LAMENT AS LEADERSHIP: A STUDY OF LIVED PRACTICES OF VULNERABILITY AND HEALING AMONG WOMEN LEADERS IN LIVING WATERS PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how lament, vulnerability, and healing shape the character formation, leadership development, and missional witness of women leaders in ministry contexts. While lament and healing have received increasing attention in pastoral and theological discussions, limited research has examined their influence on leadership formation, particularly among women leaders in evangelical settings in the Philippines.

Using a qualitative narrative research design, this study investigated the lived experiences of selected women leaders from Living Waters Philippines (LWP). Data were collected through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to identify recurring patterns and themes within participants' narratives.

The findings revealed that lament serves as a pathway toward vulnerability, healing, and spiritual transformation. Participants described how acknowledging grief, emotional wounds, and personal brokenness fostered deeper dependence on God, greater self-awareness, and healthier leadership practices. The study further found that healing-centered leadership cultivates safe spaces characterized by authenticity, acceptance, discipleship, and spiritual accompaniment. As participants experienced personal healing and restoration, missional witness emerged as a natural outflow of transformed character and relational wholeness. This study contributes to the growing conversation on leadership formation by highlighting the formative role of lament, vulnerability, and healing in ministry leadership. It suggests that leadership development within Christian communities should move beyond performance-orientation and create environments that support emotional honesty, healing, and holistic transformation.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

There have been studies on lament from biblical, theological, and pastoral perspectives as a resource for leadership formation, not merely as a devotional exercise. This study explores how lament, defined as expressing sorrow, pain, or confusion, should be the chief way Christians process grief in God's presence, and can become a pathway to transformational leadership in evangelical churches.[1]

This study contributes to extensive conversations on evangelism and discipleship. This emphasizes how vulnerability and healing can foster more holistic and compassionate leadership models within the evangelical church, and how leadership rooted in lament strengthens evangelism and discipleship.

This research is grounded in the leadership practices of Living Waters Philippines, an evangelical, church-based discipleship and healing ministry that equips the Church to become a safe place for broken and hurting people. Through prayer-centered, small-group programs grounded in the worship, words, and works of Jesus, the ministry invites honest engagement with pain, shame, and relational brokenness, fostering healing and vulnerability within a redemptive community.[2]

Living Waters Philippines is a ministry context in which lament is practiced as a

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[1] Ryan Higginbottom, *"Biblical Lament: What It Is and How to Do It,"* Open the Bible with Pastor Colin Smith, June 13, 2022, https://openthebible.org/article/biblical-lament-what-it-is-and-how-to-do-it/

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[2] Living Waters Philippines, *"About Us,"* accessed May 10, 2026, https://livingwatersphilippines.org/about-us/.

formative leadership discipline within gospel-centered discipleship. Through

healing-centered programs and small-group communities, leaders, many of whom are women, are invited to acknowledge hidden wounds, name unspoken struggles, and experience integration of faith, emotional life, and embodied spirituality. Leadership in this context emerges not as a formal model imposed from above, but as a lived practice shaped through healing, vulnerability, and communal participation.[3]

Through the ministry of Living Waters Philippines, people find the courage to be honest about their inner struggles without fear of judgment. Pastors, church leaders and lay people are given a sacred space to freely and honestly talk, receive prayer, and learn about God's design for healthy living. It is not a counseling ministry, support group, or political organization. Instead, its programs are facilitated by trained volunteers who mentor people and lead by example."[4]

Researcher's Context

This study comes from the researcher's personal ministry experiences and encounters with lament, vulnerability, and healing within Christian leadership. Before entering the graduate bible seminary, the researcher was actively serving in ministry leadership roles while simultaneously carrying unresolved deep-seated emotional wounds and childhood trauma. Ministry involvement, leadership responsibilities, academic goals,

[3] Living Waters Philippines, *"About Us,"* accessed May 10, 2026, https://livingwatersphilippines.org/about-us/.

[4] Ibid.

and personal expectations gradually created a performance-oriented approach to serving God. This is where identity, self and spiritual worth are anchored in productivity and ministry achievement.

However, the researcher later realized that much of her service was being fulfilled from a place of hidden pain and unresolved brokenness. Through participation in the healing programs of Living Waters Philippines, the researcher encountered a model of Christian leadership that is rooted not merely in performance and achievement but in lament, healing, vulnerability, surrender, and wholeness.

The researcher's personal encounter motivated her to explore how lament shapes leadership formation. This is particularly among women leaders serving in ministry contexts. The researcher then desired to examine how healing-centered leadership creates safe spaces for authenticity, transformation, discipleship, and missional witness.

The researcher's personal experience reflected a wider concern within Christian leadership and ministry contexts, where performance-oriented service, leadership responsibilities, discipleship, and ministry may continue despite grief, burnout, unresolved struggles, and hidden emotional wounds. In many church and ministry settings today, vulnerability is often minimized while strength, resilience, and productivity are emphasized. Leaders, however, may continue serving from places of woundedness, exhaustion, suppressed pain, and emotional isolation.

This is similar to how lament, healing, and vulnerability are increasingly discussed within pastoral and theological conversations. However, there is limited research on how these realities shape the formation of leadership and ministry practice,

particularly women's leadership and evangelical settings in the Philippines.

Statement of the Problem

Scripture, theology, and pastoral perspectives inspire existing studies on lament. However, they do not directly state how lament shapes leadership formation. This is especially within the Philippine evangelical context. There is existing literature discussing lament as worship, grief processing, or pastoral response. However, lament is not presented as foundational in leadership formation. Also, there are very few qualitative studies that focus on women leaders and their lived experiences of lament, vulnerability, and healing. As such, this creates a gap between Lament's theological discussions and the lived experiences of women leaders serving in healing ministries and evangelical communities.

This study, therefore, seeks to explore how lament functions within the leadership practices of Living Waters Philippines and how lament, vulnerability, and healing contribute to leadership formation and missional witness. It also aims to provide insights for evangelical churches in developing more authentic, compassionate, and healing-centered leadership and discipleship. In addition, this study gives particular attention to women leaders and how lament becomes a channel for powerful transformation impacting leadership journey and ministry life.[5]

[5] Esther Fleece Allen, No More Faking Fine: Ending the Pretending (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), Perlego, 35.

Research Questions

This research aims to understand the lived experiences of women leaders in the ministry context of Living Waters Philippines. This research uses a qualitative case study with narrative inquiry. The following research questions guide the study:

- How does Living Waters Philippines model vulnerability and healing in leadership?
- In what ways does lament shape leaders within the ministry?
- What strengths and challenges of the Living Waters leadership model connect with lament as leadership?
- How might this study serve or bless the ministry of Living Waters Philippines?

These questions elicit stories and themes and are not intended to test hypotheses or shed light on how lament functions within a specific ministry; instead, they are intended to look into experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals.[6] Narrative case study is particularly suitable in this study because it allows participants' stories to reveal the role of lament in shaping their leadership identity.[7]

Research Objectives

This study examines the lived experiences of women leaders within the context of Living Waters Philippines. It delves into lament, shaping leadership identity and formation among ministry leaders, identifying strengths and challenges in Living Waters

[6] John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2018), 67.

[7] Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1995), 1–4.

Philippines leadership practices. This study provides insight into how lament, vulnerability, and healing contribute to missional witness, discipleship, and ministry.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how lament fosters authentic and transformational leadership, especially among women leaders in Living Waters Philippines.[8] In their ministry context, leadership is not presented as a rigid framework, but as a set of lived practices. The same is passed on through staff, facilitators, and participants. This study also has practical importance for Living Waters Philippines through offering feedback that may affirm strengths, uncover challenges, and support the ministry's future improvement.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to contribute to conversations on the authentic process of transformation in leadership and the church's mission of evangelism and discipleship. Evangelism, when rooted in lament, becomes credible and relevant to the people and communities that know suffering, especially in the contexts of poverty, injustice, and natural disaster (in the Filipino context). When discipleship is shaped by lament, it develops honesty before God and others. Hence, it prevents a shallow display of strength and charisma. In each of these missional expressions, leadership through lament strengthens the church's witness to the crucified and risen Christ.[9]

The significance and relevance of this study lie in its contribution to both local and global conversations on church leadership. There are few studies in the Philippine

[8] Allen, No More Faking Fine, (2017), 190.

[9] Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 15–18.

evangelical context, and even fewer have highlighted women's experiences that examine the integration of lament as an honest expression of grief before God into actual leadership practices. As such, leaders and communities lead through lament and not apart from it.

Structure of the Thesis

This research comprises five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Data Analysis and Findings, and Discussion. Chapter 1 covers the Background of the Study, Research Problem, Research Objectives, Significance of the Study, and Structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides the related Literature, Gaps, Theoretical and Conceptual Framework, Sampling, and Ethical Considerations. Chapter 3 discusses Research Design, Method, Target Population, and Data Analysis. Chapter 4, on the other hand, includes Representation, Description, Emergent Themes, and Evidence. Chapter 5 contains Major Findings, Alignment, Contextualization, and Contributions. References and Appendices follow Chapter 5.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Foundational Literature

This research builds on the concept of lament within the church's mission of evangelism and discipleship. In the absence of lament, discipleship risks becoming shallow, as pain is minimized and grief is suppressed.

Foundational authors establish lament as a biblical, theological, and communal practice rooted in suffering, worship, and dependence on God.[10]

Lament and Discipleship

According to Andrew Comiskey, author of *Strength in Weakness*, discipleship in weakness provides the soil in which authentic healing can take root. Hence, the church is built for mission, not merely for survival, producing resilient, humble, and compassionate disciples.[11] Moreover, lament as leadership directly addresses the integrity and sustainability of Christian leadership. Dan Allender, author of *Leading with a Limp*, said

[10] Federico G. Villanueva, *It's OK to Be Not OK: Preaching the Lament Psalms* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Preaching Resources, 2017), 15–18; Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (2015), 45–47.

[11] Andrew Comiskey, *Strength in Weakness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 195.

that authentic leadership does not emerge from strength but from leading with a limp, acknowledging wounds, failures, and dependence on God.[12]

Dr. Federico Villanueva, author of *Lamentations (Psalms 1-72)* and *It's Ok to be not Ok*, provides pastoral insights that offer theological grounding for lament practices and emphasize emotional honesty in preaching the lament psalms.[13] He defines lament as sincere discipleship with trust established through suffering.[14] When shaped by lament, discipleship is built on honesty, in which brokenness is confronted, and deeper dependence on God is fostered. As Villanueva points out, lament is an act of sincere discipleship, marked by trust established through suffering.[15]

Lament and Ecclesial Witness

Charles Blaine-Wallace, author of *When Tears Sing*, explores lament in Christian communities and shows its role in communal healing. When suffering is denied, and only success and happiness are emphasized, those who are struggling with their pain and loss may appear unimportant and irrelevant.[16] This is a critique by Soong-Chan Rah, author of *Prophetic Lament*, and she argues that churches shaped by lament bear a more faithful witness in contexts of injustice and suffering. Rah presents prophetic lament as a call for

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[12] Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Take Full Advantage of Your Most Powerful Weakness* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 3-4.

[13] Villanueva, *It's OK to Be Not OK: Preaching the Lament Psalms.* (2017)

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Charles Blaine-Wallace, *When Tears Sing: The Art of Lament in Christian Community* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005)

justice; relevant for female leaders addressing systemic challenges. Rah views lament as the church's prophetic witness.[17]

Hence, the credibility of the gospel is strengthened, and communities are enabled to plant churches that embody Christ's compassion. In the context of the Filipinos, where their lives are mostly affected by poverty, political instability, and natural disasters, a

theology of lament resonates both pastorally and evangelistically. Churches grounded in lament can penetrate the wounds of communities rather than offering quick fixes.

Lament, Vulnerability, and Leadership

Henri Nouwen, writer of *The Wounded Healer*, presents a classic model that reinforces this insight, emphasizing that leadership rooted in vulnerability is not weakness but the very place from which God's power is made manifest. Nouwen frames leaders as "wounded healers."[18]

Lament in Filipino and Women's Ministry Contexts

The studies made by Maricel Ibita and Anita Hofileña add Filipino and women's ministry perspectives.[19] The said principle is embodied in the leadership practices of Living Waters Philippines as they model healing and invite others into safe spaces of

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[17] Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times,* (2015).

[18] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Image, 1979)

[19] Ibita, *Learn How to Weep: The Contemporary Challenge of Lament,* (2018); Hofileña, Maggie A, "An Exploratory Study of Women in the Pastoral Ministry in Evangelical Churches in Iloilo City," M.A. Thesis, Central Philippine University (1995), https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12852/722.

lament. Together, these works create a foundation for seeing lament not as defeat, but as formation.

Contemporary Literature

Contemporary literature expands lament into emotional health, authenticity, trauma, self-awareness, and present-day ministry struggles.[20]

Lament, Emotional Honesty, and Healing

Mark Vroegop presents lament as a biblical language for suffering that helps contemporary believers process grief faithfully before God.[21] According to him, "Lament allows you to hear the lessons God intends to teach you through pain. C. S. Lewis famously said, 'God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.' Suffering—at every level—is an opportunity to learn."[22]

Esther Fleece Allen likewise emphasizes emotional honesty before God within personal and pastoral healing journeys.[23] She reflects on the tendency within Christian communities to hide their pain and associate emotional suppression with strength and spiritual maturity. Instead, Fleece Allen argues that lament creates space for honesty,

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[20] Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), Perlego.

[21] Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy.*

[22] Ibid.

[23] Allen, *No More Faking Fine*. (2017)

vulnerability, and healing before God. According to her, her real strength is identifying a wound and asking God to enter it.[24]

Clint Watkins highlights worship through tears and honesty rather than spiritual pretending. He argues that we can wrestle honestly with God through lament…through tears and pray without pretending.[25]

Leadership and Vulnerability

Recent literature emphasizes that authentic Christian leadership includes a willingness to acknowledge suffering, weakness, and affliction, and to accompany others in their pain compassionately. The essence of true gospel leadership is a readiness even to suffer and endure affliction so that others who suffer and are afflicted might find hope. To experience sickness, sorrow, pain, or death is also to taste the love of God as expressed through people who are tethered to Jesus, the Servant who suffered.[26] Esther Fleece Allen and Scott Sauls emphasize emotional honesty, authenticity, and vulnerability within contemporary ministry leadership.[27]

Esther Fleece Allen also highlights that emotional secrecy and "faking fine" often prevent authentic healing and vulnerability within Christian communities and

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[24] Ibid

[25] Clint Watkins, *Just Be Honest: How to Worship Through Tears and Pray without Pretending* (2022).

[26] Scott Sauls, *From Weakness to Strength: 8 Vulnerabilities That Can Bring Out the Best in Your Leadership* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2017), "Suffering: Leading with a Limp," Perlego.

[27] Allen, *No More Faking Fine*; Sauls, *From Weakness to Strength*. (2017)

leadership.[28] She argues that lament and emotional honesty are costly but necessary for healing and transformation. As she reflects, "Healing is costly. Lamenting is costly. But I was paying too steep a price to keep faking fine any longer. I didn't want to pass down my messy heritage to anyone else."[29] Allen further highlights the desire to break cycles of hidden pain rather than passing unresolved wounds to others. Her work reinforces contemporary discussions on authentic leadership, emotional honesty, and healing-centered ministry.

Women in Ministry

Similar to Olsen's discussions of hidden emotional pain among women in ministry, a study by Daryl J. Potts on the silent suffering of the wives of Christian clergy highlighted the often-unrecognized emotional burdens, silent struggles, and relational pressures experienced by women in ministry leadership.[30] The study emphasized the importance of acknowledging their voices, emotional well-being, and personal experiences within ministry contexts rather than expecting silent endurance and emotional suppression.[31]

Tumbaga et al. (2024), in their qualitative study on the lived experiences of clergywomen in selected Christian churches in the National Capital Region, Philippines,

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[28] Allen, *No More Faking Fine*, (2017).

[29] Allen, No More Faking Fine, (2017).

[30] Daryl J. Potts, *"Suffering in Silence: Examining the Silent Suffering of the Wives of Christian Clergy, Advocating for Their Voice and Value," Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 75, no. 1 (2021): 45–52, https://doi.org/10.1177/1542305020968050.

[31] Ibid.

explored the challenges, emotional burdens, leadership realities, and self-perceptions of women serving in ministry.[32] The study highlighted experiences of mockery, financial difficulties, disagreements, gender bias, emotional pressure, and leadership struggles among clergywomen in church settings. Despite these struggles, the study also found themes of resilience, calling, supportive relationships, spiritual dependence, and positive self-concept among women leaders in ministry.[33]

Together, these contemporary authors emphasize emotionally healthy discipleship in which grief, suffering, and vulnerability are acknowledged rather than hidden. They increasingly value emotionally safe communities marked by empathy, listening, confidentiality, and relational trust. Healing discussions increasingly connect lament with trauma-informed ministry, compassionate witness, and emotionally healthy ministry settings.

Previous Studies and Related Research

While there are many studies on lament based on Scripture and theology, only a few integrate lament with leadership formation, especially in the evangelical context of the Philippines.

In biblical studies, Villanueva and Soong-Chan Rah established a theological and biblical foundation, but this is not directly related to leadership models.[34] Federico

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[32] Ma. Antonette M. Tumbaga et al., *"Lived Experiences of Clergywomen in Selected Christian Churches in the National Capital Region, Philippines," Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 22, no. 6 (2024): 623–642, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12797503.

[33] Tumbaga et al., "Lived Experiences of Clergywomen in Selected Christian Churches."

[34] Federico G. Villanueva, *Psalms 1–72: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016); Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled*

Villanueva's works on lament psalms provide exegetical and pastoral insight, framing lament as an act of faith and discipleship.[35] Similarly, Soong-Chan Rah's Prophetic Lament emphasizes the role of corporate lament as an ecclesial witness against triumphalism.[36]

In the areas of leadership and pastoral care, the leadership framework is grounded in brokenness, but it doesn't clearly connect with lament. Dan Allender and Andrew Comiskey argue that weakness and vulnerability are central to authentic leadership.[37] Henri Nouwen's paradigm of the wounded healer reinforces this theme.[38] Kathy Olsen's *Silent Pain* adds the perspective of hidden suffering among leaders, particularly women, pointing to the need for safe spaces in ministry.[39]

In Filipino theological studies, Maricel Ibita's *Learn How to Weep* situates lament within the Catholic context as a prophetic and pastoral response to societal suffering.[40] While valuable, her work does not directly engage evangelical leadership. In addition, studies on women in ministry, such as Hofileña's early thesis on women pastors in Iloilo

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Times, (2015).

[35] Villanueva, *Psalms 1–72: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary,* (2016), 25–30.

[36] Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times,* (2015), 45–47.

[37] Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Take Full Advantage of Your Most Powerful Weakness,* (2006), 30–32; Comiskey, *Strength in Weakness,* (2003), 42–44.

[38] Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society.*

[39] Kathy Olsen, *Silent Pain: Finding God's Comfort for Your Hidden Heartaches*, (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005), 57.

[40] Ibita, *Learn How to Weep: The Contemporary Challenge of Lament,* (2018), 100–103.

City and the more recent dissertation on clergywomen in the NCR, provide insights into women's leadership experiences but do not relate them to lament.[41]

Research Gap

There is research on lament from biblical, theological, and pastoral perspectives. However, there aren't many studies that show how lament can actually shape the everyday practices of evangelical leaders, an area that remains unexplored.

Federico Villanueva and Soong-Chan Rah have explored lament as a vital expression of worship and as a corporate ecclesial witness, yet their works do not explicitly examine its role in shaping leadership models.[42] Similarly, Dan Allender and Andrew Comiskey highlight the role of weakness and vulnerability in leadership, but they rarely situate these insights within a theology of lament.[43] Kathy Olsen's *Silent Pain* provides a poignant reflection on hidden struggles among leaders and pastors' wives, but it does not explicitly connect suffering and lament to constructive leadership formation.[44]

In the Philippine setting, studies of lament are emerging, but they often remain limited either to biblical exegesis or to pastoral application without extending to leadership implications. Maricel Ibita's *Learn How to Weep* draws from a Catholic theological perspective to highlight lament as a prophetic and pastoral response, yet it

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[41] Hofileña, *An Exploratory Study of Women in the Pastoral Ministry*; Tumbaga et al., "*Lived Experiences of Clergywomen*," 623–642.

[42] Villanueva, *Psalms 1–72: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary,* (2016), 25–30; Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (2015), 45–47.

[43] Allender, *Leading with a Limp,* (2006), 30–32; Comiskey, *Strength in Weakness,* (2003), 42–44.

[44] Olsen, *Silent Pain: Finding God's Comfort for Your Hidden Heartaches*, (2005).

does not directly engage evangelical leadership contexts.[45] Research on women in ministry in the Philippines, such as Hofileña's early work on evangelical women pastors and the more recent *Lived Experiences of Clergywomen in NCR*, offers valuable insights into gender and leadership, but they do not connect these experiences to lament.[46]

Theoretical Framework

This research situates lament as a theological category for transformational leadership. This is derived from pastoral and practical theology combined with leadership theories. This is not to say that lament is purely an expression of intense emotion. Instead, it is a sacred and theological act that reshapes and strengthens one's identity, relationships, and mission. Blaine-Wallace, for example, argues that lament holds both psychological and spiritual significance, functioning as a means of integrating personal pain with communal healing.[47]

From a biblical-theological perspective, the Psalms offer the most developed witness to lament. Federico Villanueva's exegetical work demonstrates that lament is not antithetical to worship but a vital part of Israel's liturgical life.[48] Villanueva recognizes

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[45] Ibita, *Learn How to Weep: The Contemporary Challenge of Lament,* (2018), 100–103.

[46] Hofileña, "An Exploratory Study of Women in the Pastoral Ministry in Evangelical Churches in Iloilo City," (1995); Tumbaga et al., "*Lived Experiences of Clergywomen*," 623–642.

[47] Wallace, *When Tears Sing: The Art of Lament in Christian Community (2005).*

[48] Villanueva, *Psalms 1–72: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary, Asia Bible Commentary* (2016), 25–30.

the "uncertainty of a hearing" within lament psalms. Hence, lament trains a heart in faith, so that it persists even amid unresolved suffering. Considering this, lament offers a biblical framework for understanding leadership as faithfulness in weakness, rather than certainty or control.[49]

Practical theology and ecclesiology also inform this study. Soong-Chan Rah frames corporate lament as essential for the church's witness in contexts of injustice and brokenness.[50] In this way, lament becomes more than just a prayer; it becomes an engaging expression and response to suffering and injustice. The church then becomes a safe space for vulnerability, fostering authentic worship of God. It strengthens the bond of compassion and keeps the church from pretending that everything is just fine.

Within leadership theory, Dan Allender and Andrew Comiskey both articulate how weakness and brokenness can serve as resources for leadership rather than liabilities.[51] They argue that leadership shaped by weakness, vulnerability, and authenticity produces honest and compassionate leaders who walk with people who are suffering, rather than being seen as strong, controlled, and charismatic.

All these theoretical perspectives build a leadership structure in which lament functions simultaneously as a biblical, pastoral, and leadership category. For this study, however, lament was analyzed as a lived practice shaping leadership identity and mission rather than as an isolated doctrine.

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (2015), 45–47.

[51] Allender, *Leading with a Limp,* (2006), 30–32; Comiskey, *Strength in Weakness* (2003), 40–42.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is weaving together five core concepts: lament, healing, vulnerability, leadership formation, and missional witness. These are treated as a single theme, not separate ones.

Lament. It is being honestly open before God, where we connect with our pain, acknowledge it, bring it to the cross, and exchange it with the suffering of Christ. This enables us to process our pain and grief faithfully. Villanueva highlights how lament functions as an expression of trust amid suffering, while Rah emphasizes its corporate and missional dimensions.[52]

Healing. This arises out of lament. In Living Waters Philippines, lament is not confined to merely verbal expression and intense emotions. Instead, it is integrated in listening prayer, confession, many trips to the cross, surrender to God as our healing Savior, exchanging our pain with His suffering on the cross, and the support of a healing community. These healing practices are illustrated by Comiskey, where healing becomes central to discipleship, and weakness is not suppressed but transformed.[53]

Vulnerability. This is the bridge between lament and leadership. Authentic leadership is evident in embracing vulnerability and creating a safe space where others can freely share their pain. Kathy Olsen's *Silent Pain* underscores the hidden suffering

[52] Villanueva, *It's OK to Be Not OK: Preaching the Lament Psalms* (2017), 15–18; Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (20215) , 50–53.

[53] Comiskey, *Strength in Weakness* (2003), 100–104.

that often accompanies leadership, highlighting the need for communities where vulnerability is permitted and shared.[54]

Leadership formation. This emerges from lament and vulnerability. Allender's vision of leading with a limp shows that leadership born of weakness is more credible and sustainable. Nouwen's paradigm of the wounded healer affirms that brokenness, when acknowledged, becomes a source of compassion and authority.[55]

Missional witness. A natural outflow, this is the outward expression of leadership rooted in lament. Churches are better equipped for evangelism and discipleship as lament is integrated in leadership formation.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the ethical standards of qualitative research as discussed with the participants. They are informed of the study's purpose and that their participation is voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity are observed and maintained through the use of pseudonyms or roles when necessary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Because the study involves emotionally sensitive experiences such as grief, trauma, abuse, and personal wounds, the research also follows trauma-informed interviewing practices emphasizing empathy, emotional safety, and respect.[56]

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[54] Olsen, *Silent Pain: Finding God's Comfort for Your Hidden Heartaches,* (2005), 55–58.

[55] Allender, *Leading with a Limp,* (2006), 60–62; Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society,* (1979), 87–89.

[56] Fernandez, Rochelle & Adajar, Welmer. *Trauma-Informed Counseling in the Philippine Context: A Scoping Review with Implications for University Counseling Services*. Social Science Lens A World Journal of Human Dynamics and Social Relations (January 2026). 10.62718/vmca.ssl-wjhdsr.7.1.SC-1225-014.

Chapter III

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative narrative case study design, drawing on selected ethnographic elements, to explore how lament functions as a formative leadership practice within a specific ministry context. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for this research because it seeks to understand lived experiences, meanings, and practices, rather than to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships.[57]

The primary research design is a case study, focusing on Living Waters Philippines as a bounded system. Case study research is particularly suitable when a contemporary phenomenon is examined within its real-life context and when multiple sources of evidence are required to gain an in-depth understanding of complex social processes.[58] In this study, Living Waters Philippines serves as the case and is examined

[57] Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (2018). Perlego.

[58] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018). Perlego.

as a ministry context. The case study approach allows for a holistic examination of leadership as it is lived and practiced within the ministry's life.

To complement the case study design, the research integrates narrative inquiry, foregrounding the stories of women leaders as primary data sources. Narrative inquiry emphasizes how individuals make meaning of their experiences over time and how personal stories reflect broader relational, spiritual, and social realities.[59] Through narrative inquiry, the study examines how lament shapes leadership identity, relationships, and ministry practices.

In addition, the study incorporates limited ethnographic elements, including participant observation of ministry sessions and leadership interactions. While the research does not constitute a full ethnography, ethnographic techniques enable the researcher to observe how lament is embodied not only in verbal accounts but also in rituals, communal practices, and relational dynamics within the ministry.[60] These observations provide contextual depth and support the interpretation of participants' narratives.

Table 1. Alignment of Research Questions, Methods, and Analysis

Research Question	Primary Data Sources / Methods	Analytic Approach	Expected Analytic Focus
1. How does Living Waters Philippines model vulnerability	Narrative interviews, reflective surveys,	Thematic analysis of narratives	Expressions of lament; meanings attached to pain

[59] D. Jean Clandinin, *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry* (New York: Routledge, 2022). Perlego.

[60] Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2019).

and healing in leadership?	and written reflections		and woundedness; leadership identity formation
.2 In what ways does lament shape leaders within the ministry?	Narrative interviews and participant observation (ethnographic elements)	Thematic analysis with triangulation	Practices of healing; expressions of vulnerability; relational dynamics; leadership integrity and sustainability
3. What strengths and challenges of the Living Waters leadership model connect with lament as leadership?	Interviews, observation of ministry practices, facilitator materials, and ministry records	Interpretive thematic analysis	Embodied missional witness; leadership practices connected to evangelism, discipleship, and community formation

Research Orientation

As a qualitative inquiry, this study doesn't test hypotheses. Instead, it operates on the guiding assumption that lament may serve as a formative leadership practice by integrating healing, vulnerability, and mission. This assumption serves as a sensitizing concept, guiding inquiry while allowing themes and meanings to emerge inductively from the data.[61] The goal of the study is to describe and interpret lived leadership realities within the ministry context.

Participants and Sampling

The population for this study consists of volunteers/coordinators, facilitators, and women leaders involved in Living Waters Philippines. Participants are selected through purposeful sampling, based on their leadership roles, involvement in healing ministry, and ability to articulate experiences related to lament, healing, and leadership formation.[62] Purposeful sampling is appropriate for qualitative case studies that prioritize depth of understanding over representativeness. Participants include women leaders with varying years of ministry involvement in Living Waters Philippines. They are small group leaders, prayer intercessors, ministry facilitators, and healing leaders.

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[61] Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2018), 186–193.

[62] *Ibid.*

Data Collection Methods

Data is collected using multiple qualitative methods to capture both narrative and practice-based dimensions of leadership formation:

- Surveys (for background information and initial reflections)
- Narrative interviews (to elicit leadership stories and experiences of lament)
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
- Limited participant observation (ethnographic elements)
- Reflective notes and analytic memos

The use of multiple data sources supports triangulation and strengthens the credibility of the findings.[63] The results of open-ended surveys, interviews, and FGDs were transcribed and organized using NVivo qualitative software.

Data Analysis

Data is analyzed using thematic analysis, involving the identification of recurring patterns, meanings, and metaphors related to lament, healing, vulnerability, leadership formation, and missional witness.[64] Data is coded inductively, allowing themes to emerge from participants' narratives, observations, and written materials. To enhance rigor, triangulation is employed by comparing data across methods and sources.[65] Thematic findings are interpreted in light of Scripture, pastoral theology, and leadership theory,

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[63] Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (2018), 49–68.

[64] Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (2018), 186–193

[65] Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (2018), 49–68.

consistent with the study's theoretical framework.

NVivo supports thematic analysis. The process included the following:

- Survey results
- Transcription of interviews and FGDs
- First cycle coding
- Development of parent and child codes
- Matrix coding queries
- Analytic memo writing
- Pattern identification
- Development of emergent themes

The parent themes identified are lament, healing, vulnerability, leadership formation, and missional witness. The study seeks trustworthiness through prolonged engagement in the ministry, triangulation of surveys, interviews, and FGDs, reflective memo writing, thematic consistency, and participant narrative and quotation.

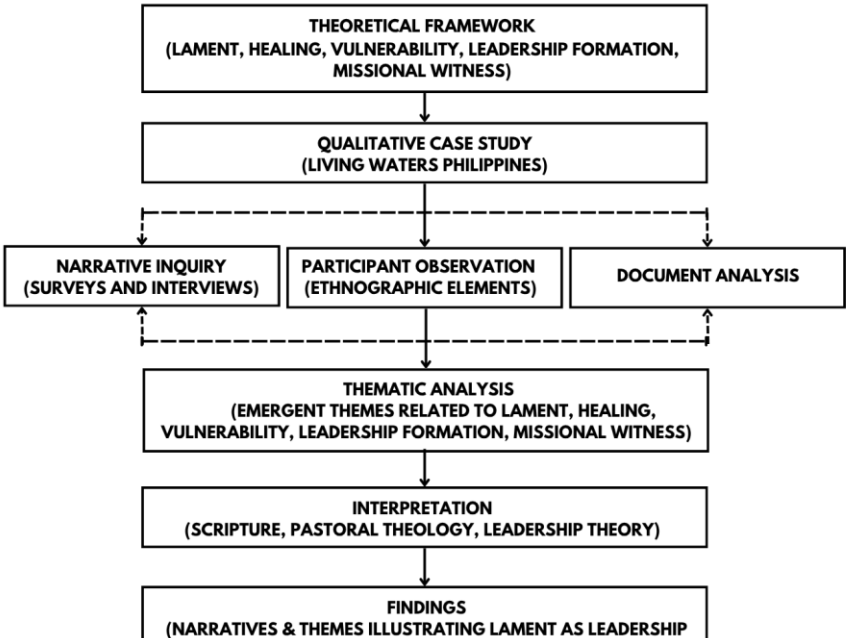
Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to one ministry context, Living Waters Philippines, and does not aim to generalize statistically. Instead, it seeks to provide thick description and contextual insight that may offer transferable understanding for similar ministry settings. Ethnographic observation is limited by time and access, and the study assumes that participants' narratives authentically reflect their lived leadership experiences.

Reporting of Findings

Findings are presented through themes and narrative accounts that illustrate how lament shapes leadership identity, integrity, sustainability, and embodied missional witness. The presentation integrates participants' stories with biblical, pastoral, and leadership insights.

Figure 1. Research Design and Analysis Framework: This diagram illustrates the alignment of the theoretical framework, the qualitative case study design, the data collection methods, and the thematic analysis used to examine lament as a formative leadership practice in Living Waters Philippines. Adapted from Yin (2018), Clandinin (2022), and Hammersley and Atkinson (2019).



Chapter IV

Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents the emergent themes, supporting subthemes, and evidence gathered from surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and ministry observations conducted within Living Waters Philippines. Through thematic analysis in NVivo, recurring patterns emerged from participants' lived experiences related to lament, healing, vulnerability, leadership formation, and missional witness.

Representation of the Participants

The participants in this study included women leaders who are volunteers/coordinators, small-group leaders, prayer intercessors, facilitators, and healing leaders involved in Living Waters Philippines programs serving in healing and discipleship ministries. Participants represented diverse ministry experiences, leadership responsibilities, ages, and years of ministry involvement. Many participants shared experiences related to emotional wounds, family struggles, leadership pressures, ministry

burdens, and healing journeys that shaped their understanding of leadership and discipleship.

Table No. 2 Representation of Participants By Ministry Role

Participant Type	Number
Volunteers / Coordinators	20
Small Group Leaders	11
Prayer Intercessors	5
Facilitators & Healing Leaders	7

Table No. 2 shows the participants by ministry role within Living Waters Philippines, including volunteers/coordinators, small group leaders, prayer intercessors, facilitators, and healing leaders.

Description of the Data

Data were collected through open-ended surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and ministry observations. The interviews and FGDs were transcribed and analyzed along with the surveys using NVivo qualitative analysis software.

Initial coding generated multiple parent and child nodes related to lament, healing, vulnerability, leadership formation, and missional witness. Through thematic analysis, recurring patterns, emotional experiences, spiritual reflections, leadership realities, and healing narratives emerged across participant stories.

Analytic memos, coding matrices, and thematic clustering further revealed significant connections between lament, healing, vulnerability, and leadership development.

Table No. 3 Thematic Coding Matrix by Participant Role

Participants Role	Lament	Vulnerability	Healing	Leadership Formation	Missional Witness
Volunteers / Coordinators	37	27	25	5	14
Small Group Leaders	21	20	36	19	11
Prayer Intercessors	37	27	25	5	14
Facilitators / Healing Leaders	19	40	66	22	13

Table 3 presents the distribution of coding across participant roles and major themes. The data reveal that lament, vulnerability, and healing emerged strongly among volunteers, prayer intercessors, and facilitators/healing leaders, suggesting the relational and healing-centered nature of leadership within Living Waters Philippines. Leadership formation and missional witness were evident across all participant groups, reflecting the integration of healing, discipleship, and ministry practice within participants' lived experiences.

Emergent Themes, Sub-Themes, and Evidences

Lament emerged as a spiritual practice of honestly expressing our pain and struggles before God. Participants described lament as naming wounds, grieving losses, expressing hidden pain, confronting brokenness, and bringing struggles honestly before God. Many narratives revealed experiences of abandonment, emotional neglect, family

wounds, emotional suppression, and unresolved grief. Lament also became a movement from self-reliance toward surrender and dependence on God.

Table No. 4 Lament Supporting Subthemes, Evidence Patterns, and Sample Evidence

Supporting Subthemes	Evidence Patterns	Sample Evidence
Lament as Naming and Acknowledging Wounds	"father wounds," "mother wounds," "abandonment," "rejection," "childhood wounds"	"I realized I was carrying father wounds all along."
Lament as Honest Emotional Expression Before God	"crying," "wailing," "grieving before God," "bringing pain honestly to God."	"I cried before God because I could no longer hide the pain."
Lament as Confronting Hidden Pain and Suppressed Emotions	"suppressed emotions," "fear of vulnerability," "protective masks," "false identity"	"I learned to survive by suppressing my emotions."

Lament as Grieving Loss and Unmet Needs	"grieving lost childhood," "lack of affection," "abandonment," "loss of intimacy"	"I realized I was grieving the childhood I never had."
Lament as the Struggle of Inner Brokenness	"anxiety," "burnout," "fear," "overfunctioning," "weariness"	"I was serving while carrying exhaustion and hidden pain."
Lament as Surrender and Dependence on God	"surrender," "asking for help," "encounter with God," "dependence on God."	"Healing started when I finally surrendered everything to God."
Lament as a Pathway Toward Healing and Transformation	"facing pain," "acknowledging struggles," "compassion through brokenness."	"God met me in the middle of my brokenness."
Lament within Spiritual and Ministry Contexts	"church hurt," "spiritual abuse," "burden of ministry," "identity tied to ministry"	"I was serving in ministry while silently hurting."

Lament and Relational Brokenness	"family wounds," "rejection," "loneliness," "emotional distance"	"I felt emotionally abandoned even while surrounded by people."
Lament and Identity Formation	"false identity," "wounded self-concept," "survival identity"	"I built my identity around surviving and performing."

Vulnerability emerged as both difficult and transformative in participants' healing journeys. Many participants described fear of judgment, shame, emotional exposure, and pressure to appear strong in ministry and church settings. At the same time, vulnerability became the bridge between lament and healing.

Participants emphasized that vulnerability flourishes only within safe and trustworthy relationships marked by empathy, confidentiality, and compassion.

Table No. 5 Vulnerability Supporting Subthemes, Evidence Patterns, and Sample Evidence

Supporting Subthemes	Evidence Patterns	Sample Evidence

Vulnerability as Honest Self-Disclosure	"openness," "sharing struggles," "authenticity," "exposing weakness"	"For the first time, I became honest about my struggles."
Vulnerability Requires Safety and Trust	"safe people," "confidentiality," "non-judgmental spaces," "trust"	"I only opened up when I knew I was safe."
Fear and Resistance to Vulnerability	"fear of judgment," "fear of rejection," "shame," "hiding weakness"	"I was afraid people would judge me if they knew my pain."
Vulnerability Versus Performance Culture	"leaders must be strong," "wearing masks," "maintaining image," "perfectionism."	"I thought leaders always had to appear strong."
Vulnerability as Pathway to Healing	"confession," "openness before God," "emotional release," "lament"	"Healing deepened when I stopped hiding."
Vulnerability and Authentic Leadership	"honesty," "humility," "integrity," "leading without pretense"	"Leadership became more authentic when I stopped pretending."

Boundaries and Discernment in Vulnerability	"wise disclosure," "discernment," "holy boundaries"	"Not everyone is safe, so vulnerability needs wisdom."
Vulnerability Builds Community	"shared brokenness," "empathy," "genuine relationships," "deeper connection"	"Our shared struggles brought us closer together."

Healing emerged as deeply relational rather than merely individual. Participants consistently described healing through safe community, confession, prayer, emotional release, acceptance, accountability, and being heard without judgment.

Healing was also viewed as an ongoing process involving restoration of identity, surrender, forgiveness, and transformation.

Table No. 6 Healing Supporting Subthemes, Evidence Patterns, and Sample Evidence

Supporting Subthemes	Evidence Patterns	Sample Evidence
Healing Through Safe Community	"safe spaces," "being heard," "acceptance," "supportive community."	"I finally felt accepted even in my brokenness."
Healing Through Confession and Honesty	"confession," "honest exposure,"	"Confession became the beginning of my healing."

	"accountability," "healing prayer."	
Healing Through Emotional Release	"crying," "grieving," "emotional expression," "release of pain"	"I cried and released years of hidden pain."
Healing Through Forgiveness	"forgiving abusers," "self-forgiveness," "letting go of bitterness"	"Forgiveness brought freedom into my life."
Healing as Identity Restoration	"freedom from shame," "restored identity," "true self," "identity in Christ"	"I no longer define myself by my wounds."
Healing as Transformation	"renewed perspective," "spiritual transformation," "surrender," "freedom"	"Healing changed how I viewed myself and others."
Healing as an Ongoing Journey	"work in progress," "continuous healing," "another layer of healing"	"Healing is still ongoing in my life."
Healing that Shapes Leadership	"compassionate leadership," "leading from	"My healing changed how I lead people now."

	healing," "creating safe spaces"	

Participants described leadership formation not merely as acquiring ministry skills, but as inner transformation shaped through healing, vulnerability, surrender, and dependence on God. Many participants emphasized that leaders must first confront their own wounds before effectively ministering to others.

Leadership was consistently connected to compassion, authenticity, humility, relational presence, and creating safe spaces.

Table No. 7 Leadership Formation Supporting Subthemes, Evidence Patterns, and Sample Evidence

Supporting Subthemes	Evidence Patterns	Sample Evidence
Leadership Begins with Inner Healing	"healed heart," "dealing with personal wounds," "self-leadership"	"God first dealt with my wounds before using me in ministry."
Leadership Through Compassion and Empathy	"less judgmental," "understanding	"My pain taught me compassion for others."

	brokenness," "patient leadership"	
Leadership Through Vulnerability and Integrity	"authenticity," "humility," "honesty," "integrity"	"Leadership became real when I stopped pretending."
Leadership Through Dependence on God	"listening prayer," "Holy Spirit," "surrender," "abiding in God"	"I learned to rely on God instead of myself."
Leadership as Creating Safe Spaces	"emotional safety," "safe environments," "healing-centered leadership"	"I now lead by creating safe spaces for people."
Leadership as Servanthood and Presence	"listening," "journeying with people," "accompanying pain"	"Leadership became more about presence than performance."
Leadership as Transformation Rather than Performance	"lead from healing," "performance culture," "true self"	"I realized ministry is not about performing for God."
Leadership as Ongoing Formation	"continuous growth," "ongoing healing," "discernment"	"Leadership formation is still ongoing in my life."

Leadership Through Testimony and Shared Brokenness	"sharing wounds," "testimony ministry," "ministering from experience"	"My testimony became part of my ministry."

Missional witness emerged as the outward natural overflow of healing and transformation. Participants described moving from personal healing toward helping others through discipleship, soul care, compassionate presence, testimony, and healing ministry.

Missional witness was frequently described as relational accompaniment rather than merely instructional ministry.

Table No. 8 Missional Witness Supporting Subthemes, Evidence Patterns, and Sample Evidence

Supporting Subthemes	Evidence Patterns	Sample Evidence
Leading People to Jesus and the Cross	"leading people to Christ," "gospel-centered healing," "cross-centered ministry"	"Healing always points people back to Jesus."

Healing as Witness and Evangelism	"transformation as testimony," "sharing the gospel through healing"	"People encountered God through our healing stories."
Ministry to the Broken and Wounded	"journeying with hurting people," "soul care," "walking with people"	"We minister to people carrying deep wounds."
Compassionate Presence as Ministry	"listening," "being present," "accompanying others," "empathy"	"Sometimes people simply need someone to listen."
Testimony as Ministry Tool	"sharing stories," "personal healing testimony," "witness through vulnerability"	"My testimony opened doors for ministry."
Community as Missional Witness	"healing communities," "shared healing," "safe spaces reflect the gospel"	"Our community itself became a testimony of healing."
Empowerment Through the Holy Spirit	"listening prayer," "discernment," "dependence on the Spirit"	"The Holy Spirit guided our ministry to others."

Transformation that Multiplies Ministry	“healed people discipling others,” “wounded healers”	“Those who experienced healing eventually helped others heal.”

Overall Thematic Movement

The findings reveal a transformational progression across participants' lived experiences.

Lament becomes the awakening stage in which participants recognize wounds, grieve losses, and bring their pain before God. Vulnerability then becomes the bridge between lament and healing, where participants risk honesty, confession, emotional exposure, and authentic relationships within safe communities.

Healing emerges through confession, surrender, forgiveness, emotional release, identity restoration, and encounter with God and community. Leadership formation then develops not merely through skills acquisition, but through healed pain, compassion, authenticity, and dependence on God.

Finally, Missional Witness becomes the outward natural overflow of healing and transformation, where participants move from personal restoration toward compassionate ministry, discipleship, testimony, accompaniment, and healing-centered leadership. From lament to missional witness through vulnerability, healing, and transformed leadership.

Figure No. 2 Transformational Progression of Lament, Vulnerability, Healing, Leadership Formation, and Missional Witness



The figure illustrates the transformational progression emerging from the narratives of participants within Living Waters Philippines. Before conducting the study, the researcher's personal observation and experience as a participant in Living Waters Philippines initially suggested a progression from lament to healing, to vulnerability, to leadership formation, and to missional witness.

However, deeper engagement with participant narratives revealed that vulnerability served as the bridge between lament and healing, as participants consistently described honesty, confession, emotional openness, and safe spaces as necessary for healing. Thus, lament becomes the acknowledgment of pain before God; vulnerability reveals hidden struggles; healing brings transformation and restoration. Leadership formation develops through compassion and dependence on God, and missional witness overflows into ministry and daily life as participants continue to connect with God as the source of healing.

Chapter V

Discussions, Contributions, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Discussion

Major Findings

The study reveals that lament functions not merely as a grief expression but as a transformational spiritual and relational process shaping vulnerability, healing, leadership formation, and missional witness within the ministry context of Living Waters Philippines.

The findings demonstrate that:

- Lament is relational, spiritual, and formative

- Vulnerability functions as the bridge between lament and healing
- Healing is communal, ongoing, and restorative
- Leadership formation begins through inner healing and authenticity
- Missional witness naturally overflows from healing and relational discipleship

The findings also reveal that missional witness becomes not merely a ministry activity but a lifestyle shaped by continued dependence on God as the source of healing, compassion, and transformation.

Alignment with Foundational Literature

The findings strongly support Villanueva's understanding of lament as an act of trust, discipleship, and faith amid suffering. Participants consistently described lament not merely as emotional expression, but as honest engagement with pain before God through surrender, dependence, and spiritual openness.

The study also aligns with Rah's concept of prophetic lament as ecclesial witness within brokenness and suffering. The findings demonstrate that lament-centered leadership creates compassionate and healing-centered ministry spaces that embody the church's witness within wounded communities.

The findings strongly reflect Allender's concept of "leading with a limp" and Nouwen's wounded-healer paradigm, in which leadership emerges not from strength and performance but from acknowledged weakness, healing, and dependence on God. Participants repeatedly described leadership formation as inner transformation shaped through vulnerability, compassion, surrender, and healing.

The findings also support Comiskey's healing-centered discipleship framework, particularly in how confession, healing prayer, surrender, safe community, and emotional

honesty became pathways toward healing and authentic discipleship.

Alignment with Contemporary Literature

The findings also align with contemporary discussions on emotional health, authenticity, vulnerability, and healing-centered ministry leadership. Similar to Vroegop, participants described lament as a faithful way of processing grief, suffering, and brokenness before God.

The findings strongly resonate with Esther Fleece Allen's discussions on emotional honesty and the dangers of "faking fine" within Christian leadership and ministry contexts. Participants frequently described emotional suppression, hidden pain, and performance-oriented spirituality before entering spaces of healing and vulnerability.

Similarly, Scott Sauls' emphasis on weakness, emotional vulnerability, suffering, and compassionate leadership reflects the participants' experiences of leadership formation through brokenness, healing, and relational authenticity

The findings also align with Potts' discussions of silent suffering among women in ministry leadership and with Tumbaga et al.'s study of clergywomen in the Philippine context. Participants described emotional burdens, hidden wounds, ministry pressures, relational struggles, and expectations placed upon women leaders, while also emphasizing healing, resilience, supportive community, and dependence on God.

Contextualization in Filipino Settings

The findings reflect several Filipino cultural realities, including:

- emotional suppression
- avoidance of confrontation
- Performance-oriented leadership and spirituality
- hidden family wounds
- collectivist community values
- relational approaches to healing

Participants frequently described difficulties in expressing pain openly within family, church, and ministry environments. Emotional struggles were often hidden to preserve harmony, avoid shame, or maintain spiritual and leadership expectations.

Within this context, Living Waters Philippines functioned as a healing-centered ministry space where lament, vulnerability, confession, listening prayer, and safe relationships became possible. The findings demonstrate how lament and healing practices create safe spaces for emotional honesty, relational healing, authentic discipleship, and compassionate leadership within the Filipino evangelical setting.

Contributions of the Study

Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes to practical theology, leadership studies, and pastoral theology by positioning lament not merely as worship or grief expression but as a transformational leadership framework shaping vulnerability, healing, leadership formation, and missional witness. The study also contributes to qualitative discussions on healing-centered leadership and relational discipleship within evangelical ministry contexts.

Ministry Contributions

The study provides practical insights for healing ministries, discipleship models, women's ministry, pastoral care, and leadership development programs. It highlights the importance of creating emotionally safe and healing-centered ministry spaces where lament, vulnerability, and honest discipleship are welcomed.

Contributions to Evangelical Leadership

The study contributes to evangelical leadership discussions by demonstrating how authentic, sustainable leadership can emerge through vulnerability, healing, surrender, compassion, and dependence on God rather than performance-driven models.

Contributions to Women's Ministry

The study amplifies the lived experiences of women leaders within healing and discipleship ministries. It highlights the emotional burdens, hidden struggles, resilience, and healing journeys experienced by women leaders. It contributes to limited qualitative studies on lament, healing, and leadership formation within the Philippine evangelical context.

Recommendations

Here are the recommendations for Living Waters Philippines:

- Continue creating safe and healing-centered ministry spaces and integrating lament, vulnerability, and healing within discipleship practices
- Strengthen the leader care and emotional support system

- Provide ongoing healing and leadership formation for ministry leaders

Here are the recommendations for Future Researchers:

- Conduct comparative studies involving male and female ministry leaders
- Further explore healing-centered leadership models within practical theology
- Explore lament and leadership in other evangelical and ministry contexts

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that lament is not merely an emotional response to suffering but a transformative spiritual and relational practice that shapes vulnerability, healing, leadership formation, and missional witness.

Within Living Waters Philippines, lament becomes a pathway toward authentic discipleship, healing-centered leadership, and compassionate ministry. The findings reveal that leaders shaped through vulnerability and healing can minister with greater empathy, humility, authenticity, relational presence, and dependence on God.

The study also responded to the research questions by showing how Living Waters Philippines models vulnerability and healing through safe spaces, listening prayer, confession, many trips to the cross, relational accompaniment, and healing-centered discipleship. The findings further revealed that lament shapes leadership by helping leaders acknowledge wounds, confront hidden pain, surrender to God, and develop authentic and compassionate leadership practices. Participants also identified

both strengths and challenges within the ministry, including the importance of emotional safety, ongoing healing, relational trust, and the tension between vulnerability and performance-oriented leadership culture.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated how leadership shaped through lament naturally overflows into compassionate evangelism and discipleship, testimony, healing ministry, and missional witness. Missional witness became a lifestyle rooted in continued connection with God as the source of healing and transformation.

The study also helps address the research gap by contributing qualitative and contextual insights into lament, vulnerability, healing, and leadership formation within the Philippine evangelical setting, particularly among women leaders in ministry. While previous literature discussed lament from biblical, pastoral, and theological perspectives, this study explored lament as a lived leadership practice embodied within ministry life and discipleship.

The progression from lament to vulnerability, healing, leadership formation, and missional witness reflects a deeply relational and transformational model of Christian leadership grounded in the lived experiences of participants within Living Waters Philippines.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that transformed and healing-centered leadership does not emerge from strength alone, but from leaders who honestly confront their wounds before God. This allows healing to shape the way they lead and minister to others, because healed leaders heal others.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire

Research Title: "Lament as Leadership: A Study of Lived Practices of Vulnerability and Healing among Women Leaders in Living Waters Philippines (Mandaluyong, Philippines)"

You are invited to participate in a graduate research study titled "Lament as Leadership: A Study of Lived Practices of Vulnerability and Healing among Women Leaders in Living Waters Philippines." This interview seeks to explore how lament, healing, and vulnerability shape leadership formation and gospel mission within the ministry context of Living Waters Philippines and will take approximately 45–60 minutes. Your participation is voluntary; you may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time, and all responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes; with your permission, the interview may be audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation.

By proceeding with the interview, you indicate that you have read and understood this information and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

☐ I agree to participate in this interview

☐ I do not agree to participate

☐ I consent to audio recording

☐ I do not consent to audio recording

A. Leadership Journey

1. Can you share your journey into leadership within Living Waters Philippines?
2. How would you describe your understanding of leadership before and after your involvement with Living Waters?

B. Lament & Healing

3. What does lament mean to you in your personal and spiritual journey?
4. Can you recall a time when you were invited to be honest about pain or struggle in Living Waters?
5. How have healing practices (e.g., prayer, confession, community) shaped your leadership?

C. Vulnerability & Integrity

6. What has been your experience of vulnerability as a leader, especially as a woman?
7. Are there pressures in church or ministry culture that make vulnerability difficult?
8. How has Living Waters influenced your sense of integrity and sustainability in leadership?

D. Mission & Witness

9. In what ways has your leadership impacted others because of your healing journey?
10. How do you see lament shaping the mission of the church (discipleship, evangelism, soul care)?

Closing

What do you wish church leaders better understood about lament, healing, and leadership?

Thank you!

Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire

Research Title: "Lament as Leadership: A Study of Lived Practices of Vulnerability and Healing among Women Leaders in Living Waters Philippines (Mandaluyong, Philippines)"

You are invited to participate in a graduate research study titled "Lament as Leadership: A Study of Lived Practices of Vulnerability and Healing among Women Leaders in Living Waters Philippines." This focus group discussion seeks to explore how lament, healing, and vulnerability shape leadership formation and gospel mission within the ministry context of Living Waters Philippines and will take approximately 60–90 minutes. Your participation is voluntary; you may choose not to answer any question or withdraw at any time, and all responses will be used solely for academic purposes. While confidentiality will be observed in the handling of data, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the group setting. With your permission, the discussion may be audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation.

By proceeding with the interview, you indicate that you have read and understood this information and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

☐ I agree to participate in this focus group discussion

☐ I do not agree to participate

☐ I consent to audio recording

☐ I do not consent to audio recording

FGD Questions:

1. How is leadership generally understood or modeled in church or ministry contexts?
2. What makes it difficult for leaders, especially women, to talk about pain or weakness?
3. How does Living Waters create a different space for leaders compared to other ministries?
4. In what ways does lament shape community, not just individuals?
5. How does leadership formed through healing influence mission and witness?
6. What strengths of the Living Waters leadership model stand out to you?
7. What challenges or tensions remain when practicing vulnerability in leadership?

Thank you!

Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire

Research Title: “Lament as Leadership: A Study of Lived Practices of Vulnerability and Healing among Women Leaders in Living Waters Philippines (Mandaluyong, Philippines)”

You are invited to participate in a graduate research study titled “Lament as Leadership: A Study of Lived Practices of Vulnerability and Healing among Women Leaders in Living Waters Philippines.” This survey seeks to understand how lament, healing, and vulnerability shape leadership formation and gospel mission within the ministry context of Living Waters Philippines and will take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary; you may skip any question or stop at any time, and all responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

By proceeding with this survey, you indicate that you have read and understood the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

☐ I agree to participate in this study

☐ I do not agree to participate

Section 1: Demography

1. Full Name: _____
2. What is your current role in Living Waters Philippines?

   ☐ Participant/alumna

   ☐ Small Group Facilitator

   ☐ Prayer Intercessor

   ☐ Coordinator

   ☐ Staff

   ☐ Healing Leader

   ☐ Other: _____
3. How long have you been involved in Living Waters Philippines?

   ☐ Less than 1 year

   ☐ 1–2 years

   ☐ 3–5 years

   ☐ 6+ years

4. What is your leadership role outside of Living Waters Philippines (if any)?

   ☐ None

   ☐ Church Volunteer / Leader

   ☐ Ministry Coordinator / Head

   ☐ Lady Pastor / Minister

   ☐ Pastor's wife

   ☐ Missionary / Church Planter

   ☐ Other: _____

5. How long have you been in a church/ministry role or leadership (overall)?

   ☐ Not Applicable (N/A)

   ☐ Less than 1 year

   ☐ 1–3 years

   ☐ 4–6 years

   ☐ 7–9 years

   ☐ 10+ years

6. What is your primary ministry context?

   ☐ Local church

   ☐ Para-church / healing ministry

   ☐ Both church and para-church

   ☐ Other: _____

7. Where is the location of your church/ministry?

   ☐ NCR

   ☐ Luzon (outside NCR)

   ☐ Visayas

   ☐ Mindanao

   ☐ Overseas / Online ministry

Section 2: Leadership Formation and Ministry Experience in Living Waters Philippines

The following statements ask about your background and leadership formation experiences; please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement using the scale below.

Scale: 1 – Strongly Disagree | 2 – Disagree | 3 – Neutral | 4 – Agree | 5 – Strongly Agree

Section 2.1: How does lament shape leaders within the ministry?

1. I have learned to bring my pain, grief, or unanswered questions honestly before God as part of my leadership journey.
2. Practices of lament have helped me understand myself more deeply as a leader.
3. Lament has shaped how I relate to God in seasons of struggle and leadership pressure.

Section 2.2: How do healing and vulnerability mediate leadership integrity and sustainability?

4. I have experienced healing that has influenced how I lead others.
5. I feel permitted to acknowledge weakness or vulnerability without fear of being disqualified as a leader.

6. Engaging my wounds honestly has helped me lead with greater integrity and emotional sustainability

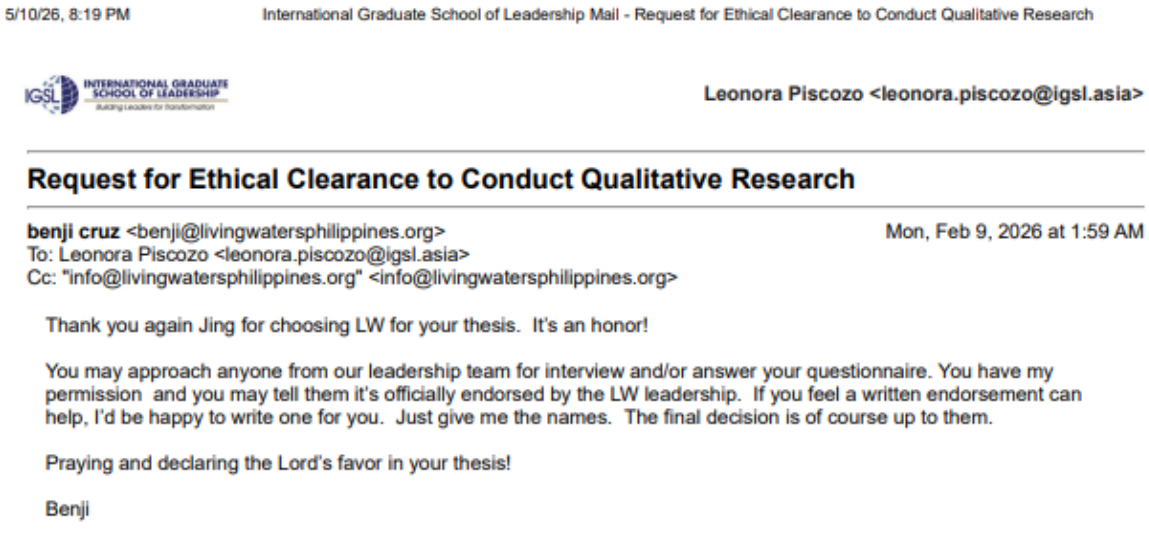
Section 2.3: How does lament-shaped leadership support the church's gospel mission?

7. My leadership has become more compassionate toward others' suffering because of my own experiences of lament and healing.
8. I believe leadership shaped by lament strengthens discipleship and community life.
9. Engaging pain honestly has helped me participate more meaningfully in the church's mission and witness.

Section 2.4: Optional

10. In one or two sentences, how would you describe the impact of Living Waters on your leadership?

Appendix D: Request for Ethical Clearance to Conduct Qualitative Research



5/10/26, 8:19 PM International Graduate School of Leadership Mail - Request for Ethical Clearance to Conduct Qualitative Research

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

Leonora Piscozo <leonora.piscozo@igsl.asia>

Request for Ethical Clearance to Conduct Qualitative Research

benji cruz <benji@livingwatersphilippines.org> Mon, Feb 9, 2026 at 1:59 AM
To: Leonora Piscozo <leonora.piscozo@igsl.asia>
Cc: "info@livingwatersphilippines.org" <info@livingwatersphilippines.org>

Thank you again Jing for choosing LW for your thesis. It's an honor!

You may approach anyone from our leadership team for interview and/or answer your questionnaire. You have my permission and you may tell them it's officially endorsed by the LW leadership. If you feel a written endorsement can help, I'd be happy to write one for you. Just give me the names. The final decision is of course up to them.

Praying and declaring the Lord's favor in your thesis!

Benji

On Feb 8, 2026, at 6:40 PM, Leonora Piscozo <leonora.piscozo@igsl.asia> wrote:

1. Invite selected women leaders to participate in the study, and
2. Conduct the research within appropriate ministry contexts, as deemed suitable by the leadership.

I have attached the Questionnaire for Survey, Interview, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for your reference.

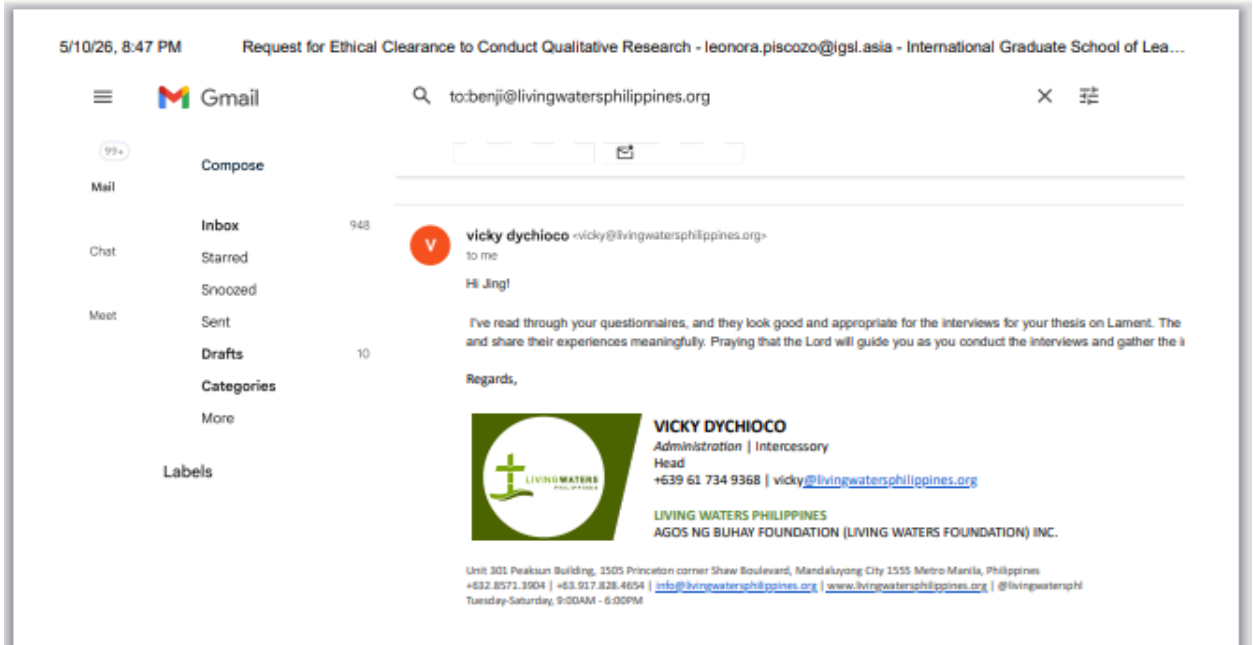
I deeply value the ministry of Living Waters Philippines and hope that this study may also serve the organization by offering reflective insights that affirm strengths and support leadership formation.

Thank you for your time, prayerful consideration, and continued faithfulness in ministry. I would be glad to provide additional documentation or clarification if needed.

With gratitude and respect,

Leonora "Jing" Piscozo
M.A. in Transformational Leadership
<image.png>
12 Daisy St., Old Sauyo, Novaliches
Quezon City 1116
(02) 8260 0041
https://www.igsl.asia

Appendix E: Questionnaire Validation from Living Waters Philippines



Appendix F: Participants Demographics

Participants By Ministry Role

Participant Type	Qty
Volunteers / Coordinators	20
Small Group Leaders	11
Prayer Intercessors	5
Facilitators & Healing Leaders	7
Total	43

Participants By Years of Involvement in Living Waters Philippines

No. of Years	Qty
Less than 1 Year	8
1 - 3 Years	9
4 - 6 Years	4
7 - 9 Years	5
10 Years ++	7
Total	43

Participants By Church Membership or Leadership Role

Membership / Leadership Role	Qty
Volunteer	6
Lady Pastor / Minister / Pastor's Wife	24
Missionary / Church Planter	5
Member	8
Total	43

Appendix G: NVivo Coding Framework

Parent Theme	Subtheme / Child Codes	Evidence Patterns
Lament	Lament as Honest Expression Before God	"bring our real stories before God," "processing grief to the Lord," "sit with God with the questions"
	Lament as Naming Wounds	father wounds, mother wounds, abandonment, emotional deprivation, sexual abuse, parental wounds
	Lament as Emotional Release	crying, screaming, wailing at the cross, pausing to cry
	Lament as Grief over Loss	broken relationship, divorce, separation, wasted years, what could have been
	Lament as Facing Hidden Pain	triggers, suppressed pain, burnout, spiraling, forced identity
	Lament as Invitation to Healing	"beautiful moment with the Lord," "invitation to lament,"

		“bring wounds at the foot of the cross”
Healing	Healing as Safe Space	“safe place,” “accepted even if broken,” “not judged,” “being heard”
	Healing through Confession	“confession,” “confess sins,” “confession unleashes,” “team prayer where we confess”
	Healing through Emotional Release	crying, emotional release, grieving, emotional honesty
	Healing through Forgiveness	forgiveness, freedom, release from bitterness, reconciliation
	Healing as Identity Restoration	identity in Christ, restored self-worth, freedom from shame
	Healing as Transformation	spiritual transformation, renewed perspective, surrender, restoration
	Healing as Ongoing Journey	“still healing,” “continuous process,” “another layer of healing”

	Healing that Shapes Leadership	compassionate leadership, creating safe spaces, healing-centered ministry
Vulnerability	Vulnerability as Honest Self-Disclosure	openness, authenticity, exposing weakness, honesty
	Vulnerability Requires Safety and Trust	confidentiality, safe people, trust, non-judgmental spaces
	Fear and Resistance to Vulnerability	fear of judgment, shame, hiding weakness, emotional walls
	Vulnerability versus Performance Culture	perfectionism, leadership image, pretending to be strong
	Vulnerability as Pathway to Healing	confession, emotional openness, lament, honest sharing
	Vulnerability and Authentic Leadership	humility, integrity, transparency, authentic leadership
	Boundaries and Discernment in Vulnerability	wise disclosure, discernment, healthy boundaries

	Vulnerability Builds Community	empathy, shared brokenness, relational trust, deeper connection
Leadership Formation	Leadership Begins with Inner Healing	healed heart, dealing with wounds, self-leadership
	Leadership through Compassion and Empathy	understanding brokenness, compassion, patience
	Leadership through Vulnerability and Integrity	authenticity, honesty, humility, integrity
	Leadership through Dependence on God	surrender, listening prayer, reliance on God
	Leadership as Creating Safe Spaces	emotional safety, healing-centered leadership, compassionate presence
	Leadership as Servanthood and Presence	listening, accompaniment, servant leadership
	Leadership as Transformation rather than Performance	freedom from performance culture, leading from healing

	Leadership as Ongoing Formation	continuous growth, discernment, ongoing healing
	Leadership through Testimony and Shared Brokenness	testimony ministry, ministering from experience, shared healing
Missional Witness	Leading People to Jesus and the Cross	gospel-centered healing, leading people to Christ, cross-centered ministry
	Healing as Witness and Evangelism	testimony, healing stories, transformation as witness
	Ministry to the Broken and Wounded	soul care, accompanying hurting people, healing ministry
	Compassionate Presence as Ministry	listening, empathy, relational accompaniment
	Testimony as Ministry Tool	sharing stories, witness through vulnerability
	Community as Missional Witness	healing communities, safe spaces, relational discipleship
	Empowerment through the Holy Spirit	listening prayer, discernment, dependence on the Holy Spirit

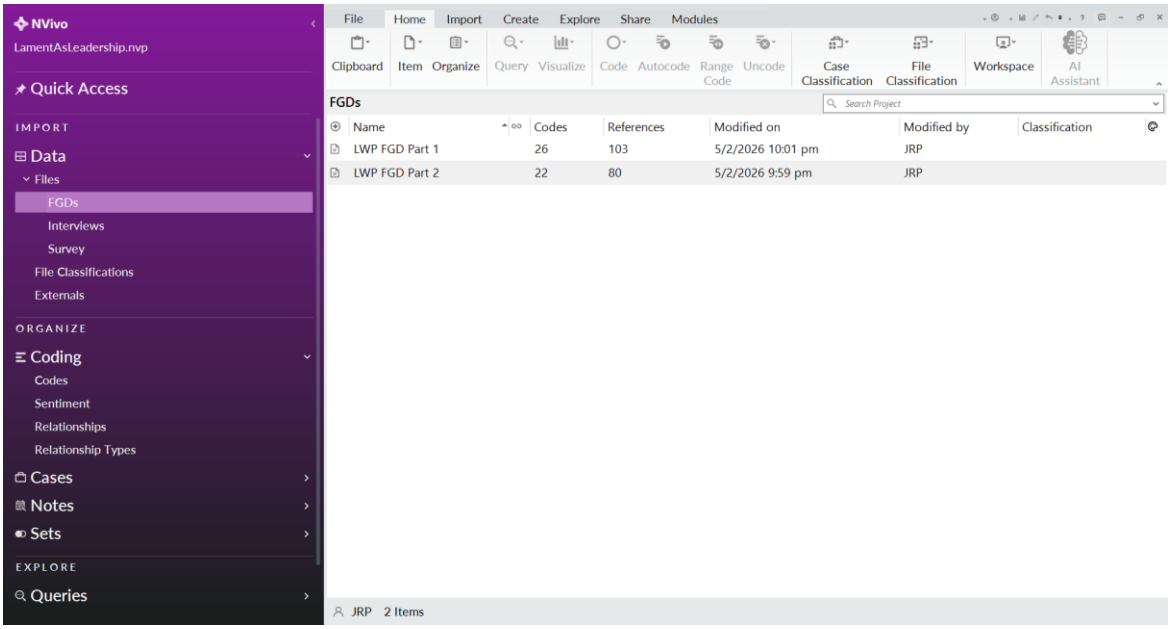
	Transformation that Multiplies Ministry	healed people discipling others, wounded healers

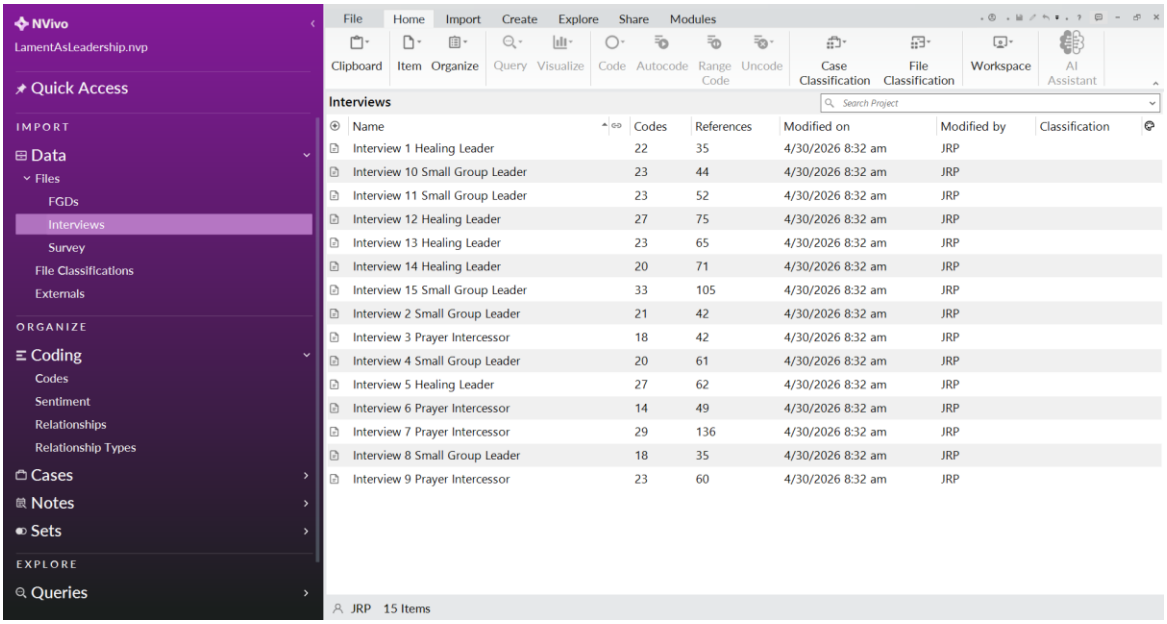
Major Thematic Progression

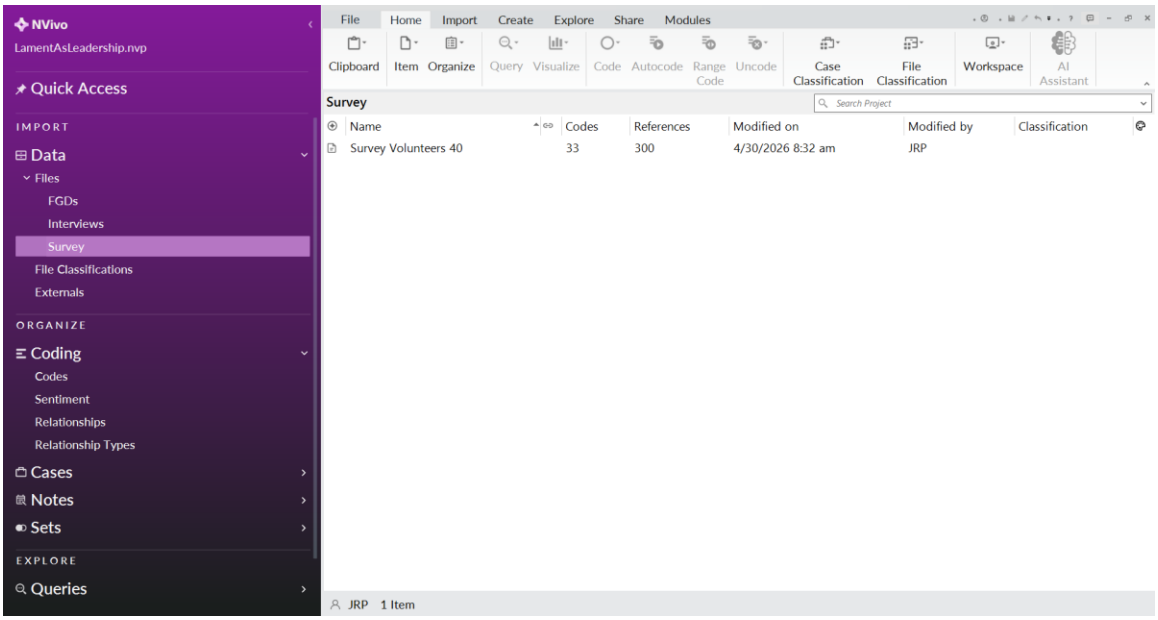
Stage	Transformational Movement
Lament	Naming pain
Vulnerability	Revealing pain
Healing	Transforming pain
Leadership Formation	Leading through healed pain
Missional Witness	Ministering through redeemed pain

Appendix H: NVivo Steps and Screenshots

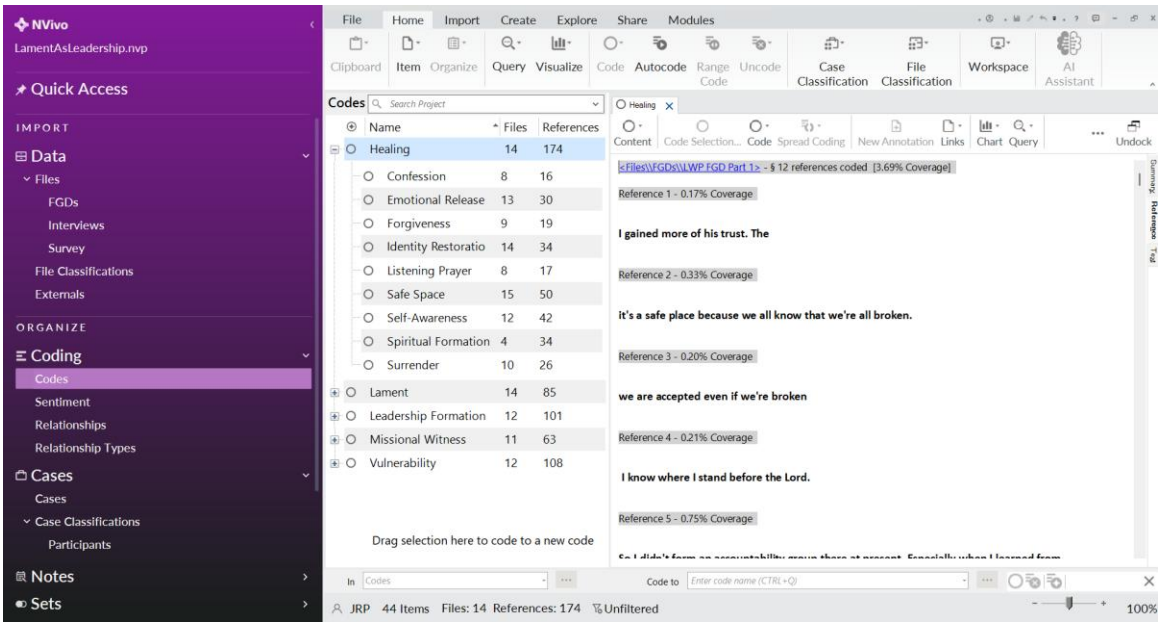
Step 1: Create a Project and Import Sources

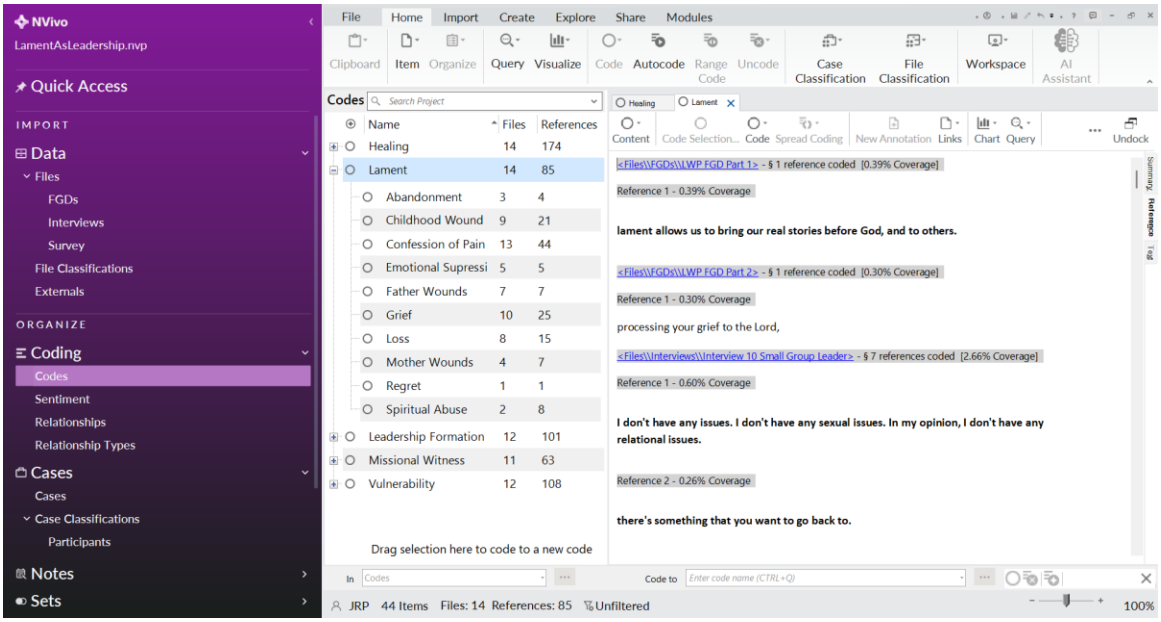

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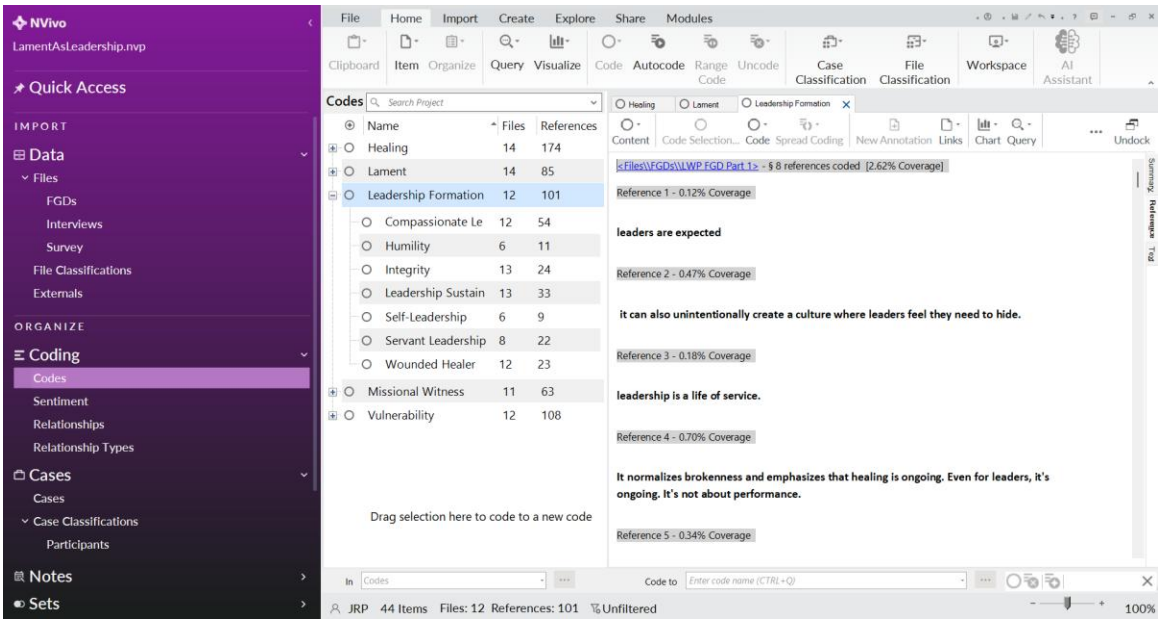

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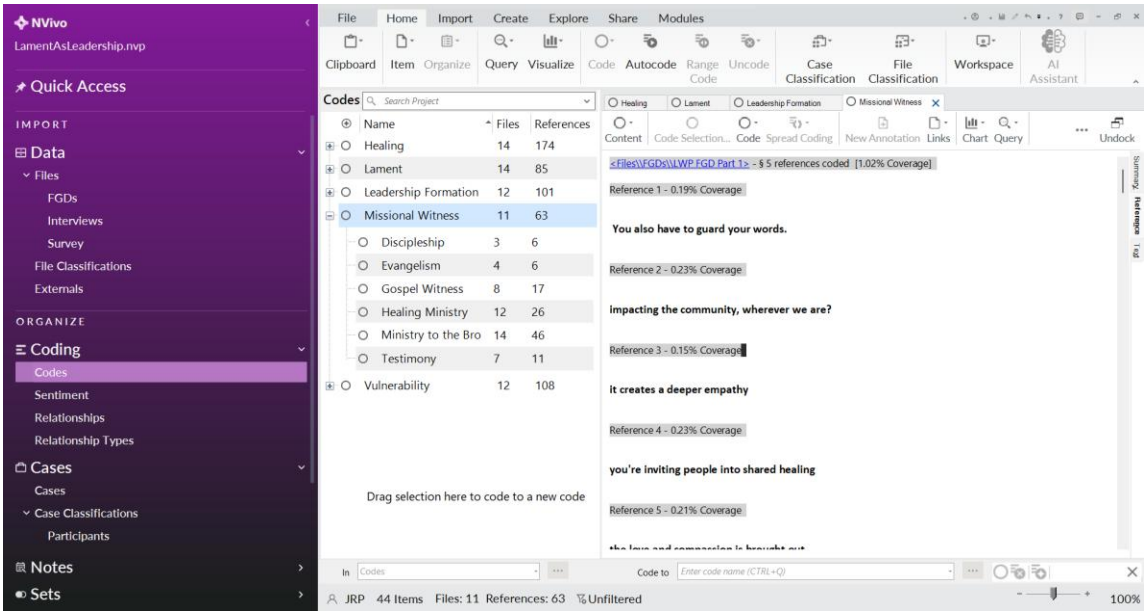


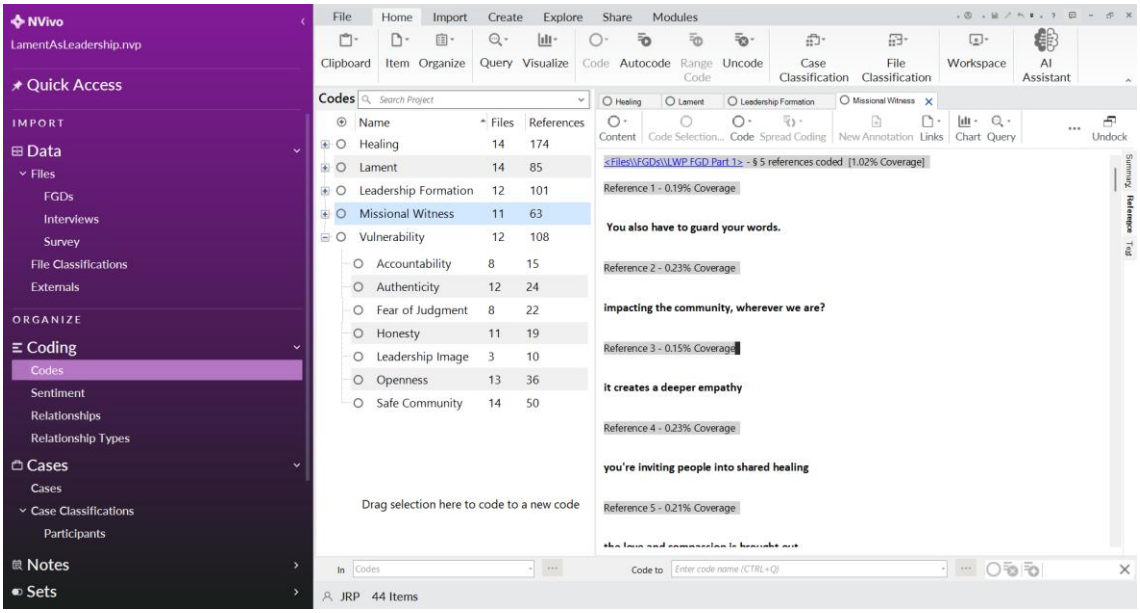
Step 2: Create codes and code the data




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Vulnerability 12 108
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Reference 2 - 0.26% Coverage
there's something that you want to go back to.
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it can also unintentionally create a culture where leaders feel they need to hide.
Reference 3 - 0.18% Coverage
leadership is a life of service.
Reference 4 - 0.70% Coverage
It normalizes brokenness and emphasizes that healing is ongoing. Even for leaders, it's ongoing. It's not about performance.
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Step 3: Generate and organize themes (See Appendix L)

Step 4: Write analytic and reflective memos using queries, maps, matrices and themes. (See Appendix J)

Appendix I: Matrix Coding Results

Table No. 3 Thematic Coding Matrix by Participant Role

Participants Role	Lament	Vulnerability	Healing	Leadership Formation	Missional Witness
Volunteers / Coordinators	37	27	25	5	14
Small Group Leaders	21	20	36	19	11
Prayer Intercessors	37	27	25	5	14
Facilitators / Healing Leaders	19	40	66	22	13

Appendix J: Sample Analytic Memos

Lament as Bringing Pain Before God. Many participants described lament not only as sadness or crying, but as bringing their real pain honestly before God. They talked about hidden wounds, grief, rejection, abandonment, and struggles they carried for many years. For many of them, lament became a moment of honesty, surrender, and dependence on God. This shows that lament is deeply spiritual and relational, not only emotional.

Vulnerability Became the Bridge to Healing. At first, I personally understood the process as lament leading directly to healing. However, while listening to the stories of participants, I noticed that healing usually happened after participants became honest, open, and vulnerable about their pain. Many of them shared that confession, emotional openness, and safe spaces helped them begin healing. This is why vulnerability became an important bridge between lament and healing in this study.

Healing Happened in Safe Spaces. A strong pattern in the interviews was the importance of safe spaces. Participants often mentioned words like “safe place,” “not judged,” “accepted,” and “being heard.” Healing usually happened when participants felt emotionally safe, listened to, prayed for, and accepted even in their brokenness. This shows that healing in Living Waters Philippines is deeply connected to community and relationships.

Leadership Formation Through Brokenness. Many participants shared that leadership was not only about skills, strength, or ministry performance. Several leaders admitted they were serving while carrying hidden pain, exhaustion, or emotional

struggles. Through healing and vulnerability, participants became more compassionate, authentic, humble, and dependent on God. The findings show that leadership formation often happened through brokenness and healing.

Performance Culture and Hiding Pain. Many participants shared that they felt pressure to appear strong, spiritual, or okay even when they were struggling inside. Some became used to hiding emotions, pain, and weakness because of ministry expectations or fear of judgment. This pattern reflects how performance culture and emotional suppression can affect leaders and church communities, especially within the Filipino setting where people often avoid conflict and try to keep harmony.

Missional Witness as a Lifestyle. Participants described ministry not only as doing programs or serving in church activities, but as living out healing and compassion in everyday life. Many shared that after experiencing healing, they naturally became more compassionate, willing to listen, disciple others, and walk with hurting people. Missional witness became a lifestyle flowing from their continued relationship with God as the source of healing.

Women Leaders and Hidden Struggles. Several women participants shared emotional burdens connected to leadership, caregiving, ministry expectations, and family responsibilities. Some carried hidden wounds, emotional exhaustion, and pressure to stay strong for others. At the same time, healing and safe spaces helped them become more authentic, resilient, and compassionate leaders. Their stories showed both the struggles and the strength of women in ministry.

Journey from Lament to Missional Witness. The themes in this study connected closely with one another and formed a clear journey. Participants first acknowledged pain

and brokenness before God through lament. Vulnerability then allowed them to become honest and open about their struggles. Healing followed through confession, surrender, forgiveness, and safe community. Leadership formation developed through compassion, authenticity, and dependence on God. In the end, healing naturally overflowed into discipleship, ministry, and missional witness. The overall movement of the study became: Lament → Vulnerability → Healing → Leadership Formation → Missional Witness.

Appendix K: Sample Participant Testimonies

Maria (Healing Leader)

Growing up, I carried deep childhood wounds, pain, and brokenness that affected my relationship with God and with myself. I realized that part of my lament was grieving the kind of childhood and family life I wished I had experienced. There were seasons when God felt distant because of my pain, mistrust, and wrong perceptions of Him as Father.

Through Living Waters, I learned to bring these wounds honestly before God instead of hiding them. The ministry became a safe place where I could confess, grieve, and process my pain without fear of judgment. Through prayer, community, and vulnerability, I experienced healing, restoration, and a deeper understanding of God's love and care. This healing journey also transformed my leadership. I realized that leaders are also wounded people who need healing and safe spaces. Because of my experience, I now try to lead with humility, compassion, honesty, and openness, helping others encounter God's healing the same way I did.

Olivia (Small Group Leader)

One of the deepest wounds I carried growing up was connected to my relationship with my mother. I experienced feelings of abandonment, neglect, and lack of affection, especially during the times she had to leave and work away from home. I realized later on that I was grieving not only her absence, but also the emotional care and affirmation I longed to receive as a daughter.

Through Living Waters, I learned to acknowledge and grieve these wounds honestly before God. The ministry gave me a safe space where I could open up, process

my pain, and surrender these struggles to the Lord. I also learned the importance of accountability, vulnerability, and listening prayer in the healing journey. As I experienced healing, my leadership also changed. Before, I easily judged people who struggled. Now, I try to understand the wounds behind their behavior and respond with more patience, compassion, and grace. Living Waters helped me become more open, understanding, and intentional in creating safe spaces for others as well.

Mei (Prayer Intercessor)

When I joined Living Waters, I was nervous at first and unsure of what to expect. But through the program, I realized that it was a safe place where I could process my pain, emotions, and struggles without shame. It helped me see that I was not alone and that many people were also carrying wounds and grief. Growing up, I learned to hide weakness and suppress emotions. It was hard for me to be vulnerable, especially in church settings where I also experienced hurt and disappointment from leaders before. But Living Waters gave me a space where I could open up honestly and slowly learn to trust people again.

The healing journey helped me acknowledge my wounds, especially fears, shame, and self-hatred. I learned to bring these struggles to the Lord instead of hiding them. Even now, healing is still ongoing, but I can say that I have more hope, more peace, and more courage to keep moving forward. Because of this experience, I believe church leaders also need spaces for healing and vulnerability. Leaders who experience healing themselves can better understand and care for broken people.

Amelia (Prayer Intercessor)

I grew up feeling unwanted and neglected. Since I was young, I stayed in church and learned to be strong, hardworking, and independent. I became very self-reliant and legalistic. Deep inside, I also carried pain from spiritual abuse, rejection, and being treated differently from my siblings. I worked at a young age and learned to hide my struggles because I thought leaders should always look strong. When I joined Living Waters, I slowly realized how wounded I really was. For the first time, I was able to open up honestly about my pain, my past, and my struggles. Through the small groups, listening prayer, and confession, I experienced compassion and healing from God.

Because of this journey, my leadership changed. Before, I focused more on rules and performance. Now, I try to listen first, understand people's wounds, and lead with compassion. Living Waters helped me become more authentic and helped our church create accountability groups and safe spaces where people can pray, confess, and heal together.

Appendix L: Thematic Maps

Figure 3: Emergent Thematic Progression



Figure 3 presents the overall thematic progression that emerged from participant narratives. The findings suggest that lament begins as the acknowledgment of pain before God, vulnerability becomes the bridge toward healing, healing shapes leadership formation, and transformed leadership naturally overflows into missional witness.

Figure 4: Thematic Map of Healing and Leadership Formation



Figure No. 2 Conceptual Framework Emerging from the Study



Figure No. 2 illustrates the transformational process emerging from the narratives of participants within Living Waters Philippines. The framework demonstrates the progression from lament, vulnerability, healing, leadership formation, and missional witness.

Appendix M: NVivo Code Book

Name	Description
Lament	Lament is the honest expression of grief, pain, wounds, loss, and brokenness before God. It is not simply sadness, but a spiritual practice of bringing suffering, unanswered questions, and emotional struggles into God's presence with honesty and surrender. In this study, lament is understood as a formative leadership practice that opens the way for healing, humility, and deeper dependence on God.
Abandonment	The feeling of being left, rejected, or emotionally unsupported by important people.
Childhood Wounds	Deep emotional pain formed through painful experiences during childhood.
Confession of Pain	Honestly admitting personal hurt, wounds, and struggles before God or trusted people.
Emotional Supression	The habit of hiding, ignoring, or refusing to express real emotions and pain.
Father Wounds	Emotional pain caused by rejection, absence, neglect, or unhealthy experiences with a father figure.
Grief	The emotional response to pain, loss, disappointment, or brokenness.
Loss	The experience of losing a person, relationship, dream, opportunity, or sense of security.
Mother Wounds	Emotional pain caused by unmet needs, rejection, or unhealthy experiences with a mother figure.
Regret	Sorrow over past choices, missed opportunities, or painful life experiences.
Spiritual Abuse	Emotional or spiritual harm caused by misuse of authority, Scripture, or leadership in ministry or church.
Vulnerability	Vulnerability is the willingness to be honest about personal weakness, pain, brokenness, and limitations before God and within safe relationships. It involves authenticity, confession, and openness rather than hiding behind leadership roles or spiritual image. In this study, vulnerability is viewed as a strength that fosters trust, integrity, and deeper healing in leaders.
Accountability	Mutual support where trusted people help one remain honest, healthy, and responsible.
Authenticity	Living truthfully without pretending to be stronger, better, or more perfect than reality.
Fear of Judgment	The anxiety of being rejected, criticized, or misunderstood when being honest.
Honesty	Speaking truthfully about one's life, struggles, and emotions.
Leadership Image	The pressure to appear strong, spiritual, and perfect as a leader
Openness	The willingness to share personal experiences and receive help from others.
Safe Community	A trusted group where honesty, healing, and acceptance are encouraged.

Name	Description
Healing	Healing refers to the process of emotional, spiritual, and relational restoration that happens when individuals confront their wounds, confess pain, receive forgiveness, and experience God's redemptive work. It includes healing from childhood wounds, rejection, abuse, shame, grief, and unresolved pain. In this study, healing is seen as essential for sustaining integrity and wholeness in leadership.
Confession	Openly admitting sin, weakness, or brokenness for healing and freedom.
Emotional Release	The healthy expression of hidden pain through crying, grieving, or honest emotional processing.
Forgiveness	The choice to release bitterness and extend grace toward oneself or others.
Identity Restoration	The process of recovering one's true worth and identity in God.
Listening Prayer	A prayer practice of being still and allowing God to speak into wounds and struggles.
Safe Space	An environment where people feel accepted, protected, and free to be honest.
Self-Awareness	The ability to recognize one's emotions, wounds, behaviors, and personal patterns.
Spiritual Formation	The process of being transformed to the image of Christ as a result of a deeper encounter with Him
Surrender	The act of releasing control and trusting God with pain, struggles, and outcomes.

Name	Description
Leadership Formation	Leadership formation is the ongoing process through which a leader's character, integrity, humility, compassion, and spiritual maturity are shaped. Rather than focusing only on skills or position, it emphasizes inner transformation through healing, self-awareness, and dependence on God. In this study, leadership formation happens as lament and healing reshape how women lead themselves and others.
Compassionate Leadership	Leading others with empathy, understanding, and care instead of judgment.
Humility	Recognizing one's weaknesses and depending on God rather than self.
Integrity	Consistency between one's private life, public life, faith, and actions.
Leadership Sustainability	Maintaining healthy leadership through healing, rest, accountability, and spiritual renewal.
Self-Leadership	The ability to lead and manage oneself well before leading others.
Servant Leadership	Leading by serving others with love, humility, and care rather than power or control.
Wounded Healer	A leader who ministers to others from personal experiences of pain and healing.

Name	Description
Missional Witness	Missional witness refers to the outward expression of God's healing and redemptive work through leadership, discipleship, evangelism, and ministry to others. It reflects how healed leaders become instruments of compassion, restoration, and gospel witness in their families, churches, workplaces, and communities. In this study, personal healing naturally flows into ministry and mission as leaders help others encounter Christ.
Discipleship	Helping others grow in faith, healing, and relationship with Christ.
Evangelism	Sharing the gospel and leading people toward faith in Jesus.
Gospel Witness	Reflecting Christ through both personal testimony and daily leadership.
Healing Ministry	Serving others through prayer, care, restoration, and emotional or spiritual healing.
Ministry to the Broken	Reaching out to wounded, hurting, and struggling people with compassion and care.
Testimony	Sharing personal stories of God's healing, faithfulness, and transformation.