



Research Article

## Conceptual Metaphors in Facebook Eulogy Posts of COVID-19 Bereaved Filipinos

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### ABSTRACT

This study was crafted to explore how bereaved Filipinos articulated their experiences during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic through Facebook posts. It employed the conceptual metaphor theory by Johnson and Lakoff (1980), which sheds light on how people process thoughts and organize their worlds through language. In analyzing the data, content analysis was used to examine the metaphors in 42 Facebook posts of bereaved family members due to COVID-19, and to further systematize this process, methods of Critical Metaphor Analysis were used. These Facebook posts, which date from 2020-2021, were collected through screenshots for the duration of one month. In the analysis of data, 11 categories of conceptual metaphors were identified. These metaphors reflected the resiliency, positivity, and religiosity of those who made the posts. This means that they chose to see the good amidst the grief they experienced. It was concluded that social media provided an effective platform for the emergence of conceptual metaphors that are reflective of the Filipino culture and the ways it influenced how the COVID-19 bereaved Filipinos process the loss of loved ones. It is recommended that other linguistic analyses be done on this corpus for a better understanding of the phenomenon.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the World Health Organization declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was attributed to the swift response of world leaders and health organizations. This was followed by the lifting of the state of public health emergency in the Philippines as declared by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. (Presidential Communications Office, 2023). Despite this, its impacts can still be felt to this day. As a brief background, the Philippine Department of Health (n.d.) reported that on December 31, 2019, a cluster of pneumonia cases with no apparent source occurred in Wuhan, China. Later, it was determined that a novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), a brand-new coronavirus strain that had never been reported in humans, was the cause of the outbreak. The 2019-nCoV caused many cases of severe pneumonia in China, and the virus has spread to many other countries worldwide since then. A few months later, 2019-nCoV was given the official name, COVID-19. Furthermore, although there have been corona virus related outbreaks in the past such as the SARS in 2002-2003 and MERS in 2015, this outbreak has become one of the most catastrophic so far (Sherwood, 2020). Usares et al. (2022) even mentioned that by January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a PHEIC or a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

Moving forward, as of March 30, 2024, the number of COVID-19 cases has reached more than 676 million globally, with 6,881,955 deaths. In the Philippines, there have been 4,077,625 cases with 66,193 deaths (Gardner, 2024). During the height of the pandemic, most people had to keep deaths about family members private for the fear of being contact traced and the fear of social persecution. Such times were adverse, and staying positive and finding balance was difficult (Relojo- Howell, 2020). Various studies even revealed the pervasiveness of stress and psychological distress during those times (Manchia et al., 2022). Additionally, Sotgiu and Dobler (2020) explained that, because of lockdowns, uncertainty over COVID-19, and fear of infection, stigma has increased in local communities. A global frenzy around a "witch hunt" mentality fueled discrimination and attacks on defenseless individuals. As the number of COVID-19 index cases rose, infected people and those who were in close contact with them were being held responsible and were being compared to criminals.

Still, some turned to social media to disclose their experiences on the loss of a loved one. These social media sites, such as Facebook, provided them with various means of expression and interaction through various modalities. As Sergeant and Tagg (2014) asserted, these platforms

provided new and dynamic communication and alternative interaction methods.

In view thereof, this research, which follows a qualitative content analysis design, was crafted to analyze Facebook posts regarding the conceptual metaphors among bereaved family members due to COVID-19. It is a linguistic analysis that investigated how these people consciously (or unconsciously) articulated their feelings and experiences in losing their loved ones because of the virus. Moreover, the Conceptual Metaphors Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) was used in this study, as metaphor is an integral part of human life, not just in how people speak but also in how they think and act. People process their ideas and thoughts metaphorically, and an individual's conceptual system is organized and manifested metaphorically. Moreover, metaphors are prevalent in every person's conceptual framework so that they can be communicated through language. Consequently, because metaphoric linguistic phrases are linked to metaphoric notions, they can be used to investigate the nature of metaphors and to understand people's actions. This theory further implicates how language and emotions are enmeshed, which helps analyze eulogy posts since they primarily deal with how people make sense of their feelings when losing someone. This assertion is supported by psychological constructionist explanations, which posit that language is an essential component of emotion and forms the basis of emotional experiences and perceptions (Lindquist, MacCormack, & Shabrack, 2015).

Furthermore, although other linguistic studies have investigated COVID-19 experiences in the Philippines, most have been on news articles and information materials. For example, in the study of Quinto et al. (2021), they analyzed 238 public information documents published by the Department of Health (DOH) regional offices on social media. Using language justice as a lens, they found hegemony in language use, preferring a specific language over others. This way of using language had implications for information access and understanding of content. Another one is the study by Metila, Morallo, and Zara (2023), which investigated 97 banner stories among Philippine newspapers and the framing of COVID-19 during its emergence from January to March 25, 2020. It was found that there were 12 frames identified in these news banner stories. Among the studies that also used conceptual metaphors and multimodal metaphor analysis in studying the COVID-19 experience were the ones done by Manalastas (2023) and Hernandez et al. (2023). Both works examined news articles and the metaphors that emerged from them. As such, there is a dearth of studies that investigate the impacts of the pandemic on families who lost loved ones because of the virus and how they

articulated their experiences online through Facebook posts. Under this light, this paper was pursued primarily to investigate the conceptual metaphors used by bereaved Filipino family members on social media and how these reflect their culture and the ways they process tragic situations such as the death of a loved one. Through this study, COVID-19 researchers would have a more humane perspective of the pandemic and be able to experience the global crisis through the lens of the victims and their loved ones. Since this paper is quite nuanced and culture-specific, this research could also add to the cognitive linguists' database of metaphors.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

This research follows a qualitative design which employs content analysis that uses lists of keywords and keyword combinations, thereby providing an organized method of getting the necessary information from text sources to structure, code, thematize, and analyze them (Panke, 2018). In the context of this paper, the analysis was guided by the conceptual metaphors theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which identifies various metaphors in Facebook posts of bereaved family members due to COVID-19. This process involved plotting the source domains and target domains, and mapping out connections. Also, the method of Critical Metaphor Analysis by Charteris-Black (2004, as cited in Chiang & Duann, 2007) was adopted in this analysis. This kind of analysis involves metaphor determination, examination, and explanation.

### 2.2 Data Collection

This paper primarily used screenshots of eulogy/tribute posts of bereaved COVID-19 family members (e.g. a daughter's, a niece's, a nephew's, a cousin's, a husband's posts) during 2020-2021 in the Philippines from public Facebook domains. That is, it does not involve an entire family cluster's post but only those of certain family members who made Facebook postings. Even more, this social networking site was chosen since, as of today, it is the most popular all over the globe (Farina, 2018). Because of its popularity and versatility, Facebook served as the primary data source for this study, and only posts from bereaved family members due to COVID-19 were included. It does not involve comments and threads. Furthermore, the years 2020-2021 were chosen since COVID-19 deaths were at their peak during these times, since vaccines were still being developed. As mentioned by UNICEF Philippines (2021), the first batch of vaccines started arriving on March 4, 2021. More so, the screenshots were gathered using various methods. One was through personal connections by looking for the posts of family members the researcher

knows who lost someone due to COVID-19. Another way is by asking for referrals from people who have lost someone through COVID-19. And the third method is by typing keywords in the Facebook search bar, such as 'rest in peace', 'salamat sa tanan' (thank you for everything), 'you will be missed', 'COVID-19', and filtering the dates to 2020-2021. In these searches, the scope was limited to the Philippines, with a concentration in Mindanao. However, there are some from the Visayas and Luzon. Additionally, for a Facebook post to be qualified to the corpus pool, the following criteria must have been met: the post must 1) talk about a person's death- either covertly mentioning COVID-19 or alluding to it, and 2) the person making the post must be a family member of the COVID-19 victim. In this case, family refers to a close group of people that are related to each other by law, by blood, or sexual relations (Bruce & Yearley, 2006). More so, to ensure that the deceased mentioned in their post indeed died of COVID-19 and that they were indeed a nuclear/extended family member, these people were personally messaged by the researcher for verification. The profiles of these family members who made the posts include: daughters, sons, nieces, nephews, cousins, and husbands. They come from various backgrounds like professionals working in offices and government service, teachers, OFWs, and recent college graduates. Finally, a self-made ethics form was sent to those who made the FB posts. Although the *National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants* (2022) state that informed consent is no longer required for publicly archived information, password-free archive access, research with no site policy prohibitions, minimal risk research, and information not used for secondary purposes involving third parties or aspects that could discourage participation, the researcher still provided forms primarily to verify that the death mentioned in the posts was indeed related to a family member who passed away due to COVID-19. This form also mentioned confidentiality and anonymity to reassure them that their identity could not be traced to the posts. It further explained the nature of this study, and that based on selection criteria, their posts have been selected. The researcher also made sure that the data was properly handled with security. These forms were personally messaged to those who made the posts through FB messenger. Using the varied sampling methods mentioned in the previous section of this paper (e.g. convenience sampling and purposive sampling), 42 screenshot posts were collected which were guided by the criteria for data selection. This may be considered a robust number given that posts like these were scarce at that time due to stigma and the threat of contact tracing. As mentioned by Creswell (2007), there is no fixed number for the number of corpora in qualitative studies. Rather, flexibility must be exercised by the researcher. Furthermore, this is a

significant number since it was able to reach data saturation by being able to identify and highlight the various conceptual metaphors in the posts. Such saturation was observed given that it was apparent that the variations in the categories and codes have clearly become minimal (Miller & Brewer, 2003). Even more, Munalim (2021) posits that several respected scholars have supported the use of small-scale corpora, asserting that the data they provide are still valuable and trustworthy as sources of evidence.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

This paper was guided using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Metaphor Theories to analyze the data. Specifically, the researcher examined the samples by looking into their target domains and source domains. For example, "We are in mourning but I can't help but feel like we lost without a fight"; and "I still salute all our front liners," both highlight battles and fighters (target domains) which could be connected to warfare (source domain). Such ideas recur in the samples that give rise to conceptual metaphors. As such, the two entries mentioned earlier eventually led to the 'THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR' metaphor. War is the source domain, while the pandemic is a target domain (which links the two entries and several more). Both share the concept of fighting against a foe. In the case of the pandemic, the enemy is COVID-19, while in a war, an enemy could be any opposing force. More so, in this part, non-metaphoric posts were screened. These findings were placed in an MS Word document to systematize the process for further examination. The tabulation and analysis involved consolidating the samples, identifying target and source domains, finding associations, clustering related associations, naming these associated entries into conceptual metaphors, and then sequencing them from those with the most to the least entries. Finally, in the second section of the results and discussions, reflections regarding these conceptual metaphors were discussed which highlight objective scholarly perspectives, as well as, personal positionality grounded on the author's experiences and academic journey towards the conception of this study. In doing so, this paper recognizes and acknowledges that scholars and researchers make up only a part of the societies they study and that the endeavor of interpretation has already been done by many social actors. More so, through this reflexivity, the researcher acknowledges and discloses himself in this study, and highlights his influence on the research process (Holmes, 2020).

### 2. 4 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants (2022), which

state that informed consent may be waived when the data comes from publicly archived sources with open access, involves minimal risk, complies with site policies, and is not used for secondary purposes involving massive data to be used by third parties or those studies that may potentially have discouraging factors. Nonetheless, forms were given out to verify the COVID-19 related deaths in the posts of the bereaved family members. Also, this study maintains anonymity and confidentiality for those who made the posts and there was secure handling of data.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through careful analysis of the data, 11 conceptual metaphors were identified. They are presented in order from those with the highest numbers of entries, down to those with the least, which also entails their significance level. Due to technical constraints in the number of words allowed in this paper, only samples are presented in the findings. Lastly, some conceptual metaphors are clustered together because of their associability. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) even assert that conceptual metaphors may be grouped to generate creative and fascinating arrangements.

### 3.1 The Conceptual Metaphors and Their Manifestations in the Language

#### 3.1.1 DEATH IS A JOURNEY

Based on these findings, it can be inferred that death is compared to a journey. Moreover, just like any journey, there is an absence, a departure, reaching a destination, and having a guide. These are shown in the next table. (Table 1)

The acts of absence are marked by the words 'nawala na' and 'wala nay' (both meaning gone). Therefore, in these two tokens, the target domain is death, while the source domain is absence. Thus, death is mapped similarly to the process of leaving someone.

Also, the acts of departure are signaled by the words 'pagpanaw' (journey) and 'paglakaw' (walk). These in the Cebuano language usually entail a direction going away, since the terms for returning home are 'pag-abot' and 'pag-anhi' (Wolff, 1972). These connote that the journey is on foot since it involves walking. Thus, the target domain is death, and the source domain is walking and journeying. In this light, death is mapped as being similar to a sojourn. In addition to this, death (target domain) is conceptualized as a journey with a destination (source domain).

**Table 1.** DEATH IS A JOURNEY Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
DEATH IS A JOURNEY	Padayon sa imong pagpanaw (Continue with your journey)	death	Walking/ journeying
	Farewell, daddy. <i>Mommy is there to welcome you</i>	death	destination
	Igo rako natulug.... Nawala na si papa (I just slept... Papa was gone when I woke up)	death	absence
	We have many plans pa baya, but I know that <i>HIS ways are higher than ours</i> . (we still have many plans, but I know HIS ways are higher than ours.)	God's ways	guide
	<i>Si Lord nay nakabalo sa imo Tay, sa imong pagpangalagad niya.</i> (Tay, God will take care of you now for all the acts of service you gave to Him.)	God's trustworthiness	guide

Regarding who is seen there, they include God and loved ones who have already reached the destination. These analogies use the following signal words: 'nagkita na gyud' (implies meeting someone again), 'you are with,' 'you are in,' and 'there to welcome you.' The scene is also portrayed in a picturesque manner.

This metaphor of death as a journey is analogous to the DEATH IS A DEPARTURE metaphor, as mentioned by Ortony (1993), that involves a causal agent who becomes a reason for departure or aids in the departure. In this case, most of those who made the Facebook posts have God as the causative agent. God accompanies the travelers in their sojourn. God, being a guide, is depicted in various ways. Two of which include being knowledgeable and being trustworthy.

The fourth example in the table portrays the quality of God as being knowledgeable, which is signaled by HIS ways being higher than ours. The target domain is God's ways, and the source domain is a guide (imbued with certain qualities). Therefore, God is mapped as showing qualities of intelligence that could best aid in a person's journey. In connection with this, the fifth example in the table shows God's trustworthiness, which is important when guiding the souls of those who have passed away. The target domain is God's trustworthiness (someone who knows how to take care of the departed), while the source domain is being a guide. Trustworthiness is a significant quality for a guide, which God possesses. For the conceptual metaphor

of DEATH IS A JOURNEY which encompasses God being a guide, a total of 16 entries were identified.

### 3.1.2 LIFE IS A BATTLE

Based on the findings, life is compared to a battle that is full of struggles. These struggles are signaled by the target domain, which is "you" (and your life's sufferings), while the source domain is battle/ struggles. In congruence to this, public discourse frequently employs war and battle metaphors to depict recurring life challenges and adversities (Flusberg et al., 2018, as cited in Schnepf & Christmann, 2021). Connectedly, since life is compared to a battle, there are weapons that could be used, and ultimately, only one way to have a respite from these struggles. The next table shows these metaphors.

As shown in the table, life is mapped as an experience of hardship. This way of portraying life could be a way for the bereaved to look into the more positive side of the situation by rationalizing death as the end of a life full of suffering. Interestingly, it is important to note that, among many cognitive linguistics researchers, LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a common metaphor shared by various societies and cultures (Gibbs, 2017). However, as evidenced in this research, this is not the only metaphor for life since life is also compared to a battle. In addition, other instances that made the LIFE IS A BATTLE metaphor emerge is exemplified in the third and fourth entries of the table which depicts fallen comrades and continuing the battle for those who remain.

**Table 2.** LIFE IS A BATTLE Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
LIFE IS A BATTLE	You are now with God, free from <i>pain and suffering</i>	You (and your life's suffering)	Battle/ struggles
	You have <i>endured</i> 18 long years of being a single father	You (and your life's suffering)	Battle/ struggles
	<i>Ayaw'g kabalaka tay kay atimanon namo ni si'</i> (do not worry, Tay, we will take care of...)	Loved ones	Comradeship (in battle)
	<i>Don't worry we will not leave papa alone.</i>	Loved ones	Comradeship (in battle)
	<i>Pahulay nga dayun maanaa unta kanimo (may eternal rest be unto you)</i>	Death	rest
	<i>Maayong pagpahulay (have a good rest)</i>	death	rest
	You have fought so many battles, we have overcome so many sleepless nights. In spite sa kadaghan problema (despite your many problems), I have seen you hold on to God. (*'Hold on to God' in this scenario is an idiom to continue having faith.)	Faith	Weapon
	Your prayers for our family kept us through all the tough times	faith	weapon

In relation with the conceptual metaphor of LIFE IS A BATTLE, it can be inferred that death is the only rest from life. This portrayal is shown in the table's fifth and sixth examples. In these entries, the target domain is death while the source domain is rest, accompanied by various adjectives to describe rest (e.g., good, eternal). Therefore, death is not presented abysmally; rather, it is a salve for the tired soul. This metaphor is quite pervasive not only in the west but also in the east (Pham & Trinh, 2024).

Finally, concerning the LIFE IS A BATTLE metaphor, there are arsenals a person can use to defend oneself in the battle. One of them is faith. Canete (2021) mentions that Filipinos value spirituality and they have a strong sense of faith. It is no wonder that this conceptual metaphor emerged. This way of viewing faith is exemplified in the seventh and eighth entries in the table which both show that by believing in God or praying to God, one can defend oneself from the hardships thrown by life. Through this, one can emerge victoriously from the struggles. As such, faith is the target domain, while weapon is a source

domain. Overall, for the LIFE IS A BATTLE conceptual metaphor, sixteen entries were identified.

### 3.1.3 THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR

According to Sontag (1989), the military metaphor related to medicine initially gained prominence in the 1880s when germs were identified as the primary cause of disease. It used to be said that bacteria "invade" or "infiltrate." However, these days, illness is talked about in terms of siege and combat, which has a striking literalness and authoritative quality. This concept is not the only way the disease's clinical course and medical care are portrayed; the sickness is also seen as the enemy society fights. Interestingly, this metaphor is collectively shared with other cultures (Benzi & Novarese, 2020; Chiang & Duann, 2007; Sontag, 1978). Such representation of pandemics as war and the virus being an assailant is reflected in the posts of the COVID-19 bereaved family members that are shown in the next table. (Table 3)

**Table 3. THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR** Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR	Though mommy did not make it, daddy's fighting with all your love and support.	The pandemic and downfall	war
	Apan siya ang nabiktima sa pandemya (she/he became a victim of the pandemic)	The pandemic	Casualties/ devastation
	I never thought you will be a casualty of war, a battle we lost without a fight.	The pandemic	Casualties/ devastation
	The last night, the virus disabled her speech, she sang up until past midnight much to our delight and concern.	virus	assault
	One morning, tapad sila ni mama (he was lying beside mama). Di na siya kabangon (he cannot stand), di nasad kaestorya (he cannot speak) na ICU, Na intubate (he was placed in the ICU and intubated). He was fighting.	virus	assault

Congruent with warfare, concepts of fights, casualties, enemies, and tactical evasion are reflected in the language. Regarding fights, this is mentioned in the following lines: 'lost without a fight' and 'daddy's fighting.' The target domain is the pandemic and downfall, while the source domain is war, as shown in the first example. Thus, the virus is mapped as fighting against people and defeating many of them. There are also casualties in this fight, which is signaled by 'nabiktima' (became a victim of), 'casualty of war,' and 'you didn't make it,' all of which have casualties/ devastation as the source domain. At the same time, contextually, the pandemic is the target domain. The second and third examples in the table illustrate these. Even more, there are warriors/ soldiers in this war (source domain) signaled by a big salute to the frontliners, with the pandemic serving as the target domain. This conceptual metaphor is quite significant given that frontliners played a crucial role during the pandemic. They were at the forefront in the emergency response, striving to control the spread of the virus and deliver essential services, resources, and information (Maitem, 2020). The pandemic is thus mapped as similar to a warzone where soldiers go to battle.

Lastly, it is posited that the virus could be compared to the enemy, particularly an assailant. According to Merriam-Webster (2022), an assailant inflicts violence on another person. This implies that there are physical impacts on the

victim. This physicality is reflected in the following tokens, 'the virus disabled' and 'di na siya kabangon' (he/she cannot stand), as shown in the fourth and fifth examples of the table.

In those two examples, the target domain is the virus, while the source domain is assault. As such, the virus is mapped as something that can assault people. For the PANDEMIC IS A WAR, 11 entries were noted for this metaphor.

### 3.1.4 KINDNESS IS AN OBJECT, DOING GOOD DEEDS IS SENDING THE OBJECT, GRATITUDE IS ACCEPTANCE OF THE OBJECT, AND REGRET IS THE INABILITY TO GIVE BACK

Regarding kindness, since these are a series of actions, it may be considered similar to the ACTIONS ARE TRANSFER metaphor, wherein actions are portrayed as tangible objects that can be moved from one individual to another (Geeraerts, 2006). Furthermore, Lakoff (1993, as cited in Evans & Green, 2006) outlines a complex example of a metaphor system that he calls the event structure metaphor. It is a sequence of metaphors that interrelate in the understanding of utterances. In this case, kindness is compared to an object that can be given away or returned. The inability to give back the object leads to regret. The succeeding table exemplifies these sequenced conceptual metaphors: (table 4).

**Table 4. KINDNESS IS AN OBJECT** Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
DOING GOOD DEEDS IS SENDING THE OBJECT, GRATITUDE IS ACCEPTANCE OF THE OBJECT, AND REGRET IS THE INABILITY TO GIVE BACK	Salamat pd sa tanang sakripisyong imong gihatag sa amoatay para lang dili magubot atong family. (Dad, thank you for all the sacrifices you made for our family so that we could have a harmonious relationship.)	kindness	giving an object
	Sorry wala ka namo nahaya para lang sa last namong kita sa imo tatay and para pud unta maserbisyohan ka namo kauban nato sa pagpangalagad. (Sorry I was not able to hold a wake for you, Tatay so that I could have served you together with our companions in serving God.)	kindness	Inability to return an object

**Table 5. WORDS ARE BOUNDARIES** Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
WORDS ARE BOUNDARIES	It's been one year when I feel that part of me is dying with you. A feeling I can never explain	words	boundaries
	I can't express enough how much I miss you... how much in pain I am in right now.	words	boundaries

As shown in the first example, the person who made the post signified a sense of gratitude for another person's sacrifices. This way of showing gratitude is even complemented by the words 'imong gihatag' (the sacrifice you gave). The target domain for this is kindness, while the source domain is 'giving an object.' On the other hand, the second example shows that not giving back the kindness of another person can lead to regret. Thus, the target domain is kindness, while the source domain is the inability to return an object. This mindset of kindness could be related to the Filipino concept of 'utang na loob' or debt of gratitude, which posits that for kindness that is done to one person, such kindness should be reciprocated in the future. From these, it can be inferred that kindness is somewhat

conceptualized as objects that could be given and received and these arouse negative emotions when not returned. Six entries were identified for this metaphor.

### 3.1.5 WORDS ARE BOUNDARIES

According to Strickland (2001), grief, a deep state of great sadness, and a natural reaction to the breaking of attachments are usually present and are accompanied by loss, a state of being without. In this connection, grief entails expressing words as a release from the pain, describing the emotional manifestation of the pain, as well as clinging to or letting go of the pain. As such, these emotions are prevalent in the posts of the COVID-19 bereaved family members. Based on the analysis, it can be

inferred that words cannot fully express the speaker's grief at losing a loved one. This limitation is evident in the next table. (Table 5)

The target domain for these two examples is words, and the source domain is boundaries. Therefore, words are mapped out as having limits. Five entries were identified from this conceptual metaphor.

### 3.1.6 MEMORY IS A TREASURE

Based on the analysis of the posts, it was found that memory was likened to treasure, which can be stored in the heart. This concept is exemplified in the table that follows: (Table 6)

In these two examples, the target domain is a person's memories while the source domain is treasure. A person's memories are mapped as something valuable that needs to be cherished and stored for safekeeping, particularly in the heart. Four entries were identified for this conceptual metaphor.

### 3.1.7 ACCEPTANCE IS A BOND

In terms of moving on or holding on to the pain of losing someone, acceptance can be compared to a bond that someone can let go of or something that binds him/her. Such concepts are manifested in the following table: (Table 7)

As shown in these two examples, the acceptance of losing someone has metaphoric underpinnings, signaled by "let you go" and "can't move on," which have a target domain of acceptance and a source domain of bond. Thus, acceptance is mapped as something similar to a bond that can restrict someone or something one can be free of. Three entries were identified for this metaphor.

### 3.1.8 TIME IS MONEY

This conceptual metaphor is pervasive in most societies. That is why there are expressions such as wasting someone's time or spending time with someone. In this light, the TIME IS MONEY metaphor also manifested in the postings of the bereaved family members. This metaphor shows that time is treated with significance, just like any valuable resource (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This concept is highlighted in the succeeding table: (Table 8)

**Table 6.** MEMORY IS A TREASURE Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
MEMORY IS A TREASURE	You are forever treasured in our hearts	Memories	Treasure
	We will hold you in our heart until I can hold you again in heaven	memories	treasure

**Table 7.** ACCEPTANCE IS A BOND Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
ACCEPTANCE IS A BOND	I can't let you go ma and I'm still figuring out how to live my life without you.	acceptance	bond
	I need to stop ... every time I am done with one item.. my tears slowly falls down on my cheeks, and I can't move on.	acceptance	bond

**Table 8.** TIME IS MONEY Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
TIME IS MONEY	....how you give your time for simple talks...	time	Money
	Thank you for spending you last hours with me sa video call, mommy	time	money

As presented in these examples, the target domain is time while the source domain is money, signaled by the words 'give' and 'spend'. It can be inferred that the time spent or the time given to bereaved family members is truly valuable. Three entries were identified.

### 3.1.9 EMOTIONAL PAIN IS PHYSICAL PAIN

Based on the findings, it was found that emotional pain is conceptualized through words related to physiology, such as 'bleeding' and 'ache', which can be observed in the following examples: (Table 9)

In these two instances, abstract emotions are mapped like appendages. In this case, the heart is described as experiencing physical pain. For this scenario, emotions are the target domain, while physical pain is the source domain. Two entries were identified for this conceptual metaphor.

### 3.1.10 VIRTUE IS AN IMPRINT

It was revealed that virtues and kindness are conceptualized empirically, or can be seen or touched by

the senses. For example, virtues are presented like a stamp or similar to a memento. These are shown in the next table: (Table 10)

For the VIRTUE IS AN IMPRINT conceptual metaphor to emerge, the target domain, virtue (exemplified in the words' generosity and kindness') and the source domain, which is imprint (exemplified by the phrase 'left a mark'), had to be identified.

### 3.1.11 VIRTUE IS A MEMENTO

Like a stamp or imprint that leaves a mark on people's hearts, virtues can also be conceptualized as a memento that can be carried or left behind. These are shown in the table that follows: (Table 11)

The table reveals that, virtues like principles and brilliance were the target domain, while being carried or leaving behind something like a memento was the source domain. Thus, virtues are mapped out as similar to portable items. In view thereof, the VIRTUE IS A MEMENTO conceptual metaphor was brought to the fore.

**Table 9.** EMOTIONAL PAIN IS PHYSICAL Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
EMOTIONAL PAIN IS PHYSICAL PAIN	Its been one year my bleeding heart slowly heals hoping it will be less painful.	Emotions	Physical pain
	My heart still aches over your loss.	emotions	Physical pain

**Table 10.** VIRTUE IS AN IMPRINT Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
VIRTUE IS AN IMPRINT	Your generosity and kindness left a mark on a lot of people.	virtue	imprint
	You left a mark in other people's lives and that speaks a lot about who you really are!	virtue	imprint

**Table 11.** VIRTUE IS A MEMENTO Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual Metaphor	Sample	Target domain	Source Domain
VIRTUE IS A MEMENTO	Your brilliance in your field left a legacy.	virtue	memento
	We will carry on your principles and legacy	virtue	memento

### 3.2 Reflections on the Filipino Experience of Loss during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Various reflections could be posited based on the conceptual metaphors that emerged in the previous section. First is that, Filipinos had their way of coping during the difficult times brought by the pandemic. It was observed through their language and their conscious (or unconscious) way of using linguistic expressions that their religiosity and spirituality indeed emanated. It can be inferred that Filipino religiosity plays a vital role in dealing with loss. As Panopio and Raymundo (2004) mentioned, religious people can turn their struggles with evil, misery, or injustice into ideas of order through their religion. They can resolve their disputes, frustrations, and dissatisfaction in this way. This way of thinking is reflected in how the bereaved family members see the reward of a journey to heaven after all the battles they experienced in life, and after all the insurmountable pain they had to endure after losing to the virus. This is supported by Graca and Brandao (2024), who posited that earlier studies have shown that religious or spiritual coping that is typically defined as using thoughts and actions based on personal beliefs and values to manage stress, can have a positive impact a person's well-being. This view is evident in the conceptual metaphor of DEATH IS A JOURNEY, which is a more positive way of looking at the passing of a loved one since it entails hopefulness and a promise of peace and rest. This prevalence is the reason why it landed at the top of the list. More so, this Filipino spirituality could be observed in related concepts of death as a form of rest and God being a guide, among others.

Furthermore, in connection to Filipino spirituality, Taisonera and Madrigal (2022) mention that a person's capacity to function optimally in their essence is said to be attributed to their spiritual well-being (SWB). A person with good spiritual health also leads a better life. He/she can find the positive side of any situation, even in the face of life's setbacks. This view is demonstrated in how the bereaved conceptualized virtues, kindness, and gratitude. This way of thinking is also quite apparent in how they value time and memories with the deceased, comparable to precious treasures and gold.

However, it is also important to recognize that although many Filipinos possess a resilient and positive spirit, this does not negate the terrible circumstances brought by the pandemic. Some also had a terrible experience during those times. To the people who caught the COVID-19 virus or had family members who died from the virus, cyberspaces became an inhospitable place due to the fear of contact tracing and social stigmatization. To cite one of the Facebook posts in the corpus, "And now even as we want to mourn, we are still confronted with the

bureaucracy and stigma." This assertion is where the war metaphor pervades, since aside from the virus killing people and disabling people, people's attitudes towards other people were also adversarial. This experience could be the reason for the emergence of certain conceptual metaphors, such as: THE PANDEMIC IS A WAR and LIFE IS A BATTLE.

On a personal note, I began this research with a certain inclination toward specific outcomes, as I approached the topic from an insider's perspective: being a Filipino Christian studying Filipino culture. This inclination became even more apparent after witnessing the deaths and losses shared by friends and acquaintances on social media. I recognized early on that spirituality and resilience would play a central role.

However, I faced challenges in maintaining objectivity during the analysis, as this paper is intended to be a scholarly endeavor. Additionally, I had to determine how to apply a linguistic lens to the data, despite having intentionally distanced myself from these types of posts later on during the pandemic to protect my mental health. I was initially unaware of how people expressed grief and resilience through their posts, which strengthened my resolve to pursue this study. I believe that these experiences deserve recognition by the broader academic community and by families who have also experienced such loss.

As the analysis progressed, my expectations regarding the presence of resilience and spirituality were confirmed. This was not only due to my personal experiences shaped by Filipino cultural constructs, but also because of the readings I went over in preparation for this research. This view is supported by Lagman et al. (2015), who noted that for centuries, Filipino Catholics have drawn on various Catholic and Christian beliefs and practices to cope with everyday struggles and hardships.

More so, one major challenge I had to overcome was maintaining objectivity, especially considering my position as an insider. Nonetheless, I was able to uphold a level of objectivity through a systematic analytical process, gained through my experience as a researcher and educator in research writing. Despite the tendency to become subjective, I reinforced objectivity by adhering to scholarly principles and following structured procedures. As Bangdiwala (2024) explains, while individual studies may not provide definitive answers to a research question, they can still offer valuable insights when they are well-designed, carefully conducted, and thoughtfully interpreted. From a linguistic perspective, my background as a language major proved advantageous. It sharpened

my awareness of certain linguistic nuances and enabled me to highlight the significance of these findings to the broader academic community and within the cultural context of the study.

Thus, I assert that being an insider offers certain advantages, but it also presents the challenge of stepping back and separating oneself from one's work. Still, with my background as a researcher and language major, I was able to maintain objectivity while drawing attention to the culturally specific language patterns used on social media. These findings emphasize the dynamic nature of research writing and provide a deeper understanding of culture through the systematic analysis of language, and that conceptual metaphors are indeed significant in highlighting culture-specific linguistic nuances that reveal how people make sense of the world.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This paper delved into the Facebook posts of bereaved Filipino families and the metaphors that are enshrined within them. Through conceptual metaphor analysis, various metaphors emerged which depict various aspects of their culture and ways of processing loss such as death, virtues, the pandemic, among others.

Through the findings presented in this paper, some insights can be ascertained. First, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory effectively sheds light on bereaved family members' thought process and behavioral tendencies due to COVID-19 in articulating their experience during the pandemic. As revealed in the findings, resilience, positivity, and religiosity are key features of how Filipinos deal with the loss of a loved one, which eventually emerged as conceptual metaphors. Death is therefore mostly placed in a positive light to cushion the devastating impacts this has. This view can be observed in the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS A JOURNEY which encompasses death is rest and God is a guide. They also portray the bereaved as having positive values seen in VIRTUE IS A MEMENTO and VIRTUE IS AN IMPRINT conceptual metaphor which could deem the dead as worthy of paradise. These ways of thinking help to allow them to process the loss better. However, despite this positive attitude towards death, the unpleasant side of it was also highlighted, such as in the PANDEMIC IS A WAR metaphor. These nuanced views show that although they have more positive ways of processing loss, they can still acknowledge and face the source of the loss.

Secondly, research such as this can help people better understand certain phenomena since cognitive linguistic studies are effective when studying people's behavioral tendencies and ways of organizing mental concepts. Even more, language is everywhere, and as such, it can provide

rich data for analyzing human patterns of thoughts and actions during certain times, such as crises.

Given these insights, it is important to note that, although this paper has significantly discussed conceptual metaphors, other linguistic approaches can be explored to understand this phenomenon better. For example, critical discourse analysis for power asymmetries in the spread of information, morphology for neologisms which emerged during that time, and even multimodal analysis to better understand the infographics that regional health offices posted.

Third, posts on social media effectively provide readers and researchers a window into people's behaviors, ways of organizing the world, and articulating their emotions. In the case of this paper, Facebook posts provided robust data on conceptual metaphors that bereaved Filipino family members consciously (or unconsciously) articulated which provided them an avenue to show how they felt, made sense, and processed the loss of a loved one such as a death due to COVID-19. Given the restrictions and stigma at that time, these posts containing conceptual metaphors allowed netizens to better understand the experience of those bereaved family members— one that is not necessarily bleak, but rather infused with positivity and spirituality. Even more, this way of processing is reflective of the Filipino culture as people's ways are shaped by the culture they are immersed in. Thus, Filipino culture puts a premium on religiosity and the decision to look at the brighter side of life amidst the adversities and grief the people face which is clearly evident in the social media posts of those COVID-19 bereaved Filipinos.

Lastly, it is suggested that medical workers analyze the aspects mentioned in this paper hand in hand with medical findings to better handle similar situations in a more empathetic manner. Aside from the morbidities brought by the pandemic, people are affected emotionally and psychologically, which also affects their health. Using linguistic studies to investigate emotional and behavioral patterns would give higher authorities an idea of better courses of action in the future.

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