

***Laki sa Lolo, Laki sa Lola:* Perspectives of Filipino Young Adults on Aging**

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ABSTRACT

Grandparents serve as powerful influences on younger generations. They play a crucial role in shaping their reared grandchildren's development, specifically their perception of aging. Hence, ageism is a prevalent issue in the country. This study explores the lived experience of being raised by grandparents who shape the perspectives of aging in San Pablo, Laguna. Ten young adults aged 19-25 participated in the study through semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that, despite societal negative views, children raised by grandparents develop a positive perception. They were equipped to have a comprehensive description of aging as a learning process and a means of life improvement. Notably, a favorable view of the grandparental role is based on their lived experiences with their grandparents. This study seeks to contribute to lifespan development research and redefine aging through kinship care, mitigating ageism to prevent threats to younger generations.

Keywords: aging, grandparents, grandparental care, young adult

INTRODUCTION

Grandparents serve as powerful influences on younger generations. They assist in resolving family conflicts and bolster the family's power by offering a life course, reflection, and wisdom. Moreover, they serve as the 'third voice.' At the same time, others view having grandparents by their side as a strain (Lanyado, 2020). Through examining the experiences of grandchildren with their grandparents, we identified that grandparents serve a motivational advantage through storytelling about their experiences, which provides moral value to their grandchildren.

Aging globally is rapidly increasing, including in the Philippines. The population of grandchildren raised by grandparents has been increasing as well, driven by factors such as a lack of parental presence in their children's lives. Borenstein et al. (2025) found that the development of formal kinship care has

largely overlooked individuals' lived experiences and perspectives on its impact. This study will focus on the kinship care provided by grandparents.

Additionally, grandparents teach their grandchildren to thrive in life. Tabudlo et al. (2024) have studied how relationship dynamics contribute to an individual's overall welfare. Spending time together doing leisure activities helps to build a strong relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. They also serve as sources of inspiration and feel satisfied when together (De Guzman et al., 2023). Grandparenthood is part of aging.

The lens of aging is characterized by a vulnerable stage in society, marked by significant changes in physical, mental, and physiological well-being. In this developmental stage, individuals experience various diseases and a decline in hearing and memory loss, as well as chronic diseases, including diabetes, stroke, and cancer, which increase the susceptibility to death (Cai et al., 2022). Fear of death and anxiety about aging are the concerns of ageism and physiological factors found as the intrapersonal level determinants of the elderly (Marques et al., 2020). Certain groups label older people as having pathogenic vulnerabilities; from this view, they can be misinterpreted as unintentional discrimination against people for being kind and overprotective. Due to ageism, older people were classified as a vulnerable group in healthcare (Langmann, 2022). Until now, combating ageism is still advocated to stop the discrimination encountered by the elderly and stop the threat to the younger generation in the concept of aging.

Aging was examined as a two-way factor, including social and cultural levels. Firstly, the way the public perceives older people shapes the internal dialogue about aging people in society. Secondly, accepting the physical and biological changes that occur at the inner psychological level as part of aging (Palgi et al., 2021). According to Chalise (2019), aging can be viewed from various perspectives and classified into biological, psychological, social, chronological, and functional aging. As they grow older, there are observable changes in the human body and a decrease in physical abilities.

In the Philippine context, aging is part of being a responsible grandparent to one's grandchildren. They become caregivers and extend support in financial, moral, and spiritual ways. Despite having poor health outcomes (Martin & Nero, 2024), unlike before when they were younger, they step up to assist their grandchildren (Dadang, 2019). One of the core traditional values of being Filipino is strong family ties, in which extended and nuclear families often live in the same household (Gozum, 2020). The population of individuals raised by grandparents is increasing for various reasons, including parents' absence from caring for their children. Moreover, Filipinos place complete trust in their family members and relatives who can rely on and guide them.

Despite the increasing number of grandchildren being raised by grandparents, only a limited number of studies in the Philippines have explored children raised by grandparents. Some studies focused on different facets and stages of development. Limited research has focused on the young adult perspective and the impact of grandparents. This study has the potential to support grandparents and grandchildren by improving relationship-building and conceptualization of aging.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore the lived experience of being raised by grandparents and how this shapes the views of young adult grandchildren. Specifically, the present study analyzes how Filipino young adults raised by grandparents shape their perception of aging.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study used qualitative methods to examine how being raised with grandparents shaped their perceptions of aging. Using this research design allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding and investigate real-life problems. It covers participants' views, behaviors, and experiences and allows them to explain how and why the phenomena occur (Tenny et al., 2022). A descriptive-phenomenological design was used to understand participants' subjective perceptions of their lived experiences and to allow them to explore the impacts of being raised by grandparents.

Research Participants. To determine the perception of aging among Filipino young adults, the researchers conducted the study in San Pablo, Laguna. It was conducted through an online interview with 10 participants. The selection of the participants was based on purposive non-probability sampling with predetermined criteria: (1) Filipino young adults aged 19-25; (2) raised by grandmother or grandfather; (3) must have been raised by grandparents regardless if they co-reside with parents or extended family; and (4) must have been raised by grandparents for at least five years, between infancy to elementary age (1-12 yrs old).

Data Gathering Procedure. The pilot test and the in-depth interview were conducted online via Google Meet. Each interview lasted for about 45 to 90 minutes. Through the semi-structured interview, the researchers were able to ask follow-up questions and probe to gather valuable data from the participants, and they also helped gain a deeper understanding of the participants' thoughts and experiences on the topic.

Data Analysis. Thematic analysis was utilized to highlight the lived experiences of being raised by grandparents. It allowed the researcher to elicit rich, detailed

responses from participants and facilitated an organized data analysis (Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from young adult participants. The data were analyzed by theme, with corresponding descriptions, to clearly understand and ascertain the study's context. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed patterns and themes to emerge from participants' responses and encapsulated each research question about the lived experiences of being raised by grandparents, the influence on social relationship skills, and how grandparents shape participants' perceptions of aging.

Grandparents Shape Their Reared Grandchildren's Perception of Aging

Aging is viewed negatively in society; despite this, grandchildren raised by grandparents may have a different perception of aging. The background of the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren may be considered a factor that shapes the participant's perception. Participants have shared how their grandparents influence their perceptions of aging.

Three themes emerged from participants' responses, as presented in Table 1. These are establishing a positive perception of aging amidst ageism, battling ageism through societal norms, and leaving a legacy that transcends generations.

Theme 1. Establishing a positive perception of aging amidst ageism based on lived experiences

Participants have diverse experiences of being raised by grandparents. Despite their grandparents treating them differently, they were influenced to develop a positive perception of aging. Participants viewed aging as a learning process, a means of improving health and quality of life, a grandparental role, and a way to embrace life by finding one's life purpose. According to the study by Flamion *et al.* (2017), a high-quality relationship between grandparents and grandchildren can reduce perceptions of ageism toward aging. This reveals that the lived experiences of participants, raised by grandparents, form a quality relationship with each other that shapes their perceptions positively. One of the responses from participant 1 shared her experiences about having a positive perception of aging:

Aging for me is a lesson. It is a process that starts when you are a child, and along the way, you will take many paths and climb many stairs as you grow. So, it is full of lessons and learning that you gain as you get older. (P1)

Table 1

Emerging Themes: Analyzing How Filipino Young Adults Raised by Grandparents Shape Their Perception of Aging

No.	Themes	Descriptions
1	Establishing a positive perception of aging amidst ageism based on lived experiences	The study found a positive view of aging among participants, based on their lived experiences with their grandparents, despite the discrimination that continues to prevail in society.
2	Battling ageism through societal norms	Due to societal influences on perceptions of aging, participants are also affected by negative views of the aging process.
3	Leaving a legacy that transcends generations	Raised by grandparents seek to influence the other generations who are either currently being raised by grandparents or will be in the future. They aim to provide valuable life advice that is relevant and applicable as these individuals progress to later stages of life.

Participant 1 disclosed how she viewed aging as a lesson. She believed that aging is as much about individual learning from experiences. This mindset aims to embrace aging without fear, unlike how others view it negatively. In addition, the study by Fragoso and Fonseca (2022) states that education and policy toward aging can help prevent ageism toward future generations. Consequently, other participants have a favorable view of aging, as their grandparents raised them. This perception resulted from grandparents educating their grandchildren about how they socialize and regulate their emotions towards others. This also reflects how they view aging, as reflected in their acceptance of others and the elderly.

Aside from the perception of aging as a lesson, health and life improvement were among the subthemes that emerged. This perception was influenced by the participants' health-consciousness and by their understanding of the physical, psychological, and emotional changes. Participant 10 was one of the participants who shared that they were health-conscious:

One of the things I have learned is to be physically healthy because I see it in them. Even though they are old, they do not want to stay stuck at home. Yes, it can be boring, and they want to have something too, which is also part of their consideration. (P10)

From participant 10's response, he revealed that his grandparent was the one who influenced his becoming health-conscious. He wants to be physically healthy like his grandparents. Teerawichitchainan et al. (2019) found, in their study on the contributions of older adults in family households, that providing care for

grandchildren and assisting with household chores are important aspects of productive aging. This underscores that maintaining physical activity—even through household tasks—supports the well-being of older adults and enables them to contribute meaningfully to their families by caring for grandchildren and helping with daily responsibilities.

Grandparents influence their grandchildren's perceptions of aging by modeling positive attitudes toward growing older through their grandparental role. Most participants indicated that they aspire to be like their grandparents or to receive similar treatment in old age. They also noted that their views on aging are shaped by the quality of roles and relationships they have experienced within their families. According to Ng and Indran (2023), stereotyping of the elderly has existed for over two centuries. To reduce ageism, they suggest focusing on the meaningful roles older adults play rather than their chronological age. This perspective aligns with the participants' responses, as many reported that their understanding of aging is rooted in their personal experiences as grandchildren, particularly in being raised or cared for by their grandparents.

Participants have found their life purpose as they viewed aging. They learned how to embrace life as they grew older. Based on the responses, participants' perception was shaped positively by enjoying getting older, positive physical changes, and the rewards of aging. Like how participant 6 and 2 share their perception towards aging:

I see myself in the future, as I grow older, being a happy person. I will still bond with my grandchildren, I want to be happy and enjoy my old age. Because, of course, we all know that life is short, so whatever happens, I want to enjoy and be happy. (P6)

Growing old, I think it is such a reward when you reach 50. Then my grandma is already 75, she is still not even halfway through my age. Then now I was only 22, and when I felt even a little pain in my body, I already started to worry about it. (P2)

Participant 6 shares how she envisions herself growing old, enjoying her life, and staying motivated to be a happy person. This perception may also drive the younger generation to perceive aging positively. This outlook was also highlighted in the study of Barbaccia et al. (2022). To remain active, older adults tend to maintain their self-esteem, social ties, and independence. They should also participate in cognitive and physical activities. Regarding participant 6's response, making life productive and building self-esteem shape a sense of worthiness by helping people enjoy life. Meanwhile, Participant 2 viewed aging as an age reward. This implies that, despite others' fear of getting old due to the additional years on

their age, participant 2 provides evidence that being raised by grandparents shapes participants' positive perception of aging.

Theme 2. Battling ageism through societal norms

Society has a negative perception of aging, wherein stereotyping and discrimination are present and alarming. These views affect younger generations' perceptions of aging in the long run. Aside from family, the environment around individuals also influences a child's perception. This underlies the negative perception of physical, cognitive, and psychological changes of aging. In the study by Elliot et al. (2021), people in midlife were more likely to experience poor memory and motor skills, a mature appearance, and a negative perception of impaired bodily functions, and to be vulnerable to frailty. This relates to the responses of participants 2 and 7 to the question on how they think society affects their perception of aging:

They might be scared, as you get older, you become weaker. That is their perspective, but for me, it also depends on the person and how they take care of themselves, because you will not become weak if you take care of yourself. (P2)

It affects me especially now that I am getting older. I do not want to hear things like that. Because it hurts deeply. Who would ever want to be told 'they are useless', who would want to hear someone say, 'they should just die already'? (P7)

Participant 2 shared that society often perceives aging as a period of weakness. However, her response suggested that there are ways to avoid experiencing such a decline. Participant 7, on the other hand, revealed how he was influenced by societal views that label the elderly as "useless people." Thomas (2019) noted that some individuals regard aging as "useless and unworthy of attention," whereas in other cultures, aging is valued as a time to spend with grandchildren. These findings indicate that negative perceptions of aging continue to shape the attitudes of younger generations.

In addition, memory loss is one factor associated with negative psychological changes in the elderly. Participant 1 observed his grandfather, who had dementia:

Like my grandfather, who used to have dementia, he even forgot me. He did and said something that supposedly happened a long time ago, or perhaps never actually did. (P1)

Several participants also shared their grandparents' experiences with memory loss. According to George and Reddy (2019), older adults often face cognitive decline, including conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease (AD). These illnesses, which can significantly impair memory, remain a major societal concern, prompting efforts to mitigate their impact and search for a cure. Health recommendations to lower the risk of dementia among the elderly include consuming antioxidant-rich foods and engaging in regular exercise. This suggests that the younger generation can take proactive steps to reduce the likelihood and impact of memory loss-related diseases later in life.

Several participants have also answered that, aside from the psychological and cognitive decline, including being weak, frail, and having memory loss, society influenced them to have a negative perception of aging as being closer to death. Fear of aging has emerged, as indicated by the participants' responses, which highlight fear of being alone and fear of aging. In which participant 3 shares:

I am afraid of getting old alone, but if I were not alone, I would not be scared. Because I know there is someone with me, someone will take care of me like my grandma. (P3)

In her response, participant 3 used her experience to describe how she felt about aging. This reveals that having her grandmother beside her shapes her perception of her future aging. She does not want to be alone. She wants somebody who will stay there for her, like her grandmother. At the same time, other participants have shared how they became afraid of aging.

Aside from being alone, some of the participants have disclosed their experiences of having a fear of death before. Like what participant 1 shared:

Maybe before, yes, I was afraid of getting older because when you are young, you feel like once you get older, you will just die, right? As if it were the end, you will get sick and feel so many things. However, from my perspective now, no, because if I do not grow old, I will not experience the things I should experience. (P1)

As found in the study by Zhang et al. (2019), death anxiety is more likely to appear at older ages. This affects the elderly, leading to low self-esteem and low satisfaction with life's purpose. This conveys that anxiety about death in the elderly was present, but participant 1 responded that despite having thought of how she will die when getting older, she sees a positive perspective about it. She viewed aging as a growing experience. This reveals how society's negative view of aging affects the participant's perception. However, being raised by grandparents helps them to develop an optimistic outlook on aging, despite how others view it.

Theme 3. Leaving a legacy that transcends generations

Each grandparent has a different personality and way of caring for their grandchildren. Their influence may help preserve customs for future generations. Religion, values, and superstitions were among the factors that led the majority of participants to want to adapt and preserve, as they will also have grandchildren in the future. According to Yuldasheva (2021), a child's development significantly affects the culture of the society in which they live. Grandparents are also the ones who pass on the community's traditions and customs, whether or not those traditions and customs are preserved. In this context, the reared grandchildren will preserve the customs and pass them on to new generations.

Participant 7 has shared his experience with his grandmother in terms of religion:

He always said, just pray and believe. Because I am not religious, but from what I have noticed, it seems like they are right. (P7)

From Participant 7's response, the values he learned from his grandparents—particularly about praying and believing—are lessons he hopes to pass on to his future grandchildren. According to Carandang et al. (2019), religious involvement and faith among the elderly contribute to their optimism about life, which, in turn, shapes their perceptions of aging. Similarly, some participants envision themselves as future grandparents who will play an active role in their grandchildren's upbringing. As Participant 2 shared,

I feel that when I get older, 'hey, my grandma was the one who raised me,' I will brag about it. So they will be interested too that I will be the one who raised them. However, not in the case that I want to separate them from their parents. (P2)

As not all participants were still together with their grandparents, participant 2 wants to brag that her grandmother raised her to be a future grandmother. Despite her experience with strict discipline, she still wanted to proudly share her experience with the younger generation. This point of view also affects her perception of aging.

Aside from preserving customs and experiences, participants raised by grandparents offer advice to other generations who were also raised by grandparents or are now raising their grandchildren, drawing on their extensive experience. Some answers from the participants include cherishing moments, showing respect, being understanding, and expressing love. As the majority of participants shared that they were unable to express themselves more and had

regrets, they want the younger generations to do the right thing for their grandparents. Below are the responses from the participants:

Cherish moments and do not let them feel disappointed, or do not always be irritated because they are getting old and they want to understand things. (P5)

Do not take them for granted. I believe grandparents' love is one of the purest kinds of love. They are your grandparents, even if the world turns upside down. (P8)

Love them, they will not hurt you. Life is short, do not make it shorter for them. (P2)

Participant 5 recalled the cherished moments spent with grandparents and the joy of getting to know them deeply. Participants 2 and 8 shared advice on openly expressing love to grandparents and showing understanding toward them. According to Hilaliyyah and Desiningrum (2022), grandparents extend unique affection and freedom to their grandchildren—a kind of love distinct from what they offer to others, and incomparable to that of anyone else. Participant 8 further advised those who were raised by their grandparents to value and appreciate them fully.

All participants offered different advice to help the youth navigate and improve their relationships with their grandparents. Drawing on experiences from their upbringing, they guided the younger generations. Some of the participants shared heartfelt experiences of being separated from their grandparents as they approached old age. Because they have already passed away, their future grandchildren, who are reared grandchildren, will not be able to meet and get to know them. By giving advice and preserving the customs and lessons from their grandparents, participants aim to pass them on to future generations, ensuring their grandparents' memory endures.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored how the lived experiences of being raised by grandparents shape their perception of aging. The study revealed that aging is still viewed negatively in society due to significant changes in impairment; however, being raised by grandparents shaped their views by establishing a positive perception, as they described aging as a learning process, a means of finding life purpose, and a more favorable view of the grandparental role. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how being raised by grandparents shapes grandchildren's perceptions of aging and provide a foundation for potential applications in human and family development studies and lifespan development.

The present study has also informed youth about how being raised by grandparents can positively shape their perception by redefining aging through kinship care. This can serve as a reference to reduce ageism among younger generations. Additionally, a drive to foster better relationships between grandparents and grandchildren and improve their quality of life as they navigate the aging process. Grandparents influence their grandchildren's social relationship skills and perceptions of aging in various ways. According to attachment theory, grandparents, as caregivers, play a major role in shaping their grandchildren's well-being.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

The researchers built rapport with the participants, making them comfortable with the process and the questions. They ensured that participation of the participant is voluntary and not forced. Before the interview started, informed consent was signed. The purpose of the study was explained to ensure their willingness to participate and to protect their rights as participants. The researchers assured participants that their names would not be shared, and only codenames were used to hide their identities. Since some participants shared sensitive information about their lived experiences, they were assured that their identities would not be revealed.

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