

# **The Lived Experiences of Court Stenographers Witnessing Child Abuse Trials in Family Court**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the lived experiences of court stenographers witnessing child abuse trials in family court, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to uncover the deeper meanings and personal interpretations that shape their professional and emotional lives. In-depth interviews with eight stenographers revealed several key themes: Professional Identity and Development, Courtroom Responsibilities and Dynamics, Emotional and Psychological Impact, Coping Mechanisms, and Support Systems.

The findings show that stenographers undergo significant professional growth and continuous learning to adapt to their roles. They also face considerable emotional and psychological challenges, especially when dealing with child abuse cases. These challenges often lead to stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, with some cases having lasting effects on their mental health. The physical setup of the courtroom and the need for accurate transcription further impact their well-being and performance.

To cope, stenographers engage in physical activities, rely on support from colleagues and family, and utilize structured support systems within the court. The study underscores the importance of institutional support and regular professional development to help stenographers manage their roles effectively. It emphasizes the need to consider the emotional and psychological health of court personnel, highlighting the importance of their well-being for the efficiency and accuracy of legal proceedings.

**Keywords:** Child Abuse, Court Trials, Family Court, Stenographers, Lived Experiences

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Over time, court systems worldwide have evolved to meet the varying demands for judicial services, influenced by both the complexity of society and numerous external and internal factors that affect their functioning (Dennis, 2022). Court personnel, including stenographers, play a vital role in maintaining the psychological well-being of both plaintiffs and the accused during trials. To ensure that witnesses can testify without fear, court personnel must be knowledgeable about developmental stages and approach the gathering of sensitive information with consideration and care (Sana et al., 2014).

Court stenographers frequently transcribe cases involving various forms of child abuse, each presenting unique challenges and emotional burdens. A significant portion of these cases pertains to physical abuse, where children suffer harm through actions such as hitting, burning, or other forms of physical aggression. These cases often involve detailed testimonies from victims, medical professionals, and eyewitnesses, requiring stenographers to accurately document sensitive and distressing information. Research indicates

that physical abuse is a prevalent form of child maltreatment, making it a common subject in court proceedings (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2020).

Another prevalent category is sexual abuse, encompassing offenses like molestation, exploitation, and assault. These cases are particularly challenging due to the intimate and traumatic nature of the testimonies. Stenographers must transcribe explicit accounts from victims, which can be emotionally taxing. The complexity of these cases is heightened by the need to capture nuanced details that are crucial for legal proceedings (Dwarakanath, 2022).

Stenographers also encounter cases of neglect, where caregivers fail to provide essential needs such as food, shelter, education, and medical care. Documenting these cases involves transcribing evidence related to the child's living conditions, health records, and testimonies from social workers and other professionals. Neglect cases require meticulous attention to detail to ensure that the severity and impact on the child's well-being are accurately represented in the court records (Feller et al., 1992).

Additionally, emotional or psychological abuse cases are part of the stenographer's purview. These involve behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being, such as constant criticism, threats, or rejection. Transcribing these cases can be complex, as they often rely on subjective testimonies and psychological evaluations, necessitating a careful and sensitive approach to accurately capture the proceedings (Knox et al., 2014).

Court stenographers, often referred to as the "silent superheroes" of the justice system, provide accurate, verbatim transcripts of legal proceedings, including sensitive cases such as child abuse trials (Etulle et al., 2023). These professionals are integral to the swift and precise documentation of legal proceedings, ensuring that every spoken word is captured for official records. The dynamic between judges and stenographers is crucial for the efficient and timely resolution of legal cases (Mughal, 2020). Judges rely on stenographers not only for routine decisions on case files but also to dictate final orders and judgments. A harmonious relationship between the judge and stenographer is essential for optimal case management. Globally, child abuse cases represent a significant concern within the legal system. Reports indicate that court personnel, including judges, lawyers, and stenographers, can experience secondary trauma, also known as vicarious trauma, due to their repeated exposure to distressing accounts (Sartor, 2020). In the United States and Europe, court systems have increasingly recognized the importance of providing mental health support for those involved in such cases. Research has shown that prolonged exposure to traumatic content can lead to burnout, compassion fatigue, and diminished job satisfaction (Figley, 1995; Levin & Greisberg, 2003). Despite this acknowledgement, court stenographers, whose work requires intense concentration and emotional neutrality, are often overlooked when it comes to psychological support (Bober & Regehr, 2006).

In Asia, particularly in countries with developing legal infrastructures, the challenges faced by court stenographers are compounded by limited resources, cultural attitudes towards mental health, and heavy caseloads. For instance, in India and Pakistan, court employees report high levels of stress due to inadequate support systems (Bhattacharya, 2018). These challenges suggest that cultural and systemic factors play a role in how court personnel manage emotional distress.

The Philippines, a country with a unique blend of Western and Eastern influences in its legal and cultural systems, faces its own set of challenges in addressing the needs of court stenographers. Philippine family courts deal with numerous child abuse cases due to a range of socioeconomic and cultural issues, including poverty and inadequate child protection mechanisms (UNICEF Philippines, 2022). Resource limitations, stigma surrounding mental health, and lengthy trial processes within the Philippine justice system

exacerbate the emotional strain on court stenographers, placing their well-being at risk (Garcia, 2021; Roche & Keith, 2024). While the judiciary has established clear pathways for collaboration to address the mental health needs of witnesses (Guinigundo, 2021), court stenographers often lack the same level of psychological support.

Research into court systems has identified several critical areas for improvement, such as the need for regular training to enhance skills, fostering positive attitudes toward judiciary stakeholders, advocating for policy changes, and leadership training among court personnel (Folami, 2012). These findings suggest that addressing the experiences of court stenographers in the context of child abuse trials is essential to understanding how the demands of their role impact their mental health and professional performance. Additionally, institutional structures significantly shape the emotional experiences of stenographers, either mitigating or compounding the emotional toll of their work. Effective institutional support, such as structured counseling and debriefing sessions, could better equip stenographers to manage the psychological challenges inherent in their profession.

Despite the sensitivity of their role, little research has been conducted on the lived experiences of court stenographers, particularly those who witness and document emotionally charged cases like child abuse. This gap is significant because stenographers often experience firsthand the emotional and psychological impacts of these trials, yet their perspectives remain underexplored. Understanding their experiences is crucial not only to improve their well-being but also to enhance the effectiveness of the justice system itself. Furthermore, these insights are essential for informing policies aimed at improving institutional support mechanisms, thereby fostering a healthier working environment for stenographers and other court personnel.

This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of court stenographers who have witnessed child abuse trials, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to uncover the personal, emotional, and psychological challenges they face in these high-stakes environments. By addressing this gap, the study aims to shed light on the need for better training, emotional support, and institutional changes to help stenographers cope with the trauma inherent in their profession. Insights from this study could inform policies and mental health support programs tailored to their needs, ultimately promoting resilience, enhancing job performance, and contributing to a more effective and humane judicial process.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003)**

The researcher will utilize the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as its theoretical foundation. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach that draws on specific theoretical foundations to explore and understand the lived experiences of individuals. In the context of court stenographers witnessing child abuse trials, this approach aims to uncover deeper meanings, personal interpretations, and unique perspectives that shape their lived experiences. Specifically, the researcher will explore the following:

#### **1. Phenomenology:**

IPA is deeply rooted in phenomenology, which focuses on examining individual's subjective experiences. In this study, phenomenology will be used to explore how court stenographers perceive and make sense of emotionally charged situations, such as child abuse trials. The emotional processes involved in these trials are a critical aspect of their experience, and understanding how stenographers emotionally engage with these events will be central to the research. By focusing on emotional experiences, the study will

reveal the emotional impact of these trials on court stenographers and how these emotions influence their personal interpretations of their roles.

## **2. Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, is integral to IPA and acknowledges the interpretative nature of understanding human experiences. The emotional responses of court stenographers to the cases they witness, combined with the institutional procedures they follow, form part of the broader context that influences how they interpret their experiences. Researchers will interpret these emotional responses in the context of the institutional structures of the court system, where formal procedures and societal expectations can often exacerbate or mitigate the emotional impact of the cases they transcribe. This dual interpretation process allows researchers to uncover the layers of meaning behind the stenographers' emotional reactions and their role within a larger institutional framework.

## **3. Idiography**

IPA is idiographic, emphasizing the uniqueness of individual experiences. In the case of court stenographers, each participant brings their own emotional responses and interpretive strategies to the courtroom setting. The emotional intensity of child abuse trials, shaped by both individual sensitivity and institutional constraints, influences how stenographers navigate these cases. The study will provide a detailed exploration of how emotional processes interact with the institutional pressures and demands placed on each stenographer, thereby enriching the understanding of the emotional and institutional dynamics at play.

## **4. Double Hermeneutic**

IPA involves a double hermeneutic, where both the participant and the researcher engage in interpretation. Court stenographers not only interpret their emotional responses to the cases they witness but also interpret the institutional structures within which they operate. Researchers, in turn, interpret these dual layers of meaning, considering both the personal emotions involved and the institutional framework that shapes their experiences. This interaction informs a richer understanding of the emotional complexities and institutional expectations stenographers navigate in their roles.

## **5. Constructivism**

IPA aligns with a constructivist perspective, which emphasizes that knowledge and meaning are actively constructed by individuals. In this study, court stenographers actively construct their emotional responses to the trials they witness, and their interpretation of these emotions is influenced by the institutional context of the court system. The research will explore how the interactions between the individual (the stenographer) and the institutional context (court system, policies, and procedures) shape the construction of meaning and emotional responses. This collaborative approach between researcher and participant will allow for an in-depth understanding of how stenographers co-create meaning within a highly structured and emotionally charged environment.

## **6. Contextualization**

IPA emphasizes the importance of context in shaping individuals' experiences. In this study, the broader context includes not only the legal framework in which court stenographers operate but also the emotional and psychological dimensions of child abuse trials. The emotional experiences of stenographers are shaped by the pressures of institutional structures, such as the need for precision in transcription, the formality of court proceedings, and the emotional burden of witnessing traumatic testimonies. By acknowledging the significance of these institutional factors, the study will provide a more holistic view of how stenographers' emotional processes interact with the broader judicial system.

By integrating these theoretical foundations, the study aims to provide a nuanced exploration of how court stenographers emotionally process their roles in witnessing child abuse trials, while also considering the institutional structure that influences their experiences. This approach will highlight the interplay between personal emotional responses and the institutional context, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges court stenographers face in their critical roles within the family court system.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study explores the lived experiences of court stenographers. Specifically, it sought to answer the question:

*What are the lived experiences of court stenographers witnessing child abuse trials?*

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study focuses on the lived experiences of court stenographers in the specific context of witnessing child abuse trials within family court settings. The research involves court stenographers actively engaged in recording and transcribing proceedings related to child abuse cases.

This study explores the emotional, psychological, and professional challenges faced by court stenographers who have witnessed and documented child abuse trials. Participants are limited to court stenographers working in family courts in the Philippines, specifically those with firsthand exposure to child abuse cases. The study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to deeply understand their experiences, with data collected through semi-structured interviews to allow for detailed and nuanced narratives. Themes examined include emotional resilience, ethical neutrality, professional growth, workload challenges, and the role of institutional support. The study focuses on experiences from the past five years to ensure relevance to contemporary judicial practices.

However, the study has several limitations. Geographically, it is confined to the Philippines, and findings may not fully apply to stenographers in other countries or judicial systems. The participant pool is small, given the qualitative nature of IPA, and may not capture the full diversity of stenographers' perspectives. The study relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by recall bias or personal interpretation. Additionally, while the research specifically focuses on child abuse trials, other emotionally charged cases, such as domestic violence or criminal cases, are excluded from the scope. The findings are also shaped by the institutional context of Philippine family courts, which may differ significantly from other judicial settings.

Another limitation is the potential influence of respondents' pre-existing trauma, which may not have been explicitly accounted for but could have shaped their emotional responses during the interviews. While the study primarily focuses on the professional experiences of stenographers, personal trauma histories may have contributed to their perceptions and coping mechanisms. Additionally, possible emotional or cognitive biases among respondents may have influenced how they recalled and shared their experiences, particularly when reflecting on distressing cases. Furthermore, the researcher's background as a psychologist in family court may introduce potential biases, despite efforts to maintain reflexivity and neutrality.

Lastly, while respondent validation was conducted to enhance accuracy, participants' feedback may have been limited by time constraints or their willingness to critique the findings. These limitations underscore the boundaries within which the study's insights should be interpreted and applied.



**Significance of the Study**

The following societal sectors, in particular, may benefit greatly from the study's findings and contribute in important ways:

**Court Stenographers.** Through this study, court stenographers may demonstrate awareness about the existing policies regarding child abuse and its effect on the mental health and mental health of the survivors of child abuse. The intervention program that this study will produce can also protect and prevent court personnel from suffering from mental health issues.

**Judicial and Legal System Administrators.** For court administrators and policymakers, understanding the experiences of stenographers can inform policies aimed at enhancing employee well-being and productivity. This can contribute to a more supportive working environment and potentially reduce turnover rates and absenteeism due to stress-related issues.

**Mental Health Professionals.** This study may help mental health professionals with intervention programs for the court personnel who may suffer from mental health issues through constant witnessing of violence against children cases in court. Furthermore, mental health professionals may also partake in the amendment of policies through the issues that will be covered in this study.

**Policy Makers and Government Agencies.** The findings can guide government bodies, such as the Supreme Court and related agencies, in implementing comprehensive mental health programs and policies to support court personnel.

**Future Researchers.** This study may create improved policies for handling violence against children cases in court. The result of this study may be tested for its effectiveness on the judicial processes for violence against children court cases.

**Definition of Terms**

This section provides clear definitions of key terms used throughout the study to ensure a common understanding of concepts and terminology.

**Child Abuse.** It refers to any type of mistreatment carried out by an adult that involves violence or poses a threat to the child, encompassing neglect. If the abuse takes place within the home, and the perpetrator is, for instance, the child's parent or caregiver, it constitutes a manifestation of domestic violence.

**Coping Mechanisms and Support Systems.** Focuses on the strategies that court stenographers use to manage the emotional and psychological stress associated with their work, as well as the institutional and social support systems available to help them cope with the challenges they face in the courtroom.

**Coping Strategies:** Methods or techniques that individuals use to manage stress and emotional distress. In this study, it refers to the approaches used by court stenographers to handle the emotional burden of child abuse trials.

**Court Stenographers.** It is an individual whose professional role involves capturing live testimony in legal proceedings using a stenographic machine or a stenomask. Through their training, certification, and often licensure, they transform the proceedings into an official certified transcript.

**Courtroom Responsibilities and Dynamics.** Describes the specific duties and interactions that court stenographers engage in during legal proceedings, particularly in the context of child abuse trials. This theme examines the courtroom environment and how stenographers navigate their role within it.

**Emotional and Psychological Impact.** Refers to the emotional and mental effects experienced by court stenographers as a result of their exposure to traumatic content during child abuse trials. This theme investigates the psychological toll and emotional strain of transcribing sensitive testimonies.

**Family Court.** A specialized court that deals with matters pertaining to family law, such as child custody, domestic violence, and child abuse cases. This study centers on the Philippine family court system.

**Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.** It is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on exploring and understanding individuals' lived experiences. IPA seeks to uncover the subjective meanings people attribute to their experiences and aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Researchers employing IPA typically analyze the detailed narratives and interpretations provided by participants to identify recurring themes and patterns, shedding light on the richness and complexity of human experiences.

**Lived Experiences.** In the context of this study, it pertains to the emotional, psychological, and professional experiences of court stenographers who participate in child abuse trials.

**Professional Identity and Development.** Refers to the way court stenographers perceive their role within the legal system and their professional growth over time. This theme explores how their responsibilities and experiences shape their sense of purpose and career advancement in the judicial environment.

**Secondary Trauma (Vicarious Trauma).** The emotional and psychological impact experienced by individuals who are indirectly exposed to the trauma of others through their professional duties. This term applies to court stenographers who listen to detailed accounts of child abuse.

## **II. METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, guided by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), to explore the lived experiences of court stenographers who witness child abuse trials. The phenomenological approach focuses on understanding the subjective and emotional impacts of their roles, while IPA's emphasis on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography provided a structured framework for in-depth exploration.

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share rich, detailed narratives, uncovering themes related to psychological, emotional, and occupational challenges. The hermeneutic component involved a dynamic, double hermeneutic process, where the researcher interpreted how participants made sense of their responsibilities and emotional responses. This approach offered insights into the deeper emotional and psychological dimensions of their roles. The idiographic focus ensured that each participant's unique experiences were thoroughly analyzed before identifying cross-case patterns and shared themes.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes across participants' accounts, providing a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by stenographers in the Philippine context. This iterative process of data collection and analysis aligned with Maxwell's (2012) assertion that qualitative research involves the concurrent refinement of data and theories. By employing IPA, the study highlighted the complexities of stenographers' professional and emotional challenges, contributing to a broader understanding of occupational health and secondary trauma within the legal system.

### **Tradition of Inquiry and Data Generation Method**

The research is grounded in a qualitative research tradition, specifically focusing on the lived experiences of court stenographers. Phenomenology seeks to explore and understand the essence of human experiences, emphasizing the subjective interpretations and meanings individuals attribute to their lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this study, court stenographers' encounters with child abuse trials

in family court were examined in-depth, aiming to uncover the nuances and perspectives unique to their professional role.

The selection of respondents was conducted through a screening process to ensure that participants met the inclusion criteria. The researcher sought permission from two judges from Branch 14 and Branch 162 to identify potential respondents who had direct experience transcribing child abuse cases. This process ensured that the participants had substantial exposure to the specific courtroom environment and were able to provide in-depth insights into the emotional, psychological, and professional challenges of their role.

The data generation methods involved conducting in-depth interviews with court stenographers, allowing them to share their firsthand experiences, emotions, challenges, and coping mechanisms when witnessing child abuse trials. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to express their thoughts and reflections freely.

Additionally, the study utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative method that emphasizes exploring individuals' personal experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences. Through a detailed examination and interpretation of participants' narratives, the study aimed to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the challenges and implications faced by court stenographers in the specific context of child abuse trials in family court.

To mitigate potential biases in the interpretation of findings—particularly because the researcher works within the court system—peer debriefing was conducted to enhance the credibility of the study. The researcher consulted other qualitative researchers and experts in phenomenological and psychological research to assess the face validity and content validity of the study. These consultations involved discussing emerging themes, evaluating the coherence of interpretations, and refining the analysis to ensure that personal biases did not unduly influence the results. Insights gathered from these discussions helped refine the thematic analysis and provided additional perspectives that enriched the study's conclusions.

To further ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher employed a respondent validation process. Participants were provided with the study results to review and validate, ensuring that the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences. This process allowed for corrections, clarifications, and additional insights from the respondents, strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's outcomes.

### **Reflexivity**

Before beginning this research, the researcher engaged in a period of reflection to examine personal experiences in the courtroom and potential biases that may have developed over time. As a clerk working closely with court stenographers, the researcher had witnessed numerous child abuse cases and was mindful of any preconceived notions regarding how such cases might affect stenographers. Recognizing these biases allowed for a more neutral approach to the research, ensuring that the study remained objective and centered on the experiences of the participants rather than the researcher's own interpretations.

Professionalism has always been a key aspect of the researcher's role. In the courtroom, responsibilities often revolve around managing logistics while stenographers focus on transcribing. This experience reinforced the importance of separating personal emotions from professional duties, a principle that was applied throughout the research process. While it is inevitable to be affected by the sensitivity of child abuse cases, the researcher remained focused on creating an environment where stenographers could freely express their experiences without undue influence from the researcher's own emotional responses.



A significant effort was made to ensure that each participant fully understood the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their identities, and how their input would be used. Establishing this trust allowed for a safe and open dialogue where stenographers could share their experiences without fear of judgment. The semi-structured interview format further contributed to this, as it provided a balance between structured questioning and open-ended discussions. This method ensured that participants could express their thoughts in depth without being overly guided by predetermined assumptions.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher employed a triangulation approach. Data was cross-checked across multiple sources, including different stenographers' narratives, courtroom observations, and relevant literature. This method ensured a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the topic, minimizing the influence of individual perspectives or isolated cases. Additionally, peer debriefing was conducted by consulting with other researchers in psychology and legal studies to assess the face and content validity of the findings. Given the researcher's role within the courtroom, this step was crucial in mitigating the risk of bias in interpreting the data.

The research process challenged initial assumptions about how stenographers navigate emotionally charged cases. While some displayed remarkable resilience, others struggled with emotional exhaustion, reinforcing the need for institutional support structures, such as debriefing sessions and access to mental health resources. The insights gained from this study have deepened the researcher's understanding of trauma-informed practices in legal settings. As the researcher progresses in clinical psychology training, there is a renewed commitment to advocating for mental health policies that address the emotional well-being of court stenographers and other legal professionals exposed to secondary trauma.

### **Peer Validation**

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the researcher conducted a peer validation process seeking feedback from key professionals in the court system, including a Branch Clerk of Court, Court Interpreter, and Judge. The feedback from these professionals offered insightful perspectives on the emotional and psychological challenges faced by court stenographers, with a strong emphasis on the importance of supporting their mental well-being.

All three reviewers agreed that while the research provides valuable insights into the emotional and psychological toll on stenographers, it could benefit from more specific recommendations for institutional support, a deeper exploration of coping strategies, and further differentiation based on case types and court settings. They all agreed on the importance of enhancing mental health support and creating a more collaborative and supportive work environment for court personnel. This peer validation process has strengthened the study by integrating these key professional perspectives, which will help to improve the overall understanding of the emotional challenges faced by court stenographers and inform potential strategies for better supporting their well-being.

### **Description of the Respondents**

The researcher selected eight (8) court stenographers as respondents, each with a minimum of one (1) year of service in local family courts and direct experience in at least five (5) child abuse trials. This criterion ensures that respondents possess sufficient exposure to the complexities and emotional demands of such cases, allowing them to provide meaningful insights into the psychological, emotional, and professional challenges associated with their roles. By requiring a threshold of five child abuse cases, the study guarantees that the respondents' perspectives are rooted in substantial experience, facilitating a more

comprehensive exploration of the recurring themes, coping mechanisms, and ethical dilemmas encountered in their profession. This approach enhances the reliability and depth of the study's findings, aligning them with its focus on the lived experiences of court stenographers in high-stress environments. The full description of the respondents are as follows:

**Table 1 Description of the Respondents**

Code Name	Age	Length of Service	Undergraduate Degree
Respondent 1	25	5 years and 7 months	Bachelor of Science in Office Administration
Respondent 2	25	5 years and 7 months	Bachelor of Science in Office Administration Major in Legal Transcription
Respondent 3	26	5 years	Bachelor of Science in Office Administration
Respondent 4	46	21 years	Bachelor of Banking and Finance
Respondent 5	23	1 Year	Bachelor of Science in Office Administration
Respondent 6	55	19 years	Bachelor of Arts in Communication
Respondent 7	30	28 years	Associate in Secretarial Science
Respondent 8	31	6 years	Bachelor of Science in Office Administration

## Instrumentation

The semi-structured interview utilized in this study was developed to explore the lived experiences of court stenographers who have witnessed child abuse trials. This instrument aims to elicit in-depth narratives from participants, focusing on both their emotional responses and professional experiences within the context of their role.

The interview instrument was developed using a combination of literature on court stenographers' roles and experiences, as well as insights from psychological theories related to emotional processing in high-stress environments. The instrument underwent a rigorous development process, which included consultations with subject-matter experts in psychology, specifically those with expertise in trauma, emotional well-being, and the justice system. These experts reviewed the instrument for content validity and ensured that the questions were relevant and comprehensive, aligning with the study's focus on the emotional and psychological aspects of stenographers' experiences.

## Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, careful attention was given to ethical principles to ensure the rights, dignity, and well-being of the participants were protected throughout the research process. Given the sensitive nature of the study, involving court stenographers who are exposed to emotionally charged cases, these ethical considerations were meticulously designed and implemented to uphold the highest standards of ethical research.

**Informed Consent .** Participants were provided with a comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, objectives, methodology, and potential implications before agreeing to participate. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they voluntarily agreed to share their experiences without coercion. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity.** Personal identifiers were excluded from transcripts and any published findings to protect participants' identities. Data was coded using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity throughout the research process.

**Voluntary Participation.** Participants were informed that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary. No incentives or compensations were offered to ensure participation was based solely on interest and willingness.

**Right to Withdraw.** Participants were explicitly informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without needing to provide an explanation. Data provided by withdrawn participants was excluded from the analysis if requested.

**Psychological Safety.** Considering the emotionally sensitive nature of the study, participants were assured that they would not be pressured to disclose information they found distressing. The researcher remained attentive to signs of discomfort and was prepared to provide referrals for counseling or mental health support if needed. Notably, some respondents disclosed past trauma related to child abuse during the interviews. In response, the researcher ensured their well-being by referring them to the Supreme Court Mental Health Hotline, a free service available to court personnel, to provide immediate psychological support and counseling.

**Ethical Approval.** The study was reviewed and approved by an institutional ethics review board to ensure compliance with ethical standards. Ethical guidelines set by relevant national and international bodies for conducting research in judicial and psychological settings were strictly adhered to.

**Respect for Dignity.** Respect for dignity ensures participants are treated with fairness and autonomy, protecting their rights, privacy, and emotional well-being. In this study, informed consent, confidentiality, and a supportive interview environment upheld participants' inherent worth, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic.

**Debriefing.** Debriefing provided participants with a clear understanding of the study's purpose and allowed them to address any emotional discomfort. Information about mental health resources was shared to ensure support if needed, fostering transparency and care

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Vicarious Trauma**

Court stenographers often experience vicarious trauma due to their indirect yet immersive exposure to harrowing stories of abuse and betrayal in the courtroom. This repeated exposure to emotionally charged testimonies can lead to profound psychological effects, including heightened vigilance, trust issues, and emotional exhaustion. These lasting impacts underscore the need for mental health resources and coping strategies tailored to those in high-stress legal roles (Maroney, 2011; Snider et al., 2022).

#### ***Witnessing Trauma in the Courtroom***

The courtroom becomes a space where court stenographers directly witness the trauma of victims and families. These professionals, tasked with recording verbatim accounts of legal proceedings, often find themselves emotionally entangled in the harrowing stories presented (Buecken et al., 2024).

For Respondent 2, the courtroom serves as a reminder of her own painful experiences. She describes how listening to a victim's testimony caused her to relive past trauma:

*"Bumalik 'yong nangyari sa akin nong eight years old ako... parang na-relive ko ulit."* Such moments highlight the deeply personal connections court stenographers may form with the narratives they transcribe (Johnson et al., 2023).

The pain of victims' testimonies often lingers for Respondent 3, who shares:

*"Naririnig ko pa rin minsan yong boses ng bata saisip ko habang sinasabi n'ya 'yung mga nangyari."* These haunting memories illustrate the long-term emotional toll that comes with their roles (Green & Nguyen, 2021).

These experiences collectively reveal the challenging reality for court stenographers. As firsthand witnesses to traumatic testimonies, particularly those involving child abuse, they often carry the emotional weight of these cases beyond the courtroom. This occupational hazard calls for further exploration of emotional resilience and mental health support systems tailored to their unique professional environment (Buecken et al., 2024; Rivera & Clark, 2022).

### **Trust Issues**

This sub-theme delves into how repeated exposure to cases of betrayal and abuse in the courtroom erodes the trust of courtroom erodes the trust of court stenographers, deeply influencing their personal relationships and interactions. Respondent 1 reflects on how these experiences make her wary, even with family: *"Ang hirap na magtiwala...lalo na kapag iniisip mo na kahit mga kamag-anak, nagagawa 'yon sa bata."*

Similarly, Respondent 7 mentions that distancing herself from others feels like the safest way to protect her emotional well-being: *"Mas pinili kong maglayo ng sarili sa ibangtao...parang mas safe naga nito kaysa mag tiwala ulit."*

These reflections align with research indicating that professionals exposed to vicarious trauma, like stenographers, often develop trust issues and hypervigilance as a psychological response to the betrayal and harm they witness (Vrklevski & Franklin, 2008; Salston & Figley, 2003; Ndongo-Keller, 2015).

### **Emotional Suppression**

This theme delves into how court stenographers manage their emotions during trials by suppressing visible reactions to maintain professionalism, while residual emotional impacts often resurface during transcription or in their personal lives. During court hearings, stenographers are expected to display neutrality.

For Respondent 2, maintaining composure in the presence of judges and lawyers is a constant struggle: *"Kailangan mong itago lahat...kahit sobrang bigat na, hindi pwedeng ipakita sa harap nila."*

Furthermore, Respondent 7 highlights the internal effort required to stay neutral even when emotionally moved by testimonies: *"Kailangan mong manatiling kalmado kahitumiiyak na 'yong tao sa harap mo...trabaho ang inuuna."*

### **Lingering Emotional Impact**

This sub-theme captures how the emotional weight of the cases stenographers handle lingers long after the hearings, often resurfacing during transcription tasks or in their personal lives, significantly affecting their mental well-being. Respondent 4 explains how vivid memories of traumatic cases stay with her, sometimes for days: *"Yong mga narinig mo, parang bumabalik lagi...kahit gusto mong kalimutan, ang hirap."*

Respondent 5 adds that the emotional impact of certain cases makes her reflect deeply, especially during quiet moments: *"Pag mag-isa ako, naiisip ko 'yong mga bata at 'yong mga sinabi nila...parang andyan pa rin."*

These experiences are consistent with findings that highlight the persistent nature of vicarious trauma among professionals exposed to distressing content. Research demonstrates that unresolved emotional impacts can lead to intrusive thoughts, emotional exhaustion, and challenges in disengaging from work (Middleton et al., 2017; Kim & Tyler, 2023; Schroder, 2020).

### Emotional Resilience

The use of structured coping mechanisms such as mindfulness practices, peer support groups, and workplace programs have been shown to mitigate the psychological impact of vicarious trauma, promoting emotional resilience (Goodman, 2017; Buchanan & Keats, 2011).

#### Empathy for Victims

Witnessing victims' testimonies fosters profound empathy among court stenographers. Respondent 3 describes how listening to victims' stories has increased his sensitivity toward their struggles: *"Pag naririnig mo yung kwento nila, parang mas naiintindihan mo kung gaano kahirap yung sitwasyon nila. Mas nagiging sensitive ka sa feelings nila."*

Respondent 6 explains how working in family court has shown her the resilience of victims despite their hardships: *"Sa dami ng kasong na kikita ko, lalo na sa family court, parang mas naiintindihan ko yung tibay ng mga tao kahit sobrang hirap ng pinagdadaanan nila."*

Stenographers, like other professionals in proximity to trauma, often experience vicarious resilience, which fosters a deeper empathy and understanding of victims' struggles and strengths (Killian et al., 2017). Regular exposure to victims' narratives and coping mechanisms enhances emotional sensitivity and professional empathy (Michalchuk & Martin, 2019). Professionals working with survivors often balance compassion fatigue and resilience, reflecting the complexity of maintaining empathy under challenging circumstances (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2015).

#### Building Emotional Fortitude

Exposure to emotionally intense cases compels stenographers to build emotional fortitude to continue performing their roles effectively. Respondent 8 reflects on how her dual roles as a stenographer and law student have demanded both emotional and intellectual strength: *"Kailangan mong tibayan ang loob mo kasi hindi biro yung ginagawa mo, lalo na kapag naiintindihan mo yung bigat ng kaso bilang law student."* Respondent 4 shares how her years of experience have made her emotionally stronger, even though the nature of the work remains challenging: *"Sa tagal ko sa trabaho, parang mas natutunan kong tibayan ang loob. Hindi ibig sabihin na hindi ka naapektuhan, pero mas kaya mo nang dalhin."*

The ability to compartmentalize and focus on task-oriented goals strengthens over time, helping professionals manage emotional burdens (Michalchuk & Martin, 2019). Developing emotional resilience is critical for individuals consistently exposed to traumatic situations. Research highlights the importance of this skill for sustaining mental well-being (Engstrom et al., 2010).

### Coping Mechanisms

This theme explores the strategies court stenographers employ to manage the emotional toll of their work, including personal hobbies, family and social support, faith, and workplace initiatives that foster resilience and mental well-being. Moreover, adaptive coping strategies like fostering gratitude and positive



reframing of experiences are associated with reduced stress and enhanced mental health outcomes in trauma-exposed professions (Vieselmeyer et al., 2017; Pietrzak et al., 2013).

### ***Distraction Through Hobbies***

This sub-theme highlights how court stenographers use personal hobbies as a way to escape the emotional stress of their work. Engaging in activities like watching movies, reading, cooking, gaming, and sports provides a mental break and emotional relief. For Respondent 3, sports and gaming are effective outlets to shift focus and unwind: *“Kapag naglalaro ng basketball o games, nakakalimutan ko muna ‘yong trabaho...parang nakakapag pahinga ang isip.”*

Similarly, Respondent 5 turns to K-dramas, finding joy in the lighthearted content that offers emotional release after taxing days: *Nanonood ako ng K-drama para makatawa...malaking tulong sa akin ang comedy para marerelease ‘yong bigat ng trabaho.”*

These hobbies act as mental escapes, offering a brief but vital respite from the emotional demands of stenographers’ work. Research supports such coping strategies, highlighting that engaging in leisure activities is linked to reduced stress and improved emotional well-being among individuals in high-stress professions (Pressman et al., 2009; Iwasaki, 2003; Lehto & Lehto, 2022).

### ***Physical and Emotional Release***

This sub-theme examines how court stenographers engage in physical activities to cope with the emotional burden of their work. Activities like running, sports, gym workouts, and even cooking serve as effective outlets for releasing built-up stress and emotions. Respondent 2 shares how running and gym workouts provided her with mental clarity and stress relief before undergoing surgery: *“Dati bago ako maoperahan, tumatakbo at naggygym ako...malaking tulong para mawala ‘yung bigat ng trabaho.”*

Furthermore, Respondent 7 describes how cooking, beyond being a hobby, functions as a therapeutic activity that helps her relax and find purpose: *“Nag luluto ako para madistract at marelease ‘yong bigat...parang therapy narin para sa akin.”*

These activities prove stenographers with structured ways to decompress and regain emotional balance after handling emotionally challenging cases. Research underscores the importance of physical activity in managing stress, highlighting its role in reducing cortisol levels, enhancing mood, and improving overall mental well-being (Salmon, 2001; Gerber et al., 2014; Rebar et al., 2015).

### ***Family as Emotional Anchors***

This sub-theme highlights how court stenographers rely on their families for emotional support, finding comfort and grounding in the presence of loved ones as they navigate the demands of their emotionally taxing profession. Respondent 5 shares how confiding in her mother helps lighten the emotional load: *“Kapag sobrang bigat ng araw, kinakausap ko ‘yong nanay ko...parang gumagaan ‘yong pakiramdam ko.”*

Moreover, Respondent 4 emphasizes how being with her children brings joy and resets her emotionally: *“‘Pag nakikita ko ‘yong mga anak ko, parang nalilimutan ko ‘yong mga nangyari sa trabaho.”*

These reflections align with research demonstrating that family support serves as a critical buffer against occupational stress, particularly in high-stress professions. Social bonds foster emotional resilience and provide a safe environment for emotional release (Westman, 2001; Amendola et al., 2021; Vujanovic & Tran, 2021).

### ***Strength Through Prayer***

This focuses on how court stenographers draw strength, clarity, and emotional resilience from prayer. For many, prayer serves as a reliable source of comfort during moments of emotional exhaustion and stress.

Respondent 7 finds a daily connection through prayer, which she describes as her ultimate source of strength and peace: *“Araw-araw akong nagdadasal, kahit sa trabaho. Sabi ko lagi kay Lord, bigyan N’yo po ako ng lakas para kayanin ko lahat ng maririnig ko sa korte.”*

For Respondent 3, prayer is a way to process his emotions and maintain composure amidst the heavy workload: *“Pag-uwi ko, nagdadasal ako para humingi ng gabay. Parang kahit gaano kabigat ‘yong araw, ang dasal ang nagbibigay ng katahimikan sa isip ko.”*

Research shows that prayer and spiritual practices are linked to enhanced resilience and lower stress levels, particularly among individuals exposed to high-stress environments. These practices foster emotional balance and provide a reliable coping mechanism (Brown, 2024; Abaniel, 2024; Neal, 2024).

### **Ethical Neutrality**

This theme explores the responsibility of court stenographers to maintain ethical neutrality and professionalism while transcribing emotionally charged cases. It highlights their commitment to objectivity despite the emotional challenges of their work.

#### ***Maintaining Objectivity in Documentation***

This sub-theme focuses on the stenographers’ responsibility to ensure transcripts remain accurate and unbiased, even when handling emotionally charged and distressing cases. It highlights their commitment to professionalism and ethical standards despite personal challenges.

Respondent 8, drawing on her dual perspective as a stenographer and law student, emphasizes the legal importance of unbiased transcription: *“Dapat ‘yong transcript, eksakto at neutral. Hindi pwedeng ipakita ‘yong emosyon o personal na opinion mo sa trabaho.”*

For Respondent 2, ensuring an unbiased transcript means putting aside her emotions and focusing solely on her role: *“Kahit umiiyak na ‘yong tao, trabaho ko ang mag record ng lahat ng sinasabi nila na walang dagdag o bawas.”*

Research underscores the significance of unbiased transcription, highlighting its role in maintaining judicial transparency and fairness. Transcription accuracy is essential for preserving the integrity of court proceedings and ensuring that justice is administered without prejudice (LoPucki, 2008; Coulthard, 2013; Fishman, 2006).

#### ***Psychological Burden of Child Abuse Transcriptions***

This explores the emotional and professional challenges court stenographers face when transcribing high-stakes cases. The emotionally charged nature of cases like child abuse or family betrayal requires stenographers to maintain focus and neutrality despite the intense emotional atmosphere. Respondent 2 shares how cases involving child abuse evoke personal memories while demanding strict professionalism: *“Minsan ‘yong mga kaso tungkol sa bata, bumabalik sa akin ‘yong sarili kong trauma. Pero kailangan kong pilitin na mag focus sa trabaho.”*

Moreover, Respondent 3 emphasizes the difficulty on hearing emotionally charged testimonies while ensuring every word is accurately transcribed: *“Ang hirap pakinggan minsan ‘yong mga sinasabi nila, lalo na kung tungkol sa pang-aabuso. Pero kailangan mong gawin ang trabaho nang tama.”*

Research highlights the psychological toll of high-stakes environments on professionals. Maintaining emotional resilience and focus under such circumstances is essential to ensuring accuracy and fairness in high-pressure settings (Musial & Nir, 2020; Neal et al., 2019; Rosenfeld et al., 2019).

## Institutional Challenges

This theme explores the challenges court stenographers face in managing high caseloads, limited staffing, and the mental and emotional toll of their demanding profession. These difficulties highlight the pressing need for institutional reforms. Heavy workloads and institutional barriers often amplify workplace stress, reducing efficiency and morale. Studies reveal that excessive workloads and inefficient resource allocation significantly increase stress and reduce job satisfaction among judicial professionals. Effective workload management systems are critical to minimizing burnout (DeFrank & Ivancevich & 1998; Cartwright & Cooper, 1997).

### *Heavy Caseloads and Staffing Shortages*

Heavy caseloads and staffing shortages place immense pressure on stenographers, often leaving them with little time to recover between tasks. For Respondent 2, the lack of staffing means taking on multiple roles, leading to physical and emotional exhaustion: *“Kulang na kulang kami. Halos lahat ng trabaho, kailangang gawin kahit sobrang dami na. Nakakapagod sobra.”*

Respondent 6 emphasizes the need for more staff to handle the increasing number of cases, especially in family court: *“Kung may dagdag lang natao, ang laking ginhawa sana. Ang dami ng kaso, tapos konti lang kami.”*

Furthermore, Respondent 5 reflects on how the fast pace of her workload leaves little time for breaks or emotional recovery: *“Parang walang oras para huminga. Ang dami ng kaso, tapos tuloy-tuloy lang kahit pagod ka na.”*

Research supports these reflections, identifying the critical need for systemic reforms to address workload imbalances and staff shortages. These issues significantly contribute to workplace stress and the decline of job satisfaction in professions with high stakes and responsibilities (Haleem et al., 2022; Sapf et al., 2012).

### *Need for Mental Health Resources*

This sub-theme highlights the importance of accessible mental resources for court stenographers. It underscores their need for psychological support to cope with the emotional toll of transcribing traumatic cases and managing the stresses of their work environment. The emotional demands of their work often leave stenographers in need of mental health support.

The availability of counseling services is a pressing need for stenographers dealing with the emotional strain of their work. Respondent 1 emphasizes how the availability of counseling services could help them process the emotional weight of their job: *“Sana may counselling na available sa amin kasi minsan parang ang bigat-bigat na ng trabaho. Walang lugar para i-process ‘yong nararamdaman namin.”*

Respondent 5 also points out how regular mental health check-ins could prevent emotional exhaustion: *“Sana may regular na check-up sa mental health naming. Nakakapagod kasi ‘yong sunod-sunod na mabibigat na kaso.”*

Research has shown that occupations involving repeated exposure to trauma and high-stakes decision-making lead to significant mental health challenges (He et al., 2018). Counseling and structured debriefing sessions are critical to maintaining emotional resilience (Spencer & Munch, 2003). Institutional initiatives such as counseling access, resilience training, and regular mental health check-ins have proven effective in mitigating burnout among high-stress professionals (Moffitt et al., 1998; Godfrey et al., 2019).

Regular debriefing sessions can provide stenographers with much-needed opportunities to process the challenges of their work. Respondent 8 suggests that incorporating debriefing into workplace routines

could make it easier for staff to handle high-stakes cases: *“Kung magiging regular part ng trabaho ‘yong debriefing, mas magiging maayos siguro ang mental health namin.”*

Respondent 2 emphasizes how debriefing after emotionally charged cases could restore clarity and balance: *“Pagkatapos ng mabigat na kaso, parang ang hirap bumalik agad sa normal. Kung may debriefing, siguro mas madali ‘yong transition.”*

Structured debriefing sessions are essential for mitigating workplace stress and supporting mental health. Research highlights their role in reducing post-traumatic stress symptoms and fostering resilience in high-stakes professions (Van Emmerik et al., 2002). Furthermore, facilitated discussions post-crisis enable emotional regulation, shared understanding, and stress reduction, supporting overall workplace resilience (Haglund et al., 2017).

### **Personal Transformation**

This theme explores the profound personal growth and transformation court stenographers experience as a result of their exposure to emotionally charged cases and the demands of their profession. It highlights shifts in worldview, strengthened empathy, and increased resilience.

#### ***Heightened Awareness of Human Vulnerability***

Hearing sensitive and painful cases in court often depends stenographers’ awareness of human vulnerability. Respondent 3 explains how the stories of abuse and betrayal he encounters in court reveal the fragility of trust and relationships: *“Ang daming kwento na parang ang hirap intindihin. Parang mas nagging sensitive ako sa mga tao kasi hindi mo alam kung anong pinagdadaanan nila.”*

Furthermore, Respondent 7 reflects on how cases involving children deepen her instincts to protect the vulnerable: *“’Pag nakikita mo ‘yong mga bata na umiyyak dahil sa abuse, parang gusto mong protektahan lahat ng mahal mo sa buhay. Ang sakit isipin na may ganong tao sa mundo.”*

Exposure to emotionally charged environments, such as courtrooms enhances professionals’ understanding of human vulnerability and fosters greater empathy (Figley, 2002). Repeated exposure to trauma narratives leads to increased sensitivity and awareness of human suffering, affecting personal perspectives and relationships (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

#### ***Broader Understanding of Justice***

The cases stenographers handle shape their understanding of justice and its implications. Respondent 8, as both a stenographer and law student, reflects on how her dual roles provide her with a holistic view of justice: *“Bilang stenographer at law student, mas naiintindihan ko kung gaano kahalaga ang bawat salita sa kaso. Parang mas nagging malawak ‘yong pananaw ko sa hustisya.”*

For Respondent 2, witnessing both triumphs and failures in court has shown her the challenges of delivering true justice: *“May mga kasona parang hindi fair ‘yong desisyon, pero kailangan mong tanggapin kasi ‘yon ang basehan ng ebidensya. Ang hirap minsan intindihin.”*

Professionals engaged in the judiciary system often develop a broader moral perspective, shaped by their exposure to diverse cases and human conflicts (Ballano, 2001). The role of stenographers in recording unbiased and complete accounts is critical for the integrity of judicial processes (Nardulli, 1979).

### **Workplace Support**

This theme explores the role of formal and informal workplace support systems in fostering camaraderie and resilience among court stenographers. Support judges, team-building activities, and workplace initiatives play a critical role in creating a cohesive and nurturing work environment. These support

systems not only alleviate stress but also strengthen the collective morale and emotional resilience of the team.

### **Supportive Judges**

This highlights the role of judges in fostering a positive work environment for court stenographers by providing encouragement, organizing activities, and prioritizing their well-being. Such leadership significantly alleviates the emotional and professional burdens stenographers face. Respondent 2 emphasizes how a compassionate judge positively influences team morale, even during difficult cases: *“Yong pagiging maunawain ng judge naming, malaking bagay. Kahit mabigat ‘yong kaso, parang nakakagaan kasi alam mong hindi lang trabaho ‘yong iniisip n’ya.”*

Respondent 7 further reflects on how their judge’s supportive nature creates a safe and emotionally secure workplace: *“Sobrang supportive ng judge naming. Hindi lang sa trabaho, pati sa emotional na aspeto, ramdam mo na gusto n’yang maayos ang lahat.”*

Research corroborates that supportive Leadership significantly reduces workplace stress and enhances team performance and morale. Leaders who actively engage in employee well-being initiatives create a more cohesive and resilient workforce (Leka et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2024).

### **Team-Building Activities**

This explores how organized team-building activities foster camaraderie, provide emotional relief, and strengthen the bonds among court stenographers, helping them navigate the challenges of their emotionally demanding roles. Respondent 8 shares how team-building activities provide her a chance to momentarily set aside both her professional and academic responsibilities, reconnecting with colleagues: *“Nakakatuwa ‘yong team-building kasi kahit saglit lang, nakakalimutan mo ‘yong trabaho at school. Parang nagkakaroon ng bagong energy.”*

Respondent 6 emphasizes the value of team-building in building relationships and creating a lighter atmosphere in the workplace: *“Sobrang saya ng team-building namin kasi nagiging mas close kami ng mga kasamahan. Pagbalik sa trabaho, mas magaan ‘yong pakiramdam.”*

These reflections align with research that indicates team-building activities improve interpersonal relationships, reduce workplace stress, and enhance overall team performance in high-stress environments (Al-Assi et al., 2024; MohammadpanahArdakan, 2024; Warner & Bright, 2024).

### **Gender Differences**

The experiences of male and female court stenographers in child abuse trials reveal both shared challenges and gender-specific differences in emotional processing, coping mechanisms, and professional adaptation. While both genders are exposed to distressing testimonies, their emotional responses and coping strategies differ due to societal expectations, personal resilience, and available support systems.

#### **Female Stenographers’ Emotional Expression**

Female stenographers tend to express their emotions more openly, often acknowledging the long-term emotional impact of transcribing child abuse cases. Many describe developing social withdrawal or trust issues as a defense mechanism against the distressing nature of their work. One respondent shared, *“Mas pinili kong maglayo ng sarili sa ibang tao...parang mas safe nga ito kaysa magtiwala ulit.”* (Respondent 7). This highlights how the emotional toll of their role extends beyond the courtroom, influencing their personal lives and relationships. Despite these struggles, female stenographers actively seek emotional outlets through social connections, family, or faith-based practices. They are also more likely to advocate



for institutional interventions, such as mental health programs and structured debriefing sessions, recognizing the necessity of emotional processing within a supportive environment.

### ***Male Stenographers' Emotional Detachment***

Male stenographers, on the other hand, often emphasize emotional detachment as a coping mechanism, consciously maintaining professional neutrality. One respondent noted, “*Ang ginaawa ko, iniisip ko na trabaho lang ito, hindi ako parte ng kwento. Para hindi ako masyadong maapektuhan.*” (Respondent 3). This illustrates how male stenographers manage emotional strain by compartmentalizing their work, treating their role as purely technical rather than emotionally involved. Unlike their female counterparts, they are less likely to verbalize distress or seek external emotional support, relying instead on independent coping strategies such as engaging in hobbies, exercising, or maintaining strict work-life boundaries.

### **Respondent Validation**

The researcher conducted a respondent validation process to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings. After completing the analysis, the researcher shared the results with the respondents, providing them with an opportunity to review and reflect on the themes and conclusions drawn from the data. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on their perception of the findings, the validity of the methods used, and the applicability of the results to their professional experiences. Through this process, the researcher gathered insights into the consistency of the findings with the respondents' lived experiences, assessed potential gaps or areas for improvement, and incorporated their suggestions to enhance the study's relevance and practical implications. This iterative validation ensured that the results authentically represented the experiences and perspectives of court stenographers.

### ***Understanding the Perception of Findings***

Respondents generally agreed with the results of the study, finding them comprehensive and reflective of the emotional and psychological challenges faced by stenographers. Many acknowledged the importance of themes like emotional strain, coping mechanisms, and institutional support. They found the conclusions aligned with their own experiences, particularly the necessity for mental health resources and structured emotional support. Some respondents noted the results provided valuable insights into often-overlooked aspects of stenography, including emotional detachment and resilience.

### ***Assessing the Validity of Results***

The respondents found the research methodology, particularly the use of interviews, appropriate for exploring the nuanced experiences of stenographers. However, they suggested that factors such as personal willingness to share sensitive experiences and variability in coping mechanisms could influence the accuracy of results. They recommend exploring additional variables, such as workplace culture and the long-term effects of trauma, to provide a broader and more nuanced understanding.

### ***Exploring Applicability and Impact***

The findings were deemed highly applicable to real-world situations, particularly for professionals exposed to trauma, such as social workers and first responders. Respondents highlighted the practical implications, such as the need for regular debriefing sessions, access to mental health services, and ergonomic improvements to courtrooms. They emphasized that these measures would enhance both the well-being and productivity of stenographers while contributing to the efficiency of the legal system.

### **Validating Methodology and Triangulation**

The qualitative approach was considered effective for capturing personal experiences, but respondents

noted that incorporating additional perspectives from judges, attorneys, and court staff could enrich the findings. They suggested that including voices from other stakeholders in the legal system would provide a more holistic understanding of how institutional dynamics impact stenographers' emotional wellbeing.

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