

## The Perspectives of the Children of Elderly Filipino Dialysis Patients: A Phenomenological Study

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**Abstract:** *The study centered on the firsthand encounters of the Children of Elderly Patients. The study employed the phenomenological research design, more precisely, the hermeneutic approach. The study included a total of eight (8) Children of Elderly Dialysis Patients, who were chosen by a purposive sampling technique. The participants were selected using a non-probability sampling method, specifically the purposive sampling method. The selection criteria involved persons who are actively engaged in the care of their elderly parents undergoing dialysis and possess firsthand experience with the challenges and responsibilities connected with this job. Moreover, the researcher utilized the Colaizzi technique to analyze the data. The Colaizzi (1978) process, which comprises seven stages is recognized for its rigor and reliability in qualitative data analysis, ensuring credibility in research findings. Moreover, the study yielded three themes, this includes; (1) Initial Reaction, (2) Coping with the Challenges, and (3) Living on. Furthermore, Moreover, the study uncovered that numerous individual derived resilience from their familial and social connections, which significantly contributed to their capacity to manage difficulties. In summary, the results provide insight into the intricate emotional and logistical elements of taking care of elderly parents undergoing dialysis treatment.*

**Keywords:** *Elderly Patients, Chronic Kidney Disease and Dialysis*

### Introduction

The Filipino culture places significant importance on familial cohesion (Morillo, et. al., 2013) and financial support, resulting in the development of strong family bonds throughout the country. The focus on family unity is evident in the strong bonds that Filipinos share (Derasin, et. al., 2024) sometimes residing nearby or even inside the same home. The strong connections created among individuals serve as a reliable assistance network during challenging circumstances and cultivate a feeling of inclusion and safety within the community. When elderly parents experience chronic renal disease, it is typical for adult children to take on the responsibility of being the main caregivers. To ensure the welfare of both the parent and the caregiver, it is imperative to maintain patience, empathy, and open communication within the family during this transition of roles. This shift can be difficult for all parties involved, as the parent may experience difficulties losing their independence while the caregiver may have to take on additional tasks.

The involvement of family members is essential in delivering care to patients undergoing dialysis (Derasin, 2019; Milenkova et al., 2020). The responsibilities of families caring for individuals with renal failure are significant, impacting both the patients and their relatives. Family caregivers have a crucial role in the care of dialysis patients (Derasin and Derasin, 2021). However, they require support and guidance to effectively handle the challenges associated with caring for a dialysis patient (Derasin et. al., 2023; Derasin et. al., 2024). This assistance can help mitigate the physical, emotional, and financial hardships that are commonly associated with dialysis treatment (Derasin et. al., 2023). Additionally, according to Coyne & Smith (1991), the ongoing treatment and control of chronic illness impose certain lifestyle limitations on both patients and their families. End-stage renal disease (ESRD) has a major impact on both the patient and their close companions. Furthermore, Van Loon et. al. (2016) noted that elderly individuals undergoing dialysis treatment sometimes experience a higher prevalence of age-related impairments and a significant load of additional medical conditions.

For this reason, the offspring of elderly individuals undergoing dialysis play a crucial role in the survival of their parents.

Jones and Bargman (2019) assert that the management of geriatric dialysis patients presents distinct challenges and considerations. Research has indicated that older individuals undergoing long-term dialysis face elevated levels of functional impairment, hospitalization, institutionalization, and death. To enhance the quality of care for geriatric dialysis patients, a comprehensive approach is required, encompassing rehabilitation, individualized decision-making, and the evaluation of conservative treatment alternatives (Treat et. al., 2013).

In addition, studies have been undertaken on older persons undergoing dialysis treatment, but there is currently a lack of research on the experiences of the offspring who take care of them. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the obstacles faced by the offspring of dialysis patients and examine their coping mechanisms. The researcher anticipates that this study will provide valuable insights into the influence of family support on the health outcomes of dialysis patients. Through an analysis of the involvement of children in this particular situation, healthcare providers can enhance their ability to deliver comprehensive care for elderly individuals undergoing dialysis treatment.

### **Methods and Materials**

The study used a phenomenological research design, using the hermeneutic approach. The participants of the study are individuals who have elderly parents on dialysis. The selection of these participants was based on a non-probability sampling specifically the purposive sampling method. Wherein criteria were used in the selection and the criteria are individuals actively involved in caring for their elderly parents on dialysis and have firsthand experience with the challenges and responsibilities associated with this role. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of those directly impacted by the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, the study was conducted in Cebu City. This location was chosen due to its high population density and prevalence of dialysis centers, providing a rich pool of potential participants. The

researchers conducted in-depth interviews to gather detailed insights into the daily struggles and coping mechanisms of caregivers in this specific context.

The researcher utilized the Colaizzi technique to analyze the data. The Colaizzi (1978) process, which comprises seven stages is recognized for its rigor and reliability in qualitative data analysis, ensuring credibility in research findings. Moreover, it guarantees a thorough investigation, with each phase adhering faithfully to the empirical findings. The final result is a concise yet thorough explanation of the phenomenon under investigation, which has been confirmed by its creators. The methodology is based on a thorough compilation of primary experiencing accounts, which can be obtained by many methods such as face-to-face interviews, written narratives, online blogs, research diaries, and virtual interviews, among other approaches.

### **Results**

This portion pertains to the data gathered through interviews. The researchers utilized Colaizzi's Method to interpret and analyze the gathered data. By analyzing the obtained data, the researchers were able to identify recurring themes. These themes provided valuable insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives on the topic being studied. The researchers were able to draw meaningful conclusions and implications from these findings. Moreover, the study yielded three Core themes, this includes; (1) Initial Reaction, (2) Coping with the Challenges, and (3) Living on

#### **Theme 1. Initial Reaction**

The first theme of the study entailed the initial reaction of the individual when their elderly parents were to undergo dialysis. This reaction included feeling overwhelmed and anxious, while others expressed a sense of duty and responsibility towards their parents' health. The diverse range of emotions highlighted the complex nature of family dynamics in the context of chronic illness.

##### **Subtheme 1.1 Overwhelmed and Anxious**

This subtheme described the participants' overwhelming sense of helplessness upon learning that their parents had been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease and were scheduled to begin dialysis treatment. Many participants expressed feelings of

fear and uncertainty about the future, as they struggled to come to terms with the new reality of their parents' health.

*"Nakalitan gyud mi pagkahibaw namu nga mag dialysis na akung mama, wa mi kabaw sa among buhatun kay daghan kaayog bayranan, mga tambal plus sa pang dialysis pa sa akung mama"* (**We were shocked to learn that my mother would be undergoing dialysis; we are at a loss for what to do because there are numerous medical debts and expenses in addition to the cost of dialysis**). – Participant 3

*Grabi kaayo among kaguol pagkahibaw namu nga si mama mag dialysis na, diabetic mana siya, nakuyawan mi basin maunsa nya siya, tiguwang na raba na siya nya nagkadaghan ang sakit"* (**We were devastated to learn that our mother, who is diabetic and aging with a chronic illness, would soon require dialysis. We were concerned about her well-being and the progression of her condition**). – Participant 5

#### **Subtheme 1.2 Guilt**

This subtheme explores the feelings of guilt experienced by individuals over the health state of their parents as dialysis patients. Additionally, many participants expressed experiencing a sensation of culpability or obligation towards their parent's state, pondering whether they could avert it. These emotions often stem from a sense of helplessness and the desire to take control of the situation, leading to internal conflict and self-blame. Some participants also mentioned feeling torn between their own lives and responsibilities, and their duty to care for their parents, adding another layer of complexity to their feelings of guilt.

*"Usahay tungod sa ka busy sa trabaho, di kaayo naku matagad si mama, kung sayu sayu pami ni adtu sa doctor pagpa check up di ta ma dialysis si mama, natambalan pa tatu."* (**Because of my rigorous job schedule, I am unable to visit my mother frequently. Had we sought medical attention earlier, we could have averted the need for dialysis therapy for my mother**). – Participant 2

*"Panagsa ragud naku mapalitan si mama sa iyang tambal sa diabetes, usahay di ko kapalit sa iyang insulin kay na pud tay laing mga obligasyu, ingun ang doctor nga mao ni complicate ni tungod sa iyang diabetes, wa na control ang sugar"* (**Occasionally, I am unable to purchase my**

**mother's diabetic medicine, including insulin, due to other responsibilities. The doctor has indicated that managing her diabetes is challenging, as her blood sugar levels are not well-regulated**). – Participant 6

#### **Theme 2. Coping with the Challenges**

The second theme explored the ways utilized by the participants to address the issue of their parents undergoing dialysis therapy. These tactics encompassed obtaining emotional support from friends and family, seeking financial help from different Organizations, as well as acquiring knowledge about the dialysis procedure to enhance comprehension and manage the condition. In addition, certain individuals also investigated lifestyle modifications to potentially enhance their parents' health results.

##### **Subtheme 2.1 Support from Friends**

This subtheme examines how persons with elderly parents receiving dialysis treatment seek support from their friends and relatives. The assistance they receive from their circle of friends can significantly influence their capacity to manage the challenges of caring for elderly parents undergoing dialysis. These persons may depend on their circle of friends for emotional support, help in getting to appointments, or even financial aid to cover medical costs. The intensity of their social bonds can influence the degree of stress and responsibility they encounter while caring for their elderly parents during this arduous period.

##### **Subtheme 2.2 Financial Help**

This subtheme explained how the children of elderly dialysis patients seek assistance from various government and private organizations to cover the high costs of treatment and medicines for their parents. Many of these children also face challenges balancing their financial responsibilities with the needs of their aging parents, leading to increased stress and emotional strain

*"aku mo linya ko sa DSWD para maka tabang tabang pud sa gastuan ni mama, kay lisud kaayo mi karun, napa raba koy gipa eskwela nga anak."* (**We seek out DSWD for assistance with my mother's bills, our finances are challenging right now, and my kid is still in school**). – Participant 4

*Maayo gani dako kaayo sa tabang sa phil health PCSO ug DSWD. Mau nang maka maintain naku karun sa akong pag pa dialysis ni mama ug ang*

*iyang mga tambal” (With the assistance of DSWD and Phil Health PCSO, it’s much better. Now that I am able to continue my mother’s meds and dialysis) – Participant 8*

**Theme 3. Living on**

The study’s third theme examined the willingness of individuals to acknowledge and embrace the circumstances of their elderly parents who are undergoing dialysis, while also assuming the role of primary caregivers is a significant aspect of caregiving for patients with chronic illnesses like end-stage renal disease

**Subtheme 3.1 Acceptance**

This subtheme explores the Acceptance of the offspring of the elderly dialysis patient on their parent’s condition and the impact it has on their own lives. It delves into the emotional and psychological aspects of coming to terms with a parent’s illness and how it can shape relationships within the family dynamic.

*“Dawatun nalang gyud tani, kabaw ko nga mobu nalang ang kinabuhi ni mama, so samtang naa siya aku siyang silbihan ug provide dan sa iyang panginahanglan, isag lisud man pero pangitaan nakug pa agi” (I understand that my mother’s time on earth is limited. While she is still alive, I will take care of her and help her, even if it is hard. I will find a way). – Participant 5*

*“mao naman gyud ni, nya wa naman pud tay mabuhat ani, so dawatun nalang tani, ako lang is tabangan naku si mama kutub sa kung matabang” (Since I am powerless to change the situation, I must accept it and focus on providing my mother with the best care I can). – Participant 2*

**Subtheme 3.2 Taking the Responsibility**

This subtheme expounded on the offspring of elderly dialysis patients assuming the role of primary caregivers for their parents. The study found that these caregivers often faced challenges balancing their caregiving responsibilities with their personal and professional lives.

*“Kutub sa akung mabuhat akung buhatun parang mama, kay ako anak man ko ako ing responsibilidad nga mutabang sa akung mama”. (I will provide assistance to my mother to the fullest extent possible. As her son, it is necessary for me to fulfill my role of caring for her).. – Participant 3*

*“maluoy gyud ko sa akung mama, labi na tiguwang na siya , mao na mag kina unsa akung gyud nang*

*tabangan akung mama, kita anak daku tag utang kabubut ub sa atung mga ginikanan”. (I deeply sympathize with my mother, especially now that she is elderly. That is why I am determined to help my mother in any way I can. As children, we have a great responsibility to support our parents, who have sacrificed so much for us). – Participant 1*

**Table 1. The Summary of Themes and Subthemes Generated in the Study**

Themes	Subtheme
Initial Reaction	Overwhelmed and Anxious Guilt
Coping with the Challenges	Support from Friends Financial Help
Living on	Acceptance Taking the Responsibility

**Discussion**

The study identified three core themes: (1) Initial Reaction, (2) Coping with the Challenges, and (3) Living on. Participants in the study described their initial reactions to the challenges they faced, followed by strategies they used to cope with these difficulties. Ultimately, they shared how they were able to move forward and continue living their lives despite the obstacles.

The participants of the study felt anxious and fearful when finding out that their parents had to undergo dialysis. Caregivers experienced a variety of ambiguity and confronted fear about their future (Calvin et. al., 2014; Lee et. al., 2016; Ebadi et. al., 2018). Moreover, they were concerned about the impact on their parent’s health and well-being, as well as the potential financial burden of ongoing medical treatment. Some participants also expressed feelings of helplessness and uncertainty about the future. Dialysis typically extends lifespan, but it can place a significant emotional, physical, and financial strain on patients and their families (Vachharajani, 2014). According to Tong et. al. (2006), People and families affected by chronic kidney disease (CKD) may experience feelings of uncertainty regarding the unpredictable course of their diagnosis, hospitalizations, infections, and limitations in growth. Likewise, patients and their families experience fear and anxiety regarding CKD conditions and anticipate future events with apprehension. Patients experienced significant

stress and concern related to mortality, dialysis equipment, and their future (Sahaf,2017).

In addition, the offspring of elderly patients undergoing dialysis experienced feelings of guilt regarding their parents' illness. This guilt stemmed from the children feeling responsible for their parents' health decline, despite it being out of their control. According to Kim and Lee (2022), caregivers of dialysis patients often feel guilty, thinking they are at fault for the patient's disease or unable to provide adequate care. According to the studies conducted by Lindhardt et al. (2006) and Lowson et al. (2013), children play the role of advocates and managers in safeguarding and ensuring the welfare of their elderly parents. These studies highlight the importance of recognizing children as active participants in the care of their elderly parents, rather than just passive recipients of information or instructions. By involving children in decision-making and caregiving responsibilities, families can promote a more collaborative and supportive environment for aging loved ones.

Additionally, the study also revealed the importance of support in the lives of Caregivers of Dialysis Patients (Canaud et. al., 2011). Family support can encompass all aspects of our existence (Reyes et. al., 2023; Beduya et. al., 2023). According to Coyne & Smith (1991), The extended duration of therapy and the ongoing control of chronic illness imposes some limitations on both patients and their families in terms of their lifestyle, and families need to communicate openly and work together to find ways to adapt to these changes and support their loved ones. Similarly, the analysis revealed that the participants sought financial assistance to cover the costs of dialysis therapy and medication for their parents. According to Derasin (2019), to cope with the financial constraints, Patients and significant others utilized the assistance of the Philippine Health Insurance, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, the Department of Social Welfare and Services, and other organizations to help finance the treatments and medication.

Finally, the study revealed the willingness of participants to recognize and accept the situation of their elderly parents who are receiving dialysis treatment, while simultaneously taking on the responsibility of becoming their main caretakers, which is a crucial part of caregiving for patients with

chronic illnesses such as end-stage renal disease. According to Zalewska et. al., (2007), The primary difficulty faced by individuals with chronic diseases is in their acceptance of their state, as this might result in noncompliance, ultimately leading to detrimental consequences for the patient. Likewise, Malhotra et al. (2018), revealed that caregivers exhibited a higher level of readiness to allocate financial resources compared to patients, to prolong the patient's lifespan and enhance their overall well-being.

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed three noteworthy findings on the experiences of those with elderly parents undergoing dialysis. These encompass the first response, managing the difficulties, and continuing to live with the condition. The study emphasized the strength and flexibility of those who have elderly parents undergoing dialysis. Moreover, the study uncovered that numerous individual derived resilience from their familial and social connections, which significantly contributed to their capacity to manage difficulties. In summary, the results provide insight into the intricate emotional and logistical elements of taking care of elderly parents undergoing dialysis treatment.

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