

Walking on Hot Coals: A Phenomenological Study on Dealing with Temptations in the Seminary

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Abstract

The seminary life for Catholic seminarians includes aspects of their human, spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation. While staying in the seminary, they may encounter different kinds of temptations that can hinder them from pursuing their priestly vocations. This research explored the diverse temptations diocesan priests experienced when they were still seminarians. This study then explored the diverse ways of managing these temptations for the research participants. Using the transcendental phenomenology design, the researchers interviewed ten priests to explore their experiences on how they dealt with their experienced temptations. After the data analysis, six themes surfaced on temptations: family-related temptations, sexuality, deviation from the seminary structure, the temptation to isolate from the community, the envy of life outside the seminary, and doing things inconsistent with the priestly vocation. To cope with their temptation, they employed strategies such as: cultivating self-discipline, prayer, and reflection, being faithful to the mandates of the priestly vocation, living in the seminary formation process, and adjusting to community life. Thus, the research participants completed their seminary formation and were ordained as Roman Catholic priests.

Keywords: Dealing with Temptations; Phenomenology; Seminary Formation; Temptations



Berjalan di Atas Batubara Panas: Studi Fenomenologis tentang Menghadapi Godaan di Seminari

Abstrak

Kehidupan seminari bagi para seminaris Katolik mencakup aspek-aspek pembinaan manusiawi, spiritual, akademik, dan pastoral mereka. Selama tinggal di seminari, mereka mungkin menghadapi berbagai macam godaan yang dapat menghalangi mereka untuk mengejar panggilan imam mereka. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi beragam godaan yang dialami para imam diosesan ketika mereka masih menjadi seminaris. Studi ini kemudian mengeksplorasi beragam cara mengelola godaan ini bagi para peserta penelitian. Menggunakan desain fenomenologi transendental, para peneliti mewawancarai sepuluh pendeta untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mereka tentang bagaimana mereka menghadapi godaan yang mereka alami. Setelah analisis data, muncul enam tema tentang godaan: godaan terkait keluarga, seksualitas, penyimpangan dari struktur seminari, godaan untuk mengasingkan diri dari komunitas, kecemburuan hidup di luar seminari, dan melakukan hal-hal yang tidak sesuai dengan panggilan imam. Untuk mengatasi godaan mereka, mereka menggunakan strategi seperti: menumbuhkan disiplin diri, doa, dan refleksi, setia pada amanat panggilan imam, hidup dalam proses formasi seminari, dan menyesuaikan diri dengan kehidupan komunitas. Dengan demikian, para peserta penelitian menyelesaikan formasi seminari mereka dan ditahbiskan sebagai imam Katolik Roma.

Kata Kunci: *Fenomenologi; Formasi Seminari; Godaan; Menghadapi Godaan*

INTRODUCTION

Seminary formation allows seminarians to experience interior silence to have a profound experience with God (Keating, 2012). In this profound experience of silence, seminarians can contemplate the vocation destined for them. They have an opportunity to spend many years in the seminary to prepare themselves for their priestly ministry in the future. During these seminary years, the seminarians develop their well-being. Cultivating values such as humility is necessary for the well-being of the seminarians (Ruffing et al., 2021). Seminarians can experience growth in their human and spiritual formation, such as in how they deal with others and their diligence and sincerity in their prayer schedules (Hoelsing & Hogan, 2021). Since the seminary is a community, seminarians must develop healthy interactions with their co-seminarians, formators, and other community members. They also have structured prayer schedules to cultivate the prayerful life necessary in the priestly ministry. Seminary formation is also concerned with the nurturance of self-awareness and a willingness to be responsible for their actions (Lio et al., 2022). To prepare for a priestly ministry, a seminarian needs both intellectual preparation and the development of proper attitude and behavior (Fairbanks, 2017; Romeo Mateo, 2021). This preparation is necessary for him to carry out his responsibilities competently in his future assignment. He needs to deal with different groups of people and lead them to the path of holiness.

The formation that the seminarians experienced in the seminary helps them in their future ministry. The style and approach of evangelizing priests are products of the training they received in the seminary formation (Wankar, 2021). The dynamic process of seminary formation helps priests cope with their parishes' dynamism (Sarbah, 2022; Selvam, 2019). The mentoring practices they received from their

formators helped the seminarians to cultivate practical managerial skills for their future ministry ([Chiroma, 2017](#)).

During the many years of seminary formation, seminarians may face many challenges, including different forms of temptations ([Strange, 2015](#)). Being tempted involves doing or not doing something ([Leftow, 2014](#)). Some things need to be done in the seminary, while others do not need to be done. Like other Christians, seminarians also face moral temptations that can lead to spiritual failure and feelings of guilt and shame ([Coe, 2008](#)). Seminary temptations include sexual temptations such as engaging in pornography and having sexual partners ([Oldenkamp, 2018](#); [Rockenbach, 2020](#)), selfishness ([Oakley, 2017](#)), and trivializing the importance of disagreement ([Cordella-Bontrager, 2017](#)). Seminarians must overcome those challenges to finish the seminary formation and become priests. Thus, seminaries are usually isolated from the community to protect seminarians from temptations ([Oberdorf, 2021](#)).

Seminary formators usually discuss temptations for seminarians to develop practices that increase their desire to pursue their goals ([Devers & Runyan, 2018](#)). This study took off in the context of effectively addressing one of the challenges in seminary formation. This study explored the different temptations that priests experienced during their seminary years. This study also explored their different ways of dealing with these temptations. This study anchored itself in the coping theory by Lazarus and Folkman ([Biggs et al., 2017](#)). Temptations caused stress to the seminarians. The temptations need to be dealt with properly to survive the seminary formation.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used the transcendental phenomenological method as it gathered the participants' life experiences and points of view, especially the scenarios on how to deal with temptations (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry from philosophy and psychology in which the researchers describe the lived experiences of individuals about the phenomenon as described by participants.

Research Environment

The research is conducted in the Diocese of Pagadian. It is a diocese located in the beautiful province of Zamboanga del Sur, Pagadian City, a western part of Mindanao, Philippines.

Research Participants

The research participants of this study were the 10 priests from the Diocese of Pagadian. They were chosen purposively as those individuals who successfully underwent the seminary formation and were ordained priests. The priests are categorized by their age and years of service in the church. The research participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Research Participants

Participants	Number of years in the priesthood	Age
Priest 1	Thirteen Years in the ministry	44
Priest 2	Two Years in the ministry	31
Priest 3	One Year in the ministry	31
Priest 4	Thirty-Four Years in the ministry	62
Priest 5	Nine Years in the ministry	35
Priest 6	Nine Years in the ministry	37
Priest 7	Sixteen Years in the ministry	44
Priest 8	Nineteen Years in the ministry	49
Priest 9	Seven Years in the ministry	35
Priest 10	Thirteen Years in the ministry	42

Research Instrument

The primary instruments for this research are the researchers, aided by their semi-structured interview guide. The interview protocol includes questions exploring the priest's temptations while still in the seminary formation. The interview protocol also explored how these participants coped with those encountered temptations.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers first sought permission from the bishop in the diocese where these priests were serving. After the approval, the researchers visited these priests in their parishes and sought an appointment to interview them. The researchers asked for their consent to participate in the study. The researchers explained the questions and the purposes of the study. They ensured the confidentiality and privacy of the research participants. The

participants had the freedom to respond to the questions in their preferred language. During the interview, one researcher focused on the conversation through the guide questions the researchers had prepared, while another audio-recorded the entire conversation.

Data Analysis

The researchers summed up the data and created different themes for the separation of the data following the data analysis of [Moustakas \(1994\)](#). First, the researchers suspended their biases concerning seminary formation to focus on the research participants' transcripts. They then developed themes on the essence of the participants' life experiences while they were still in the seminary formation.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers followed the necessary ethical principles in conducting their research by giving the participants informed consent. The researchers also assured them about data protection. The researchers ensured that the data of the participants remained confidential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During their stay in the seminary, these priest participants experienced different kinds of temptation. These temptations relate to their backgrounds, vocation, and community life in the seminary. These temptations are categorized into family-related temptations, sexuality, deviation from the seminary structure, the temptation to isolate from the community, the envy of life outside the seminary, and doing things inconsistent with the priestly vocation.

Family-related Temptations. Family-related temptations included the temptation to quit the seminary formation due to their family's financial problems that affected the seminarians' support in the seminary. While staying in the seminary, the seminarians need financial support from their families to pay for their board and lodging, tuition fees, and personal things. Thus, it is always a struggle for the seminarians if their family is suffering from financial problems. Regarding this temptation, one participant stated:

One of the temptations I experienced while in the seminary relates to finances. It affects me if my family cannot sustain my need while staying in the seminary. I was envious of my fellow seminarians with stable financial help from their families. – P4

And another that:

I experienced the temptation to quit seminary formation because of financial problems. For many months, I could not pay my dues in the seminary. Our rector called my attention. During our conversation, I requested that even if I could not pay my dues, please allow me to eat here in the seminary and continue my journey as a seminarian. – P9

Another sub-theme related to family-related temptations is the seminarians' desire to be with their families. Most seminarians have been separated for the first time from their families. Thus, there is always a desire to quit seminary formation and be with their respective families. Participant 4 describes, "I desired to be with my family every time I am sick in the seminary. I miss how my family members take care of me." Seminarians feel that the care given by their family members when they are sick is not the same as that of other seminarians in the community.

The desire to help the family is also a temptation that is under family-related temptations. It is natural for children to help the family earn a living, especially after finishing their studies. This temptation usually occurs to seminarians of low-income family backgrounds. They are torn between the reality of pursuing priesthood or quitting

the formation to look for a job and help the family. This situation is true to the experience of participant 5, as he mentioned, "When you are a seminarian, you cannot financially help your family. You are tempted to look for opportunities to have a work and help your family in need."

There were also instances where essential individuals in the family did not support the priestly vocation of the seminarians. This reality tempted them to quit seminary formation and stop pursuing the priestly vocation. Some participants struggled in staying at the seminary because their fathers were not in agreement with their decision to enter the seminary. Some participants said:

At first, my father disagreed my desire to become a priest. However, I decided to enter the seminary despite my father's disagreement... during home visitation, my father usually got drunk and putting the blame on me - P9

When I entered the seminary, my father did not support my decision. That is why, I encountered struggles in my seminary formation. - P10

It is always a struggle for seminarians living far from their families. The seminarians needed to endure the pain of separation from their families. In terms of support from their families, those seminarians from low-income families received limited financial support from their families (Cornelio, 2012; Rhee & Oh, 2011). Moreover, Filipino families were proud of their family members who entered the seminary (Calibo & Oracion, 2014). They considered it a blessing in the family when one member entered the seminary and eventually became a priest. Just like the sharing of the two participants, it would be a struggle for a seminarian if his family did not support his decision of priestly vocation.

Sexuality. As human as they are, seminarians also experienced the attraction to the opposite sex. Many of them struggled in the seminary formation because of the temptation to engage in an intimate

relationship with ladies and abandon the priestly vocation. Several participants mentioned this:

I was tempted to engage in an intimate relationship with a beautiful lady. However, I also know the reality that if I succumb to that kind of relationship, I could not continue my priestly vocation. – P4

My next temptation is about the intimacy to opposite sex. I was also thinking of the option to get marry and quit the seminary formation. – P5

There is a temptation that threatens the celibate life of a seminarian. This is part of life as a person. As a person, we feel love to the other person. – P7

The temptation in relation to sexuality is really affecting my life in the seminary. This temptation really allowed me to decide what it is that I want to be whether I want to be a priest or a married man. – P8

When I was in the seminary, there was time that I had a girlfriend. I came to a point that I want to quit the seminary formation and marry her. I wanted to meet her parents and tell them of our situation. – P9

When I had my studies later in my priestly formation in another country, I met a lady who tried to convince me to be with her and quit my priestly vocation. She said that together, we can earn a living in that country. – P10.

Temptations about sexuality will lead to sexual violations if not managed carefully (Meek et al.,2004). Temptations on sexuality pertain to the challenges in human form that often involves pornography and masturbation (Alphonso, 2015). Therefore, there is a need to maintain a balance to build healthy relationships with the opposite sex, the community, and the formators (Meek et al.,2003).

Deviating from the structured life in the seminary. Some seminarians also have difficulty with the structured life in the seminary. They experienced temptations to deviate from the structure. This temptation includes: going out at night, drinking, struggling for independence, craving more food, laziness, and not exerting effort in studying. Some seminarians got bored with the structured life in the seminary and thus found ways to go out of the seminary at night

without the knowledge of the seminary rectors. About going out at night, participant 1 described, “one temptation that I cannot forget is that I used to go out from the seminary at night without the knowledge of my rectors. I do not know what I was looking for, but I just liked the feeling of going out at night during those times.”

Closely associated with going out at night is the temptation to drink alcoholic beverages while in the formation years in the seminary. Some seminarians go out at night to drink alcoholic beverages outside the seminary. Relating his experiences with drinking beverages, participant 3 mentioned, “one of my experienced temptations was to drink alcoholic beverages. This experience caused me to receive a warning from my seminary rectors. I had difficulty conquering this temptation since other seminarians were with me in our drinking sessions at night.”

One of the temptations of structured seminary life is the struggle for independence. Seminarians felt that they could not do everything they wanted when they were in the seminary formation. They felt choked by the schedules in the seminary and wanted to have their independent schedules. Participant 6 narrated, “I came from a strict family. I had a hard time asserting my independence. This desire for independence reappeared when I was in the seminary. I felt like I did not want to follow the structured life in the seminary.”

For young individuals in the seminary, there is a desire to have more food. Seminarians were not satisfied with the food served during meals. Especially since they are busy doing things with academic study, cleaning, and doing sports, they want to eat more food than that served in regular meals. Participant 8 narrated, “When I was a young seminarian, I was always tempted to eat more. I felt that the food served to us was not enough. Sometimes, we went out to form the seminary and buy food to eat from the stores.”

Part of the seminary structure is to assign different activities for the seminarians. There are times allotted for prayer, studies, manual labor, and sports. Some seminarians like to do the other activities but get lazy doing the others. Mostly, they got lazy when it was the time for manual labor when they were tasked to do gardening and clean the seminary surrounding. They tended to relax and not exert effort in manual labor. Participant 8 narrated, "I was tempted to become lazy during the manual labor schedule in connection to this temptation. I tried to find ways to escape from doing my tasks."

In the seminary formation, one priority is academic study. For seminarians to become priests, they need to finish two courses: Philosophy and Theology. In doing their studies, seminarians sometimes get tempted not to exert effort studying. Participant 6 said, "I experienced lacking effort in my studies. I do not exert effort anymore in striving for more improvement in my studies."

Seminary formation is about training the seminarians for their future priestly ministry. The structured life in the seminary helps them cultivate values and skills to effectively carry out their ministry in the future. The formators mentor the seminarians for one goal: to be good priests in the future and be the image and likeness of Jesus Christ (Alphonso, 2015; Chiroma, 2017). Thus, it would be difficult for the seminarians to continue with the seminary formation if they did not embrace this structured life.

Adjusting the community life. The seminary is a community composed of different individuals. Seminarians come from different family orientations and value systems. Therefore, there is always the tendency to be bothered by adjusting to community life while staying in the seminary. Seminarians tend to isolate themselves and sometimes encounter conflicts with other seminary community members. Regarding this temptation, some participants stated:

In living [in] the seminary community, I know that I can live harmoniously in the community. However, I have this tendency to isolate myself from my brothers in the community. – P6

Sometimes, my expectation in the seminary community was not met. That experienced caused me to be frustrated in the seminary community. That experience almost caused me to abandon my priestly vocation. – P7

In the seminary community, there is the presence of competition. There are those seminarians who shared your shortcomings immediately to the formators. Thus, sometimes, there were disagreements and conflicts among seminarians. – P10

Living inside the seminary includes getting along with the other seminarians and the formators. Seminarians need to adjust to the seminary schedule and the different attributes of each one. Some seminarians found it challenging to live harmoniously with each other inside the seminary. They encountered arguments from other seminarians. However, seminary activities help the seminarians develop a bond with each other. As they participate in these activities, they allow themselves to be involved in the community (Zhang, 2019).

Envy of the life outside the seminary. There are also moments in the seminary formation when the seminarians reflected on their lives prior to entering the seminary. with the life outside of it. During these moments, they compared their lives to their high school classmates fulfilling their dream careers and earning money for their living. Being envious of the situation outside the seminary leads them to be tempted to abandon the seminary formation. Experiencing this kind of temptation, some participants mentioned:

One of the temptations I experienced is that when I compared my life here in the seminary and the lives of my high school batchmates studying and finishing their respective college courses. My batchmates were free to do things that they want. I cannot do things that they do since I am in the seminary and living a structured life. – P2

Part of being a young man is to build my own identity. I have a lot of dreams. I have a lot of plans to do. However, I cannot fulfill them because I am here in the seminary. – P6

I think about the material things that I can give to myself and my family when for instance I did not enter the seminary. When I have a job, I can have those things. – P7

When I studied Theology in Italy, I was tempted for a job opportunity there. If I go out from the seminary, surely, I can have a good-paying job. – P10

While staying in the seminary, some seminarians get envious of the life outside of it. They compared themselves to their high school classmates who were taking the courses they liked to pursue their dreams. The tendency to compare themselves to their non-seminarian batchmates made them doubt their chosen vocation.

Doing things inconsistent to priestly vocation. Seminary formation includes a long process of discernment. The seminarians reflect on the path that is really for them while in the seminary. There are instances when their actions in the seminary are no longer following the priestly vocation. They become unfaithful to priestly vocation even when they are still in the seminary. Participant 6 said, “I was tempted to be unfaithful to my commitment to God. Sometimes, I forget to pray. Sometimes, I was lazy attending the mass.”

Seminarians often experienced challenges in their spiritual formation. Just like the experience of one participant in this study on being unfaithful to his chosen vocation, many seminarians struggled in their prayer life (Alphonso, 2015). At first, they were eager to pray, but as times unfolded, they felt tired of doing their usual activities. Therefore, there is a need to address this challenge to succeed with the seminary formation.

Ways of Dealing with Temptations in the Seminary Formation

Experiencing the different temptations while in the seminary formation, these priest-participants have developed various strategies

to counter their encountered temptations. According to the research participants, the following are the different ways to deal with the experienced temptations in the seminary: cultivating self-discipline; prayer and reflection; being faithful to the mandates of the priestly vocation; living in the Seminary Formation process; and adjusting to the community life.

Cultivating Self-Discipline. The common but the most challenging way to avoid temptations is disciplining oneself. The cultivation of self-discipline as narrated by the priest-participants includes having self-control, learning to say no, being contented, being able to comfort oneself, facing the problem immediately, keeping busy, and doing productive things. Self-control was seen as an essential coping mechanism for a priest to overcome their experienced temptations while staying in the seminary. Describing self-control, participant 1 said:

I cultivated self-control to discipline myself. Through self-control, I was able to contemplate the main reason why I am staying in the seminary. I have to control myself and maintain my focus.

Learning to say “no” is one way of cultivating self-discipline that was helpful for the participants to overcome their encountered temptations. They rejected temptation through conditioning themselves not to engage anymore in drinking and eating excessive food.

I learn to say no especially to the things that cannot help for our vocation. When the temptation to drink is there, I made sure that I will not fall into its trap anymore. - P3

I learn to say no and limit myself in terms of food cravings. I partly condition myself to be satisfied in the three proper meals a day. I tried it slowly, and it took some time to reach the conditioned body in receiving food within these three good meals. - P8

Cultivating self-discipline is also seen in contentment with the situation. While in the seminary, seminarians were tempted by

material things, especially those who came from poor families. In relation to contentment, participant 3 said:

Since I did not have a benefactor, I just relied from the support given by my family. Whatever amount sent to me for my allowance, I learned to be contented with it. I made sure that I only spend based on my received amount. – P3

Another way of cultivating self-discipline is comforting oneself, especially when tempted to quit the seminary life due to missing the family. One participant developed this ability by reminding himself of the necessity to stand on his own feet, especially when away from his family. According to participant 4, “Every time I miss my family, I comfort myself and embrace the reality that I need to be on my own.”

Facing one’s problem immediately is also a way of cultivating self-discipline that is one way for the participants to cope with the temptations they faced while inside the seminary. Addressing the temptation immediately was seen as an effective way to deal with the temptation of sexuality. When a seminarian is experiencing a vocation crisis because of the affection for the opposite sex, dealing with the problem right away by sharing it with the formators, spiritual directors, and fellow seminarians will help. Hiding the experience does not address the temptation. According to one participant:

It is important to face the problem immediately and not attempting to hide the problem. In doing it, you will receive a proper guidance through being open to the formators, spiritual directors, and fellow seminarians. – P7

Another priest added that keeping himself busy can also avoid evil thoughts that lead to temptation. According to priest 8, this is how he disciplines himself;

One that helped me the most in my vocation is the quote “do not always stay alone in the room,” except, of course, if its reflection time, but those times that you do not have work. It is hard because being alone makes you think of many profound thoughts and leads to

thinking about bad things. Of course, I keep myself busy so that I cannot think of other things rather than those evil thoughts. – P8

Cultivating self-discipline is vital in dealing with the experienced temptations inside the seminary. Self-discipline takes many forms, such as self-control, learning to say no, keeping busy, and addressing the problem immediately. In conquering temptations, seminarians need to rely on themselves and look for ways to address their challenges so as to continue their chosen vocation (Meek et al., 2004). Cultivating self-discipline is also strongly associated with coping with the experience of grief in which acceptance plays a vital role in dealing with the negative experience (Sodoy, 2006).

Constant Prayer and Reflection. Another effective coping strategy for seminarians while inside the seminary is their constant practice of prayer and reflection. When faced with different temptations in the seminary formation like material things and intimacy-related temptations, the seminarians were always prayerful and reflective. Doing constant prayer and reflection is revealed by the following responses:

When I experienced the temptations, I prayed to God and asked for guidance so that I will be enlightened both in mind and soul if what is really my vocation in life. – P2

When I faced the temptation concerning the intimacy to opposite sex, I prayed to God about it and nurture my relationship to Him more. Intimacy is also a relationship but it is not in accordance with the vocation I am preparing for. – P7

I reflected about the temptation and I trust God about his plans to me. I believe that He will take care of me and my father who does not support my chosen vocation. – P9

I faced my temptations through prayers and rosary. My prayer life helped me. I developed my personal relationship with God. – P10

Through constant prayer and reflection, seminarians prepare themselves for their priestly vocation. Doing this develops their relationship with God that will also be translated to how they deal

with others in the community. Coping with temptations also becomes effective when there are interpersonal interventions such as of spiritual direction (Garrett, 2013).

Being faithful to the mandates of a priestly vocation. This theme of dealing with the temptations encountered reminds the seminarians of the purpose of entering the seminary. Whenever they experience a crossroads due to encountering temptation, they reflect on their primary intention to enter the seminary. As to faithfulness to their vocation, some participants said:

I have to focus on my desire to become a priest. The temptations gave me a challenge to pursue my vocation but then I have to remind myself of the main reason to enter the seminary. I want to become a priest. P5
The temptations made me lazy to follow the seminary process. They affect my prayer life. However, I have to be faithful to my commitment to God. I have to be faithful to the different activities necessary for my formation. - P6.

The priestly life faces many challenges and difficulties. The priests are called to serve all people regardless of their status in life. Thus, they need to be strong to face the temptations and challenges along the way. They have to be faithful to the vocation they choose. Therefore, it is significant for them to be satisfied with what they do. They need to cultivate a religious emotion that helps them be faithful to their vocation (Cornelio, 2012).

Living in the seminary process. The long process of formation helps a seminarian to reflect more on life. Living in the formation process can also give the best experiences in dealing with temptations in seminary formation. According to priest 6, handling temptations needs experience and time to reflect.

The long process of formation teaches me to choose the proper way to deal temptations. The formation, the long years of formation, gives me the exact experience to choose the best way to handle the temptation.
- Priest 6

The formation process of the seminarians wanting to become priests takes many years. The formation includes the development of many aspects of life that will help priests in their ministry. Thus, living in the formation process allows seminarians to deal with their encountered temptations. They cultivated resilience in facing those that hinder their path (Gordon, 2019). Living in the formation process will help the seminarians develop and reflect more on how to deal with temptations (Oberdorf, 2021). In addition, the seminary process allows the formators to look for ways to help form the well-being of the seminarians (McGlone & Sperry, 2020).

Adjusting to the community life. Many seminarians tend to isolate themselves because of disagreements when living in a community. Personality clashes sometimes cause these experiences. Thus, to continue the seminary formation, seminarians need to adjust to the community life in the seminary. According to participant 7, "I learned to enjoy the community life. I learned how to blend with my fellow seminarians in the seminary community." A seminary then could become a "community of brothers" when seminarians learn to live harmoniously (Clements, 2015). Everyone in the seminary works together to promote personal and communal formation (Agnew, 2012). The formators can also do accompaniment to the seminarians through dialogue and guidance (Alphonso, 2015).

When faced with different challenges, individuals find ways to look for solutions to them. The seminarians who encountered different kinds of temptation while in the seminary formation looked for ways to address their encountered temptations. This situation conforms to the coping theory of Lazarus and Folkman. They defined coping as efforts to manage internal and external demands that cause struggles in a person (Biggs et al., 2017). According to Lazarus and Folkman, one of the emotional functions to cope with experienced difficulty is self-control. Similarly, the seminarians cultivated self-discipline in dealing

with their encountered temptations in the seminary. Through self-discipline, they could redirect their attention to the primary focus of entering the seminary.

Other emotional functions such as confrontation, social support, acceptance, and problem-solving also relate to how seminarians deal with temptations. When one seminarian encountered a crisis in vocation due to his attraction to the opposite sex, he confronted it, settled it, and persevered in the seminary formation. The presence of co-seminarians, formators, and spiritual directors also enriches the seminarians' social support, especially in times of crisis. Through this support, they made adjustments and found ways to address the challenges.

Implications of the Study

Choosing a priestly vocation requires much preparation for the person and the formators assigned in the seminary. A seminarian enters the seminary to serve the people through a celibate life. He needs to undergo human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation ([Alphonso, 2015](#)). For a seminarian, this experience is not productive when it focuses only on the aspect of formation. Instead, there is a need to obtain well-being. There is a need to have balance in the formation process. In staying at the seminary, a seminarian may encounter difficulties because of his temptations. He needs to act on these temptations in order to pursue his vocation. If he can successfully address the temptations while in the seminary, he can move to the next chapter of his vocation as an ordained priest.

The temptations of the priestly vocation do not end with completing the seminary formation. Priests assigned to different parishes encounter different temptations that make their ministry challenging to carry out. Thus, there is a need to address the temptations continuously. When faced with temptation, the priest can

use his experience while in seminary to conquer his encountered temptations. His experience will help him find ways not to succumb to these traps to quit his chosen vocation.

The findings of this study are also relevant to the young seminarians aspiring to become priests. The findings can help them cope with the struggles of separation from the family, adjust to community life, and persevere in their chosen vocation. Young seminarians are the future of the clergy. They will fill the demands of priests in different parishes. Thus, young seminarians should be taken care of. Formators and the members of the seminary community can work hand in hand for the sake of promoting priestly vocation.

The study's findings also relate to how seminary formators accompany the young seminarians. The programs that they can offer to the seminarians can be directed to helping the seminarians cope with their encountered difficulties. Thus, the formators can find ways to limit the turnover in the seminary.

CONCLUSION

Living in the seminary is always accompanied by experiencing temptations that challenge the seminarians on whether or not to pursue their priestly vocation. Temptations take many forms and are present in every aspect of the seminary formation. For the seminarian to actualize their call to become priests, they must deal with the temptations that hinder them. They can make use of different strategies that they developed during their stay in the seminary. These strategies helped them in the seminary formation, but they are still relevant whenever they encounter challenges in their priestly ministry.

This research is limited only to the Diocesan catholic priests' strategies in dealing with temptations. However, there are also other seminary formations aside from those Diocesan seminaries. Therefore,

future research can also deal with how religious men and women successfully formed themselves in the seminary formation.

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