

# Extrajudicial Killings and its Effects on the Socialization and Self-acceptance of Victim's Families



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## Abstract

This research examined the extrajudicial killings (EJK) and its effects on the socialization and self-acceptance of the victim's families. Using quantitative research with structured questionnaires and interviews as the main data gathering strategies, the primary data were collected from 60 purposively chosen residents of the three (3) selected barangays with high recorded cases of EJK. The findings showed no significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their socialization. However, there was a significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their self-acceptance. There is a significant relationship between socialization and the self-acceptance of the respondents; thus the null hypothesis was rejected. The results may infer that acceptance of the happenings within the society greatly influences interrelation, treatment of other people and the socialization with each other. This study may serve as a vantage point for the local government units (LGU) in their response and treatment of the family members' victims of EJK. This could be inputs to establishing a program to address the psychological needs of the people with such depressing experiences.

Keywords:

extra-judicial killings, socialization, self-acceptance, human rights, drugs

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## 1. Introduction

When President Duterte assumed to power on 2016, he immediately started the so called “*war on drugs*” envisioned to halt the long time problems of the Philippines on illegal drugs. He tasked primarily the PNP to lead this war with their so called “*Oplan Tokhang*” in going after illegal drugs activities and personnel. Unfortunately the *Oplan Tokhang* is allegedly used or abused by policemen for their personal interests or some sort of vendetta against their enemies which resulted to the problems of EJK (Franco, 2016; Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). In the Philippines, the term “extrajudicial killings” does not have a clear definition. Baldwin (2016) in *Secretary v. Manalo*, the Supreme Court, citing the rule on the writ of Amparo, opined that extralegal killings are “*killings committed without due process of law, i.e., without legal safeguards or judicial proceedings*” (Arceo, 2016).

In 2016, President Duterte released the so called “Narco-Lists” naming active and retired politicians and police officials who were allegedly involved in the drug trade. One of the listed personalities was the ex-mayor of the San Pablo City, Laguna whose family members allegedly involved in illegal drugs either as users or dealers (Escuta, 2017). The unending battle seemingly started resulting to the loss of lives of the suspected drug users, dealers and drug lords without any due process of law. The ironic reality about the story was that most of the killed were the poor, the ordinary people, and the powerless leaving their families with this remarks “*Nanlaban kasi eh, kaya napatay!*” (Reyes, 2016; Barera, 2019; Fernquest, 2018; Amnesty International, 2019). The turn of events can disturb human behaviour and might affect the expression of feelings and thoughts, socialization and self-acceptance that eventually could lead to fear, discomfort and anxiety. Some issues in the community like EJK might result to disorganized and chaotic society (Houle & Kenny, 2018).

Taking the premise of democracy and psychosocial development, this study dwells into the effects on the immediate family members who experienced the tragic loss of loved ones lives due to EJK. In a report by Boghani (2019), the left behind families suffered deep trauma resulting to children’s withdrawal from school and others work menial jobs. Similarly, the reports of Human Rights Watch (2020) emphasized on the psychological

distress suffered by family members after witnessing the killing of a loved one. Children had to leave the community, hide and relocate due to fear while some children experienced bullying due to stigma. In this context, the current study aims to assess the effects on the socialization and self-acceptance of the left-behind families of EJK victims in a specific community. The results of the study could be fundamental in understanding the extent of effects of these variables to other people and the society at large.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1. EJK and Oplan Tokhang***

The Philippine constitution clearly states “*No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the law.*” However, the prevalent killings reported almost every day through all forms of media give an otherwise different presumption on people going above the law. Accordingly, Article III, Section 14 paragraph 1 which reads, “*No person shall be held to answer for a criminal offense without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws*”, promulgates that no one is allowed to judge a person as criminal or not without the judiciary process.

It is the drive of the President and his men to eradicate the illegal drugs and eventually dismantle drug syndicates that are lurking in the country. The efforts of the government paved way to declaring war on drugs which killed almost 1,800 people in just seven weeks (Lema & Mogato, 2016; Liu, 2016; Reuters, 2016) after its implementation. With such a controversial death toll rise, the country became the spotlight of comparison with the enraging war of the drugs of Mexico and China (CNN, 2016). According to Katigbak (2016), the country has confronted significant denunciation from the international media, human rights activists and even in the local civil society for the causes of the deaths of political activist, journalists, and others that oppose the government. Accordingly, perpetrators of the said killings are pointed to the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippine (Pangilinan, 2010). Instead of enforcing the rule of law, police officers violated the constitutional right of the suspected criminals (Baguilat, 2016) which led to killings without legal judgment of the court. The USAID and the ASIA Foundation called

for a national epidemic considering that multiple people had been killed and involved in the operation (Parreno, 2010; GMA, 2016).

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has ordered the Philippine National Police (PNP) to extend its ‘*Oplan Tokhang*’ program from illegal drugs to illegal gambling. *Oplan Tokhang*, which means “knock and plead,” is a police operation in the where authorities knock on the doors of suspected drug users or pushers and ask them to surrender. The PNP publicly pronounced the results of Project Tokhang that was initiated since its inception on July 1, 2016 until September 6, 2016 (Gonzales, et. al, 2016). The operations conducted by the uniformed men range to 15,905 operations, around 15,193 where arrested and around 1,033 killed (Hunt, 2020). DILG Secretary Ismael Sueno (2016) said that apart from the narcotics campaign, the PNP should also implement the ‘*Oplan Tokhang*’ principle in going after illegal gambling lords “*to ensure that appropriate taxes go to government coffers.*” Sueno also asked the PNP to ensure that the program was not used for the self-interests of the policemen. *Oplan Tokhang* is not used or abused by policemen for their personal interests or some sort of vendetta against their enemies (Felipe, 2017). It is implemented for the sole purpose that it was conceived, and that is to round up drug personalities and other criminals (Sioson, 2017).

In the face of repeated condemnation from local and international human rights organisations, UN experts, and the international community, President Duterte continues to encourage the police to kill criminals and alleged drug offenders, and has vowed to protect those who kill for him (Human Rights Watch, 2017). His threats have become even more incessant in recent months, amid reports of an increase in killings once again. In March 2020, the President railed against human rights groups and critics of the “war on drugs” in a speech meant to address COVID-19, stating, “*A mayor can always threaten a criminal without criminal liability. It is my job to scare people, to intimidate people, and to kill people.*” (Sotomayor, 2020) In his 4th State of the Nation Address, President Duterte justified his war on drugs and abuses seen under his administration, simultaneously vowing to uphold human rights and then threatening to kill people who use drugs (Tomacruz, 2020). From July to August 2020, the President spoke anew about his readiness to kill on national television no less than four times, in one case stating, “*I said, I will kill you if you destroy my country and I*

*will really do it. You'd be unlucky if you're there.*" (Inquirer, 2020). These calls are further evidence of the climate of impunity and the deliberate and systematic nature of the killings which continue to be conducted as part of a government-orchestrated attack against people suspected of using or selling drugs. Amnesty International (2019) has concluded that extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations committed as part of the "war on drugs" may amount to crimes against humanity. As demonstrated in previous findings of Amnesty International (2017), these crimes have continued over a period of several years, with frequent statements of support and approval from senior government officials and almost complete impunity for the perpetrators, who appear in most cases to be either police officers or people linked to the police (Human Rights Watch, 2017). It is Amnesty International's position that these acts should therefore be investigated as possible crimes under international law. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has not yet opened a formal investigation into the situation in the Philippines. Amnesty International continues to call for the ICC to expedite the preliminary examination into possible crimes against humanity, with a view to opening an investigation as a matter of urgency. In 2019, President Duterte warned that the second half of his six-year term will only be harsher, stating that "*the last three years of my term will be the most dangerous for people into drugs*" (Lopez, 2020). The Amnesty International (2020) is concerned that if the international community does not act strongly enough to pressure the Duterte administration – and other governments that might be tempted to follow its lead – it will continue and possibly escalate its campaign of killings and other human rights violations with impunity.

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework and Study Variables**

The current study variables are closely related to the Social Influence Theory proposed by Kelman in 1958 which explains the influence of the society in the individual's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. As cited by Estrada et al. (2011), the three central elements of the theory are compliance (accept influence), identification (adopt induced behaviour) and internalization (accept influence). In this study, the three elements are considered central to the behavioural change of the individuals left behind by victims of the EJK. It underscores the perception of the person on the issue of EJK (compliance) that made him/her change the attitude towards the other person (identification) and towards himself (internalization). As such, the compliance element was assessed through the approval or disapproval of EJK, the

identification was evaluated through socialization and internalization through self-acceptance, self-control and optimism.

***Socialization.*** According to Christiansen (2008), socialization is one of the most important environmental factors during childhood development which taught children how to act. It refers to the period of childhood development when children learn the rules and values of their society. This hypothesizes that initially children learn to merely obey the rules of their society. Certain actions are repeated because of directly correlated consequences. In addition, Weidl (2012) reiterates that socialization is the development of culture within a person, teaching him or her values, norms and roles. This also creates self-awareness as individuals interact with others making socialization a life-long process (Brym, Lie & Rytina, 2010). Deviance, by contrast, is an aversion from the common values, and norms of one's own culture. A crime is when one deviates from a norm that is considered a law, and enforced by government bodies (Brym, Lie & Rytina, 2010). All three of these have a large effect on the society.

In the past decades, a number of studies have focused on issues related to personal safety in the community (Crawford et al., 2008). However, there are still gaps in the literature since the field of personal safety is still growing in various countries. In addition, individual perception often measures belief or opinion not influence on the behaviour. The subject of personal safety falls within the social geography (Chekwa, et al., 2013) which justifies the current study locale. There are several studies conducted related to environmental danger, risk, or threat of harm, injury, or loss to personnel and/or property, whether caused deliberately or by accident (Brown & Andy 2007). Individuals are threatened by societal behaviour as victims, perpetrators, or both (Flannery & Quinn-Leering, 2010) requiring preventive measures (Fischman & Foster, 2007). The incidence of environmental safety generally associates with greater perceptions of fear (Loukaitou-Sideris & Fink, 2009; Johnson, 2009; Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

***Self-Acceptance.*** Self-acceptance, a dimension of Ryff's (1995) psychological well-being model, means having a positive attitude, good of bad qualities, toward the self and positive feelings about the past. According to Saleem and Saleem (2017), it refers to the individual's satisfaction about himself/herself. As considered necessary for good mental

health, it requires a realistic and subjective awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses. It demonstrates the individual's 'unique value.' Ultimately, an individual needs to achieve unconditional self-acceptance, accepting self without concerning about others love, respect, and approval (Hill, et.al. 2008).

Baroni et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of being aware of the individual potential and making this potential functional to reach self-fulfilment. In this sense, human empowerment is important. The purpose in life is having goals and outlook that gives its meaning. Thus, personal growth, a close concept to self-actualization, helps realize a person's potential (Altunbas, 2014). The individual characteristics along with psychological well-being develop the individual potential. In this context, this study presupposes that the participants have positive relations with the society, in general. Positive relations include well and trusting relationships with others, empathy, love, and trust.

***Self-Control.*** Good self-control has been related to many positive outcomes related to health, success, wellbeing, and crime avoidance (Stock, & Baumeister, 2012; Duckworth, Quinn, & Tsukayama, 2012). Policy-makers have considered large-scale programs aimed at improving self-control with the hope of improving the health and wealth of the citizenry and reducing crime (Moffitt et al., 2011). The trait of self-control is found in a plethora of research studies, predominately in the field of psychology. Although self-control is considered an important trait, no single accepted definition or name is used consistently. Self-control has been referred to as self-regulation, self-discipline, and willpower, among other names (Duckworth & Kern, 2011). Duckworth, et.al. (2012) acknowledged the confusion between the meaning of self-control and self-regulation and differentiate them as "self-control" being a personality trait that voluntarily regulates impulses to meet long-term goals and "self-regulation" being metacognitive strategies that help in meeting personal goals. Storch (2015) succinctly sets self-control and self-regulation apart by saying "*self-control helps you meet small challenges, but to change your life significantly you'll need self-regulation.*"

***Optimism.*** Abdel Khaleq & El Nayal (2015) defined optimism as "*the positive view, loving life and belief in the possibility of good occurrences, or the good aspect of things, rather than the bad aspect.*" In addition, Abdel Khaleq (2010) defines optimism as rejoicing

view of the future making the person expects better, anticipates occurrence of goodness, and looks forward for success. Accordingly, it holds generalized favourable expectancies for the future (Carver et al., 2010). Optimism concentrates in the general expectation that good or positive things will happen. Thus, optimists are individuals with a tendency to have positive expectations about the world in general, whereas pessimists tend to anticipate negative outcomes in their lives (Carver et al., 2010). On the other hand, pessimism is a negative anticipation of the events to come, making the person expects worst things to happen, and anticipates badness, failure and disappointment.

### 3. Methodology

A descriptive correlational method was used to find out the relation between the self-acceptance and socialization of the selected participants. The method was used because the research aims to correlate the relationship between the variables.

The participants were 60 selected residents who are related (relative, friend or neighbor) to the victims of EJK in the three barangays namely Barangay San Juan, Barangay Guadalupe and Barangay Del Remedio, San Pablo City, with age 18 years old and above. The participants were purposively chosen who agreed to answer the research questionnaire. The respondents were mostly 18-25 years old (45%), female (51.67%), single (53.33%), high school graduate (41.67%) and employed (75%). These were mostly relatives of the victims.

The study used a self-made questionnaire with three portions:

**Personal Information.** This includes the basic information about the respondents, which include the age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, family monthly income and relationship to the victim.

**Questionnaire on Self-Acceptance.** This was divided into three categories which are optimism, emotional stability and self-control. Each category has 10 questions that aimed to answer the perceived level of self-acceptance of the respondents.

**Questionnaire on Socialization.** This was divided into two categories which are the family safety and concern and safety of the community. Each category has 10 questions that aimed to answer the perceived socialization of the respondents.



The data collection was personally administered for confidentiality and security. The study secured the participants' consent at the beginning of the survey. The study objectives were clearly discussed to give the participants enough time to comprehend the critical nature of the study. The study treated the data gathered with utmost confidentiality in order to protect the identity of the participants.

The frequency, mean, percentage were used for the non-inferential statistical treatments whereas Pearson r was used to correlate the independent and dependent variables.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

**Table 1**

*The Respondents' Factors for Socialization*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>VI</b>
Personal/Family Safety	1.69	0.873	L
Community Safety	2.11	0.932	M
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>1.90</b>	<b>0.902</b>	<b>A</b>

*Legend: 4.0-3.26 High; 3.25-2.51 Moderate; 2.50-1.76 Average; 1.75-1.0 Low*

Table 1 shows the respondents' perception on the different factors for socialization. It is evident that the level of socialization in terms of family safety has an overall mean of 1.69 which is verbally interpreted as "low." It means that the respondents' socialization is very limited due to the heavy effects of the situation. The Filipinos are well-known for being socially and family-oriented people. Most often than not, the strength comes from family members and loved ones due to strong ties enabling support system in times of challenges. The results clearly indicate that the fearful experience created stigma and long lasting trauma that limited their way of socialization (Almendral, 2017). Meanwhile, safe community has been perceived as "moderate" with an overall mean of 2.11. Although higher than expected, the general impression of the respondents towards other people still is indifferent. There are still prohibitions as to the actions towards other people and the society, in general. The respondents still feel the need to be secured towards their community actions.

The overall general perception on the factors of socialization has an overall mean of 1.90 which is verbally interpreted as “average.” The assessment clearly showed the negative consequences of the EJK on the left behind families. As narrated by Demick (2016), that many suffer psychological distress after witnessing the killing of a loved one. Some of these respondents also had to leave their homes and community, either to hide or relocate because of fear. Similarly, some experienced bullying because of the stigma of alleged drug use by a now deceased parent.

**Table 2**

*The Respondents' Level of Self-Acceptance*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>VI</b>
Optimism	1.91	0.934	M
Emotional stability	1.90	0.967	M
Self-Control	2.13	0.924	M
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>0.941</b>	<b>M</b>

*Legend: 4.0-3.26 High, 3.25-2.51 Moderate, 2.50-1.76 Average, 1.75-1.0 Low*

Table 2 shows the respondents' level of self-acceptance. The mean of 1.91 reflects the moderate level of self-acceptance as to optimism. There was moderate level also in the emotional stability with a mean of 1.90 and with 2.13 mean reflects the moderate level of self-control of the respondents. Summing this up, the overall level of self-acceptance of the respondents was “moderate” with mean of 1.98. This implies that EJK affects the self-acceptance of an individual, particularly those who are relatives and family members of the victims. Most of them feel judged and secluded with a tagged negative stereotyping. Due to the stigma tied to DRKs, neighbours' and relatives are also afraid to associate with bereaved families and are unable to condole at the wakes. This also leads to weaker support systems for affected families. Some respondents noted that some informant ‘assets’ and assassins are also members of the community, eroding trust among neighbours. As shared experience, Pangilinan, et al. (2017) identified one orphaned grandchild of a respondent is saving up money to buy a gun so that he can avenge his father's death.

**Table 3***Test of Correlation between the Profile of the Respondents and Socialization*

<b>Profile of the Respondent</b>	<b>Test-statistic</b>	<b>Tabular value</b>	<b>Value of tc</b>	<b>r-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Age	R	2.00	0.187	0.024	Accept Ho	NS
Gender	R	2.00	0.499	0.065	Accept Ho	NS
Civil status	R	2.00	0.761	0.099	Accept Ho	NS
Educational attainment	R	2.00	0.687	0.90	Accept Ho	NS
Occupation	R	2.00	0.557	0.073	Accept Ho	NS
Family Monthly Income	R	2.00	1.313	0.170	Accept Ho	NS
Relationship to the Victim	R	2.00	1.450	0.187	Accept Ho	NS

Table 3 shows the test of correlation between the respondents' profile and the factors of socialization. It can be implied that the age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, monthly income and relationship to the victim were not statistical factors affecting socialization of the respondents. This infers that the demographic profile of the respondents have no statistical implication on the various factors considered for socialization. Thus, the situation must be assessed on a case by case basis.

Table 4 presents the test of correlation between the profile of the respondents and the level of self-acceptance. Noticeable that all the variables under profile were not significant to the self-acceptance of the respondents except for educational attainment. Willis (2011) claimed that the higher education of an individual, the higher the level of emotion. Being exposed and aware of the different circumstances in the environment, the educational level reflects the level of critical thinking and analysis. The level of education opens the socio-cognitive skills of an individual to respond to the different social situations. Similarly, the educational attainment in the Philippines is tantamount to a higher social expectations in terms of emotional stability which also affects the self-acceptance.

**Table 4***Relationship between Profile of the Respondents and Self-Acceptance*

Profile of the respondent	Test-statistic	Tabular value	Value of tc	r-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	r	2.00	0.449	0.065	Accept Ho	NS
Gender	r	2.00	0.678	0.089	Accept Ho	NS
Civil status	r	2.00	0.201	0.026	Accept Ho	NS
Educational attainment	r	2.00	2.545	0.317	Reject Ho	S
Occupation	r	2.00	0.790	0.103	Accept Ho	NS
Family Monthly Income	r	2.00	0.418	0.055	Accept Ho	NS
Relationship to the Victim	r	2.00	1.620	0.208	Accept Ho	NS

Table 5 reveals that the family safety and concern and safety of the community were not factors that affect the self-acceptance of the respondents even after the occurrence of EJK. This indicates the positive outlook of the Filipinos on looking for a positive side and stay optimistic even in the midst of this crucial event. As asserted by Hill, et.al. (2008), self-acceptance requires a realistic and subjective awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses. The results show the ironic side of life that despite fearing for their lives, the level of the respondents' optimism is still high.

**Table 5***Test of Correlation between Factors of Socialization and Self-Acceptance*

Variables	Test statistic	Tabular Value	Value of tc	r-value	Decision	Interpretation
Family Safety and Concern	R	2.00	1.026	0.134	Accept Ho	NS
Safety of the Community	R	2.00	1.162	0.151	Accept Ho	NS

**Table 6***Relationship between Socialization and Self-acceptance*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Test statistic</b>	<b>Tabular Value</b>	<b>Value of tc</b>	<b>r-value</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Socialization and Self-Acceptance	R	2.00	2.208	0.507	Reject Ho	S

Table 6 shows a positive relationship between socialization and self-acceptance. The results signify that as socialization increases the level of self-acceptance also increase. Relatively, when the socialization of the respondents is poor then the level of their self-acceptance drops. As Grusec (2011) clearly states that “*the ability of a person to maximize the potential skill was brought out with socialization and with this the emotion that arises emphasizes the severity and degree regarding to the norm of a certain community.*” Similarly, the self-acceptance can be measured through the degree of socialization of an individual per se. It infers that the psychological domain of a person has a strong impact on the way he/she socializes and views the society.

The findings of the study suggest that the left behind families have high involvement, whether emotional or social, with the EJK victims’ unbearable fate. This explains the Filipinos high regard for family, family ties and strong family bond. Generally, the results imply a rather clear effect on the socialization and self-acceptance of the respondents. Whether low level or high level, the family’s involvement in the tragic experiences brought trauma and fear (Reyes, 2015) affecting how to socialize and reject the dictates of the society. However, this raises questions on the family’s life after the victims’ death. Rebuilding a family after a tragic event is not easy which Carandang, (1987) as cited in Puente (2000) coined the term *mananalo* (helper) to describe this phenomenon in Filipino family dynamic.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study examined the EJK victims’ left behind families to determine the effect of the tragic event on the socialization and self-acceptance. The results showed no significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the factors for socialization while

there was significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and the self-acceptance. As to the socialization, the respondents' perceived personal safety and community safety as generally "average". Meanwhile, the self-acceptance in terms of optimism, emotional stability and self-control, are generally assessed as "moderate." It was further revealed that there was a significant relationship between socialization and self-acceptance of the respondents.

The results of the study serve as fundamental to the complete understanding of the effects of a difficult situation. Although it is easier said than done, respondents should have the strength to face any problems with optimism. Strong family support system is needed in order to overcome this difficulty.

For the Local Government Unit, this study may serve as a vantage point in their better response and approach to assist the EJK victims' family members. The priority must be establishing a program to address the psychological needs. Further studies may be conducted using validated and expanded questionnaire to include other variables not considered in this study. A mixed method may also be considered for triangulation and validation of the results.

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