

## Victim Witnesses of Human Trafficking: A Phenomenological Study

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**Abstract :** Human trafficking may happen to anyone. The study aimed to explore the experiences of victim witnesses of human trafficking. It utilized a qualitative phenomenological study design. Eighteen women, 15 to 46 years old, had experienced human trafficking (sex or labor trafficking), and with a filed case or not. An in-depth semi-structured, open-ended interview was employed to gather information. Guardians were also interviewed for triangulation purposes. Findings showed that the participants experienced fatigue and abuse for their physical aspect and gained negative feelings such as burdened, sad, scared (fear), stress, anger, trauma, depress and suicidal thoughts for their psychological aspect. For the spiritual aspect, the participants concluded to have enhanced spiritual life where they knew about God, became closer to God, and learned how to pray. They also faced challenges such as dysfunctional family, delinquent friends, exploitation, problems kept from the family, and poverty, which resulted in their becoming victims of human trafficking. To cope with the situation, they utilized family support, prayers, guts or courage (lakas ng loob), negotiation with their employer, and support from kababayans. Their practices and mechanisms to recover were the Blas Ople Center, rescue/entrapment operation, shelter, and embassy. After the incident, the participants shared that they earned to have thoughts of having a good life without going abroad/makabayan, knowledge of overseas Filipino workers, wise choice of friends, contentment, and value for the family.

**Keywords :** victim-witnesses, human trafficking, lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies

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