution of meaning in which individuals reinterpret their experiences in response to a spiritual encounter, leading to inner transformation (Rambo, 1993). Such encounters often bring a sense of spiritual rescue and clarity, as individuals become aware of a deeper, guiding reality that reshapes their inner life (Lewis, 1955). Conversion may also reflect growth in faith development, marked by a shift toward more integrated and reflective beliefs.

From a psychological perspective, conversion can promote emotional healing and renewed purpose by providing spiritual resources for coping and meaning-making. Participants described conversion as a deeply personal encounter with God that re-oriented their lives, values, emotions and relationships.

Themes in the Conversion Phase

Inner Awakening

Participants realized that their ways could not fill the emptiness within them, marking a moment of personal brokenness (Rambo, 1993). Their encounter with God, sparked by a helping hand, helped them recognize that the true idols in their lives were themselves (Lewis, 1955). This realization led to humility, dependence on God, and a willingness to follow divine guidance instead of their own desires, reflecting a transformation in faith development and meaning-making.

As participants entered or were invited to their Christian faith-based groups, they found themselves in a state of brokenness. They saw their lives as a form of suffering and recognized deep pain and regret. Participants described that transitioning slowly towards conversion provided a deep sense of satisfaction that they had long sought.

They experienced the filling of a long-felt void which they sought – an emptiness they satisfied through different means like drugs, alcohol, women, and work. In their conversion experiences, they discovered in God what worldly pleasures and addictions could not satisfy. They found fulfillment through His transforming grace.

Rescued by God

The participants experienced being hurt by experiencing his presence in the encounter and being healed gradually from abuse, comparison, and abandonment. While this was not a straightforward endeavor, the participants found themselves growing in God. One was physically rescued from drowning while diving in the sea. This symbolized their being rescued and healed from what they deeply disliked to what they desired.

Most of the participants' conversions were marked by a deeply personal encounter with God, rather than emotional religiosity. For instance, one participant, after completing detoxification, attended a church service in a state of clarity and, during prayer with the pastor, he experienced a profound surrender, opening his heart to God despite feelings of guilt, shame, and anger (Rambo, 1993). Unlike previous superficial experiences of faith, this encounter led to immediate and decisive change, prompting him to sever ties with substance-abusing influences and commit to abandoning drugs, alcohol, and smoking (Lewis, 1955). Another participant encountered God while he was trying to surface to the sea after losing oxygen while diving.

Whether it was a spiritual or physical manifestation of being rescued, such as the case for Participant 4, who had almost drowned, the participants show that being 'saved' was the initial catalyst for them to pursue God deeper. This feeling of love slowly cradled their journey in taking a step forward in church life.

These moments reflect the shift from inherited or cultural Christianity to a lived and intrinsic faith, demonstrating how conversion grounded in surrender can transform beliefs into actions and integrate meaning into one's life.

Experience of Hope

The participants felt more profoundly loved. Prior to the experience, they felt love as fleeting, but now they are convinced that God loves them for who they are – unconditionally and permanently. The gained ability to extract meaning from it. Participants experienced the process of meaning-making. This process allows individuals to reinterpret their suffering as a pathway to divine purpose, character refinement, or spiritual solidarity with others.

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Meaning-making is the process by which individuals reinterpret their lived experiences of spiritual conversion, leading to identity reconstruction (Frankl, 1963).

Conversion awakened hope, emotional comfort, and a sense of God's unconditional love. This hope became the anchor for a new identity and direction. Encountering a relationship with God allows individuals to reinterpret their suffering as a pathway to divine purpose, character refinement, or spiritual solidarity with others.

Before their spiritual conversion, some participants tried to change but returned to the dysfunctional cycle. When they discovered spirituality through their encounter with God, they grew and transformed. They received hope.

Participants felt they had been set on a directionless path prior to the encounter. During the encounter, they felt a sense of calling and hope that God was with them. They gave their lives as offerings to the Lord and He accompanied them to a new purpose.

From Personal Renewal to Active Ministry

Participants expressed that they did not remain passive after their spiritual encounter. They became active in ministries such as ushering, facilitating small groups or bible studies, or managing Christian centers. Some participants took on discipleship roles, leading their own groups.

This shows that their faith was translated into lived discipleship. Their relationship with God formed their priorities and these priorities. Spiritual conversion transforms and gives birth to a new self, as the pre-existing identity is remodeled to align with new beliefs and a new spirituality. Such a change can be beneficial to the person's identity because it integrates old and new perceptions of self into a more meaningful whole.

Personal growth following spiritual conversion is often associated with an increased sense of purpose, self-acceptance, and emotional resilience (Reyes-Perez, 2025).

From Pain to Purpose

Participants reframed their past wounds as tools to help others. Their deepest pains became their calling to serve, mentor or guide. Consistent with the identity reconstruction theory, which suggests that human beings construct a cohesive "life story" to make sense of their fragmented experiences. Recent studies show that spiritual narratives provide a powerful, redemptive framework for this identity reconstruction (Smith et al., 2023). When an individual embraces a spiritual worldview, they are empowered to rewrite their past—viewing former traumas, failures, or maladaptive behaviors not as permanent stains, but as necessary precursors to their current spiritual awakening. This reshapes their self-concept, allowing individuals to discard prior destructive thoughts and establish highly motivated, spiritually aligned life goals.

Participants 4 and 5 illustrated how God transformed their difficult past into a meaningful mission that blesses

others. Their pains became a source of empathy and calling. From their deepest pains, these became a calling to psycho-spiritual counseling and being a feastbuilder in a Catholic church group. By surrendering their lives to Christ, they were able to discover new directions in their work and lives.

Echoing the experiences of others, Participant 4's greatest pain became his intense passion. From being bullied and hating his father's religion, he became a psychospiritual counselor to the lay, seminarians and even priests. Because of the abuse of his father, he became a bully to those who reminded him of his father, especially of Catholic religiosity. However, his encounter with God while he was trying to surface during his diving accident turned his life around. The experience of God being a rescuer made him want to serve God in the area where he was wounded. He became a wounded healer in his counseling ministry. And because of his own experience, he became a compassionate counselor to many.

Participants went through identity reconstruction, which refers to the process by which a person: a. reinterprets past experiences b. reorganizes self-understanding. c. develops a new sense of identity after significant events such as painful experiences, abuse, or trauma.

From Profession to Mission

Some participants experienced shifts in career direction. Their professional identities became aligned with spiritual purpose, seeing work as an extension of mission. Their professional identities became aligned with spiritual purpose, seeing work as an extension of mission.

Participants in subtheme 3 expressed a deep desire to change from professional ambitions toward a mission. Their careers became means for serving God. Career change was seen as a "yes" to God's call which became opportunities for service

In Participant 2's case, she was an employee in the call center industry. However, her growth in the Lord and her new identity in Christ made her seek a more meaningful work – one that allows her to know God while contributing to the charism of a catholic community. Hence, she offered her services to a Catholic church group.

Participant 5 changed careers from managing people in the corporate office to shepherding members of the Catholic Church. He is now a feast builder for a Catholic ministry.

Divine Direction and God-Given Opportunities

Participants discerned God's guidance through unexpected opportunities and life events. They saw divine providence shaping their journey. Such purpose and calling arose from conversion, transforming personal healing into service and mission.

Participants recognized God's providence in opening new paths — sometimes unexpectedly — where they could witness and model Christian living even in professional or domestic contexts.

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Taking the case of Participant 1, a person who was unreliable at work. He could not keep a job because of his addiction problem. He was a burden to his wife and to his family of origin. However, after his profound encounter with the Lord after one of the worship services at an evangelical fellowship, he volunteered at community-based drug rehabilitation programs at their LGU.

With his father's death, he became the acting manager of an evangelical broadcasting and counseling ministry. This organization has a bookstore, a broadcast, and a counseling ministry. In December 2025, he was installed by the board as the Managing Director of the ministry in the Philippines. He was even described as a shepherd after God's own heart at the said installation.

His father was the former managing director of the said counselling and broadcast ministry. However, for many years, Participant 1 was a burden to his father and to his father's ministry. Ironically, in his conversion, he was slowly directed to become what his father once was: the Managing Director of the ministry, installed by the board, of which many are leaders of a national council of evangelical churches.

Doubts from Family

Participants said that they tried to reform habits but keep repeating them – such as drugs, womanizing or nagging. Another participant said he tried sports but was not able to overcome hatred towards his father.

Hence, the family did not believe them after their spiritual experience. It was only after a consistent change in behavior that their family members believed them. There changes in the family behavior, as well. One family member even gave up being an alcoholic for 18 years.

Consistent with this tendency toward relational stability, participants reported that their personal transformation was not immediately accepted but met with doubt and caution within the family.

Conflicts

Conversion, therefore, required unlearning distorted images of God and separating divine faith from human failure. For the family, this process was gradual and difficult, as trust in God had to be rebuilt apart from prior religious trauma and disappointment.

Initially, some loved ones projected old wounds or suspicions onto the believer's new life, revealing deep emotional divides that needed time and forgiveness to heal. Like the father of the former drug addict's wife who was very reluctant. This was the same resistance from the wife of the womanizer "who said he may die if she reconciles with husband. They thought that addiction may be repeated and daughters may suffer.

Meanwhile, Participant 6's repeated extramarital relationships with one woman followed by another eroded the trust of his wife. When he joined an evangelical growth

group, he experienced God showing him fragments of memory revealing a deeper meaning of his offenses against his wife; this opened up his need for God and a need to be reformed. When he felt a spiritual experience of surrendering to God, he participated in bible studies and a growth group. This helped him renounce his wrongdoings, his weakness with women and his being an absentee father. But when he was trying to contact his wife, the wife thought and felt that these were just temporary and that he would return to his former vices. Even the father of the wife pleaded with her daughter not to return to him.

Families often feared relapse and questioned the sincerity of a member's transformation due to past failures, highlighting the need for trust, consistency, and time. According to Family Systems Theory, families tend to maintain homeostasis, resisting sudden changes that could disrupt established dynamics (Bowen, 1978; Calatrava, 2021). Structural family perspectives similarly note that family roles and patterns create stability, so behavioral shifts may initially be met with doubt or surprise.

The Family Resilience Framework emphasizes that families adjust to change gradually, balancing support and caution as they integrate new behaviors into the household (Walsh, 2016). Collectively, these perspectives explain why family acceptance of personal transformation requires sustained consistency and relational negotiation.

Gradual Acceptance

Despite initial skepticism, families gradually accepted the changes as participants demonstrated humility, consistency, and spiritual growth. Family 4's experiences show that conversion is neither immediate nor effortless but occurs gradually and unevenly.

At first, some family members of participants were surprised at their child's desire to pray with them when they used not to get along. Another family member said that it is like a miracle that her sister became kinder and more obedient to their parents. These were welcome changes. Some family members observed the over-involvement in bible studies and church activities. Sometimes a tendency to spiritualize matters that can be psychological or practical when they feel that they are still on earth hence the need to be practical, too. Later, some get into the habit of reading the bible, as well.

Family Member 4 noted that his father's transformation unfolded through small, consistent shifts in behavior, attitude, and relationships over time, while Participant 4 described long periods of resistance, denial, and reluctance, even after counseling and ministry involvement. Stressful moments occasionally triggered old behaviors, highlighting that conversion requires ongoing struggle, discipline, and self-awareness. This subtheme emphasizes that challenges in conversion persist beyond initial transformation and demand sustained commitment, patience, and grace.

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However, with the perseverance and consistency of these two participants to change their behaviors through changed habits and strong encouragement of their support groups, they were able to convince their significant others. For Participant 1, he was able to borrow money from his father after a year. For Participant 6, his wife and son lived together and vowed to continue their relationship as husband and wife.

While family systems often tend toward stability and homeostasis, participants' lived experiences revealed that when transformation aligns with long-standing hopes, it may be received not with resistance but with relief, affirmation, and even gratitude.

For Participants 4 and 2, this was not the case. The families did not oppose the changes that affected these persons, whose lives were touched by God and whose behavior improved. Their change for the better was even welcomed by their respective families, who had been praying for many years. As in the description of Participant 2's brother, Family Member 2, "It is a miracle!" The changes seen in these participants were what the family had been praying for many years. And these were welcomed changes. Similarly, for Family Member 3, she prayed for her husband because she and her children suffered from Participant 3's alcohol addiction. And now she felt relieved, knowing her prayers had been answered.

Changes from conversion in participants who were being prayed for because of family members' compassion and whose dysfunctions had severely affected the family dynamics and members' wellness themselves, were accepted with surprise and had no resistance at all. Like Monica, they delight in having their hopes fulfilled.

Participant 1's conversion and change were doubted in the beginning because he had times when he changed, but the change was manipulative. He improved his behavior in order to get what he wanted. Hence, when he was able to get what he desired from his family, he went back to his dysfunctional ways. Addiction is a difficult problem to recover from. Dr. Nora D. Volkow, Director of the U.S. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) mentioned that "drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences" (Volkow, Koob, & McLellan, 2016, p. 363-365).

Themes in the Transformation and Ripple Effects in Family Life

Spiritual Disciplines and Habitual Practices

Related to Pudjiati's study on adaptive coping, family resilience, and spiritual grounding, active spiritual engagement—such as consistent prayer, meditation, or participation in faith communities—provides individuals with an internalized locus of control and a profound sense of peace. This spiritual grounding enables individuals to manage emotional turbulence, socio-economic stressors, and relational conflicts far more effectively than those who lack a

transcendent framework to contextualize their struggles (Pudjiati, 2021).

Faith Communities and Social Support Groups

Participants maintained their transformation through steady support networks and the consistent practice of spiritual disciplines. Faith communities, such as growth groups, care groups, and Catholic church groups, offered accountability, acceptance, and encouragement, reinforcing personal and family spiritual practices (Smith, 2016). Participant 3 emphasized that involvement in church activities, Bible studies, and community interactions helped sustain consistency, including encouraging siblings to engage with God's Word and sharing experiences with friends, pastors, and fellow believers (Willard, 2002).

As communities formed, participants found stability through habits such as prayer, attending mass, participating in Bible studies, receiving the sacraments, or attending retreats. This strengthened their inner discipline through being accountable for their devotion and time allocated to their faith groups. This created a sense of continuing purpose through forming habits. This benefited those, especially those with vices, since there was redevelopment and the unlearning of previous habits.

Most, if not all, participants who had spiritual experiences sustained transformed living through strong accountability groups. These groups include faith communities, prayer groups, fellowship gatherings in the Christian family movement, evangelical fellowships, and/or a Catholic church group, which provided structure, encouragement, and shared commitment to Christian living. Through these groups, a sense of community and responsibility formed. Participants were carried by their faith as much as their spiritual community.

This experience and community reflect the church life, where everyone is responsible for one another. This feeling conveys the sense that no one is alone and that change is embraced alongside a faith-based support system.

Regular engagement in spiritual disciplines—such as prayer, study, and reflection—supported ongoing growth and reinforced the internalization of change (Foster, 1998). This subtheme demonstrates that sustaining transformation requires both communal support and habitual spiritual practices to maintain and strengthen faith over time.

Authors Yalom and Leszcz (2020) emphasized the group as a potent source of support and change. Through belonging, mutual aid, and interpersonal learning, members can take risks, revise maladaptive patterns, and move toward healthier ways of being. Furthermore, they described that such change occurs not in isolation, but through the corrective emotional experience of being accepted, understood, and supported by others (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).

Because of the encounter and the relationship with God, the regular and persistent encouragement from support group members and with others, support from family

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participants, they were able to form new habits. According to Smith (2016, p. 25), “a habit is a ritualized practice that shapes our loves—that is, what we desire and what we are oriented toward. The well-loved Stephen Covey (1989, p 46) viewed that “our character, basically, is a composite of our habits. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character.”

Improved Communication and Openness

Participants reported openness, listening, transparency and emotional safety at home. According to Family Member 4, there was an effort on Participant 4 to listen, give advice and not to judge. He listened and became open to his wife, children, parents and sister. This created a ripple effect. The members of the family became more open to him, to each other which enhanced their communication.

Participants reported a shift from avoidance and misunderstanding to openness and even dialogue grounded in faith. Participants were open to speaking their truths since they found a supportive community that could support them through their struggles. This opened up their communication methods. Communication became more open and empathetic which led to trust, emotional safety, and intimate family bonds.

Participant 1 and Family Member 1 level when needed. This means being truthful and open with sensitivity and respect for each other’s feelings, aiming for authentic communication, clarity, and understanding. This was done to enhance their marital relationship. And of course, they talk about what God did for them during the evenings. This practice deepened their sensitivity and appreciation for God.

Because of openness, transparency, and trust, conflicts become manageable. Because of participants' openness in their marital relationship, their children, in turn, became communicative with their parents. And when they make God their anchor.

Reconciliation and Forgiveness within Families and Loved Ones

Forgiveness was central to their change. Participants narrated emotional reunions, healing dialogues, and humility that restored broken relationships and brought peace after years of resentment or distance. This became their biggest challenge since they admitted they came from a wayward life and that they had hurt their loved ones. But through consistent growth, the family members and their loved ones gradually accepted the changed participant.

For Participant 2, she forgave her mother. Participant 6 asked his wife for forgiveness. Family Member 1 decided to give Participant 1 another shot. Participant 4 forgave his father, who verbally abused him, especially while he was growing up. Forgiveness enables the family to heal from hurts, move on to reconciliation and continue with a more life-giving relationship. Forgiveness, kindness and humility restored relationships and reduced conflicts.

The integration of genuine faith into a family system recovering from past trauma, neglect, or dysfunction generally promotes virtues such as forgiveness, gratitude, and radical hope. These spiritual virtues are absolutely essential for overcoming profound relational wounds and breaking cycles of generational pain (Çetintaş & Eksi, 2020).

Spiritual Maturity and Harmonious Family Life

Beyond reconciling, families developed shared faith and mutual respect. Their families became spaces of spiritual maturity, where faith in God guided decision-making and brought greater harmony. The participants shared how their transformations brought their families into their own faith practices and groups and that this allowed them to pursue God and grow together.

Participants’ spiritual conversion was not limited to an internal religious awakening but gradually manifested in concrete behavioral and relational changes within the family. Prior to their conversion experiences, many of the participants described their family life as marked by instability, emotional distance, or unhealthy coping mechanisms. Addiction, rebellion, unresolved trauma, marital conflict, and reliance on external distractions such as partying or vices were common responses to stress and adversity.

However, the moment of spiritual encounter, whether through worship, community, prayer, or a crisis, initiated a reorientation of priorities. Participants began cultivating practices such as prayer, Scripture reflection, service in church communities, and intentional spiritual discipline. These practices fostered humility, accountability, and a deeper awareness of God’s presence in daily life, which in turn reshaped their attitudes toward family responsibilities and relationships.

As spiritual maturity deepened, the families experienced noticeable improvements in communication, forgiveness, and relational stability. Converts who once struggled with anger, pride, or self-centeredness gradually became more patient, responsible, and attentive to the needs of their family members. In Family Member 1, Participant 1’s commitment to sobriety and spiritual discipline restored trust that had been broken by years of addiction.

In Family Member 2, Participant 2’s spiritual growth fostered openness, reconciliation, and a renewed ability to cope with profound grief following a devastating family tragedy. In Participant 7, spiritual maturity transformed patterns of jealousy, anger, and avoidance into patience, communication, and prayerful decision-making. These changes cultivated an environment in which family members felt safer expressing themselves, resolving conflicts constructively, and supporting one another emotionally and spiritually.

Faith as Anchor

Shared faith provided peace, stability and hope during difficulties. Shared faith provided peace, stability and hope

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during difficulties. According to Lina B. Laigo, the Filipino continues to evolve, adapting to circumstances while keeping values such as faith in God alive. Praying together is most applicable to Filipinos, given that praying is a commonly used coping mechanism.

According to Laigo, even those who do not go to church would find themselves in church during a crisis. The wife of Participant 5 holds on to prayer like going to the adoration chapel after Participant 5 left her. When they reconciled, both Participant 5 and Family Member 5 held on to God during adversities. (Laygo, pp 15-18.)

After their spiritual experience, participants described an inner calm and stability that replaced past anxiety and worries. Strengthened faith, peace and trust in God became their anchor for emotional calmness, self-acceptance and acceptance of others. Faith served as an anchor for their persistent growth and reminded them of how much they had changed. Faith allowed the participants to be more reflective and forgiving of their past.

This is true for Participant 1 and Family Member 1 who pray before sleeping, for Participant 6 and Family Member 6, for Participant 7 and Family Member 7 and for all the others. Praying and faith in God became their source of hope and strength.

Strengthened through Trials

After feeling their home was unsafe, they now enjoy coming home. At times, they have put another family member down, but they have become more supportive. Homes became spaces of openness, mutual support, and togetherness, marked by less conflict and more emotional closeness. Families became a place where one can be oneself, grow, feel accepted and share one's pains and joys.

Families described increased unity, mutual support and emotional closeness even amidst hardship. The family relationships became more stable. The difficulties the participants experienced helped them tap inner resources and attain skills. Coping, problem-solving, and decision-making skills are enhanced through the trials, thereby becoming personal protective factors when faced with challenges. Along with vigorous spirituality, they experienced serenity and were at peace with themselves. They applied adaptive coping, which involves using positive, constructive strategies—such as open communication, shared prayer, boundary negotiation, and empathy—to manage systemic stress and foster collective resilience (Pudjiati, 2021).

Family Transformation

Participants found new meaning in their lives and in their relationships with one another. Their sense of purpose extended beyond themselves and their families toward service to others. They developed gratitude and enduring hope, paving the way for more mature emotional resilience.

The lived experience of the seven families shows that families undergo developmental processes characterized by differentiation, boundary renegotiation, and role

redefinition across the life cycle (Bowen, 1978). These processes are often intensified during non-normative events—such as the spiritual conversion of a member—necessitating systemic reorganization (Walsh, 2016). Their testimonies showed that when one member goes through a non-normative event, specifically spiritual conversion, the family members also go through role redefinitions, changes in lifestyle and are affected by the newness in behavior of the family member.

If only we “love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (1 Jn 4:12). Since “the human person has an inherent social dimension”, 372 and “the first and basic expression of that social dimension of the person is the married couple and the family”, 373 spirituality becomes incarnate in the communion of the family. (Pope Francis, 2016, paras. 372–373).

Every spiritual encounter is unique. The way they give meaning to the encounter leads the person to spiritual conversion. Through reflection on their spiritual encounter, individuals reinterpret their lives, reassess their values and develop a renewed orientation toward God. During the process of meaning-making, the encounter becomes transformative, reshaping personal identity and a relational attitude toward others, especially family members.

Additionally, participants developed their spirituality while retaining their religious affiliation. The evangelical and Baptist Christians continued attending worship services, bible studies and support groups. On the other hand, Catholics attended masses on Sundays, prayed the rosary and novenas. However, there was a shift in identity and perspective. Because of their encounter with God, they developed a relationship with Him.

The spiritual conversion deepened the participant's understanding, experience, and practice of their faith—even without changing their religious membership. There was: a. depth of commitment b. personal appropriation of faith, c. identity orientation toward God. This reflected what Rambo (1993) conceptualized as intra-faith, or intensification, conversion, in which individuals experienced a deepened commitment and reorientation of faith without changing their religious affiliation. Rather than abandoning institutional religion, participants internalized their beliefs, moving from externally guided religious participation to personally appropriated and experientially grounded faith.

Participants' spirituality was internalized, integrated, and expressed through transformed relationships and family engagement. The encounter with God functioned as a pivotal moment that restructured meaning, identity, and relational orientation, leading to sustained engagement in church life, ministry involvement, and family relationships. Spirituality allowed them to understand others as well. This transformation deepened participants' sense of shared humanity within their families, enhanced empathy and connection among members. As their spirituality grew, they

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began to recognize their common humanity with family members, fostering compassion and understanding in their relationships. This enriched faith experience helped cultivate stronger familial bonds, fostering a supportive environment where love and unity thrived, ultimately reinforcing the importance of family unity.

In essence, Pope Francis described that “if a family is centered on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life” (Pope Francis, 2016, paras. 317). This profound assertion underscores that when Jesus is the center of family life, He becomes the unifying presence that enriches relationships and infuses daily experiences with deeper meaning. By embracing this spiritual center, families can foster love, understanding, and resilience, transforming their homes into reflections of spiritual communion and purpose. When Jesus becomes the center of the family, He becomes the unifying presence that gives meaning to the members’ relationships and their daily experiences.

In the transformed life, it is important to note that change was sustained through a slow, enduring process. The participants have found communities that supported them and their families, and had a gradual process in accepting the change that emerged. But through faith and the willingness to change, participants have fully entered the transformed life and seen that their pre-conversion lifestyle was greatly different from their transformed lives. While it was not explicitly stated, it can be inferred that participants recounted their lives not with shame, but as a reminder of who they were and of their growing ability to forgive themselves.

The experiences of the seven families show that personal crisis often opens the way for transformation, destabilizing old patterns and prompting reflection on meaning and purpose. Conversion functioned as a profound meaning-making encounter, restructuring the self, filling existential voids, and fostering spiritual rescue, emotional healing, and renewed purpose. This transformation does not remain within the individual. Rather, it gradually unfolds within family relationships, guiding participants from the seven interview families toward mission-centered lives and service, while requiring patience and consistent demonstration of change to earn family trust. Sustaining transformation relied on both internal commitment and external support.

The transformation is sustained through lived practices, including prayer, participation in faith communities, and intentional habits that replaced previous patterns of behavior. They provided reinforcement and structure, replacing destructive patterns with consistent, life-affirming practices. Over time, families themselves begin to share in these practices, creating a shared rhythm of faith, well-being and resilience, improving communication, emotional repair, and relational cohesion, and enabling families to navigate challenges together with hope and trust. As the transformation deepens, family life becomes

characterized by greater acceptance, mutual support, and a renewed sense of purpose. Homes that were once marked by conflict and distance became spaces of belonging, where members experienced being understood and valued, fostering enduring relational healing, growth, and resilience.

Overall, spiritual conversion is a dynamic process that transforms both individuals and families, producing enduring personal growth, individual and relational healing, and holistic resilience.

Fundamental Structure

Given the statements, themes, and categories, the pre-conversion experiences lay the groundwork for every successful change or conversion story.

Breaking down the themes further, the formulated meanings form in terms of change, conversion, and acceptance.

Other essential insights:

1. Profound personal and relational crises typically precede spiritual conversion.
2. Spiritual conversion is experienced as an embodied encounter, not merely a cognitive change in belief.
3. Consistency, accountability, and new habits, which are life-giving and spiritual disciplines, are essential for sustaining transformation.
4. Spiritual conversion contributes to improved family functioning, relational well-being, and the ability to face adversities with hope.

Verification

To validate the statements, participants were asked to verify them along with family members' affirmations. This was to ensure that the Colaizzi method was followed.

Emerging Theoretical Framework



Figure 1. Key Processes in the Intrapersonal Conversion to Family Transformation Framework

This framework explains how a personal crisis can function as a catalyst, opening a person to receptivity to God. A meta-personal encounter with God may open the way for

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intrapersonal spiritual conversion. Through changes in meaning, identity, thought patterns, behavior, and relational engagement, this conversion contributes to transformation within the family system. The inner reorganization in the individual extends to family-level transformation, resulting in improved communication, healthier dynamics, relational healing, psychological wellness, harmony, and a more united front to face adversities with greater hope.

Because of the internal reorganization, reframed paradigms and new identities in God, participants described a growing recognition of common vulnerability and imperfection in themselves and their family members, reflected in reduced judgment, increased compassion, and a greater capacity to remain relationally connected despite differences. This can be termed as shared humanity which is the link between the individual's transformation and the family's relational healing and renewal. Through spiritual conversion, the individual moved beyond the self, recognizing one's own brokenness, which fostered empathy for family members. This allows individuals to see loved ones as fellow human beings (I-Thou Relationship). The shift promoted better relationships and a more unified family.

This framework is illustrated through interlocking circles to represent the dynamic and reciprocal relationships among the key processes identified in this study, namely: (1) Personal crisis and questing, (2) Encounter with God, (3) Intrapersonal Conversion, (4) Shared Humanity, and, (5) Family healing and renewal.

This approach preserved integrity and ensured that the findings were grounded in participants' and family members' lived experiences.

CONCLUSION

The experiences of the seven families show that personal crisis opens the way for transformation, destabilizing old patterns and prompting reflection on meaning and purpose. While facing great difficulties both internally and externally, the participants each found their own avenues to use their crises and struggles as a starting point for something bigger or to build a better future for themselves. Even when their loved ones doubted them, they pursued their conversion.

Conversion functioned as a profound meaning-making encounter, restructuring the self, filling existential voids, and fostering spiritual rescue, emotional healing, and renewed purpose. Participants shared how they slowly tried to build themselves again and start reaching out to their loved ones. This transformation extended beyond personal renewal, guiding participants from the seven interview families toward mission-centered lives and service, while requiring patience and consistent demonstration of change to earn family trust.

Spiritual conversion, as experienced by participants, may be understood through psychological processes such as meaning-making, identity reconstruction, and emotional

integration, which extend into relational transformation within the family. The findings offered an integrative perspective wherein interior change is both personally integrated and relationally expressed.

Sustaining transformation relied on both internal commitment and external support. Daily spiritual disciplines, faith communities, and intentional habits provided accountability, reinforcement, and structure, replacing destructive patterns with consistent, life-affirming practices. Through communal support, the participants allowed themselves to feel accountable for their own actions and transformed towards self-betterment. The impact extended to family well-being and resilience, improving communication, emotional repair, and relational cohesion, and enabling families to navigate challenges together with hope and trust.

Drawing the shared human experience of spiritual conversion, it can be understood as a movement toward genuine relational presence. As this transformed orientation is embodied in daily life, it extends to family relationships. Family members begin to engage one another not as I-It, defined by fixed roles, past conflicts, or instrumental expectations—but as Thou, worthy of presence, dignity, and mutual recognition. This relational shift enables deeper empathy, improved communication, and renewed connectedness within the family system. Thus, spiritual conversion facilitates a shared human experience wherein both the convert and family members participate in I-Thou encounters that promote relational healing and family growth, regardless of denominational affiliation.

The intrapersonal change in participants, brought about by spiritual conversion, served as a means of better relational functioning within the family. This describes how an interior change in a member can influence the family's overall relationships. This affirms that family is a profoundly interconnected and emotional unit, hence influencing their members' thoughts, feelings, and actions

The participants' crises were not only external but also internal. These struggles occurred when the personal meaning, assumptions, values, and beliefs no longer hold. What was once meaningful no longer works. For the participants, a crisis occurred when their divided selves (real vs. ideal) reached the limits of their own efforts. Their spiritual encounter and conversion happened when they became open to meaning beyond self-effort. After conversion, their selves were reorganized around a new unifying center: God.

The spiritual conversion deepened the participant's understanding, experience, and practice of their faith—even without changing their religious membership. There was: a. depth of commitment b. personal appropriation of faith, c. identity orientation toward God.

Lastly, from a phenomenological perspective, the essence of spiritual conversion lies not in denominational form but in its lived meaning and relational consequences.

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Family growth emerges from the authenticity of the spiritual encounter and its integration into everyday life. Thus, spiritual conversion functions as a unifying human process that fosters personal integration and family transformation across both Catholic and Evangelical contexts.

Overall, the study highlights that spiritual conversion is a dynamic process that transforms both individuals and families, producing enduring personal growth, individual and relational healing, and holistic resilience.

Further research is needed to examine how different types of crises shape the timing, depth, and outcomes of conversion across diverse family contexts. Given the importance of family support, relational trust, and consistent practices, research could examine how spiritual conversion affects individuals' interactions and well-being in schools, workplaces, and other social settings.

Moreover, studies may explore the connections among spiritual growth, mental health, communication, and resilience, highlighting how transformed individuals navigate relationships and responsibilities in family, educational, and professional environments. Such research can inform counseling, community programs, and institutional support systems that aim to strengthen both personal and familial transformation.

Future studies may also: (1) Explore the experiences of incomplete conversion; (2) Compare intra-faith and inter-faith conversion within families; (3) Examine longitudinal outcomes of family transformation and relevance; (4) Compare Western and Filipino families in terms of spiritual conversion and their relationships with family; (5) Apply a psychospiritual approach to counseling families in crisis using the emerging framework of reawakening and shared humanity; (6) Participants from various regions to discover cultural implications, and; (7) Find results if Participants from different religious denominations are involved.

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