

# Filipina Fur-Rescuers: Experiences, Empowerment, and Education from a Feminist Lens

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**Abstract:** As the digital landscape in the Philippines evolves, social media has become a critical site for animal welfare advocacy. This study utilizes a qualitative multiple case study approach to analyze the online narratives of three prominent female dog rescuers: Karina Suarez, Jona Viray, and Malou Perez. Grounded in Feminist Standpoint Theory, the Ethics of Care, and Social Cognitive Theory, the research explores how these women use digital media to negotiate identity, perform emotional labor, and subvert gendered stereotypes. The thematic analysis reveals that these rescuers exercise radical agency through significant financial sacrifice, the physical transformation of rural landscapes into "geographies of care," and the strategic rebranding of native *Aspins* to challenge systemic institutional failures. The findings highlight critical leadership competencies, including clinical mastery, spatial management, and psychological fortitude against "online bashing". By professionalizing animal rescue as a form of "gendered social labor," this study bridges research gaps regarding "invisible labor" and non-Western development communication. Finally, the paper proposes a modular development communication program, "Project Bantay-Buhay," designed to ensure the long-term psychological and financial sustainability of rescuers through structured educational interventions.

**Keywords:** Feminist Standpoint Theory, Development Communication, Animal Welfare, Gendered Social Labor, Digital Advocacy

## I. Introduction

As the digital landscape in the Philippines continues to evolve, social media platforms have become critical sites for social advocacy, particularly within the burgeoning movement for animal welfare. This study analyzes online video content—specifically vlogs and digital documentaries—that chronicles the experiences of female dog rescuers. By examining the narratives of women like Karina Suarez (Rubio, n.d.), Jona Viray (n.d.), and Malou Perez (n.d.), this research explores how digital media functions as a space for identity negotiation, emotional labor, and the subversion of gendered stereotypes in the context of Philippine "rescue culture."

To understand the significance of these digital narratives, this study situates itself at the intersection of three key scholarly dialogues:

**The "Gendered" Narrative of Care and Rescue.** Current animal studies literature frequently examines the "feminization" of animal rescue. Scholars such as Luke (2007) have long debated the "ethic of care," arguing that women's involvement in rescue often reifies traditional gender roles by positioning women as the emotional, domestic "nurturers" of the nonhuman world. However, contemporary research suggests that this labor is far more

complex, involving intense decision-making and systemic navigation that transcends simple stereotypes (Taylor, 2010). This study contributes to this conversation by analyzing how Filipino women use online video to showcase the grit and financial agency of rescue—such as Suarez's (Rubio, n.d.) liquidation of multiple real estate properties—thereby challenging the "sentimental" trope of the female rescuer and replacing it with a narrative of radical sacrifice and professionalized advocacy.

**Digital Advocacy and Framing in the Global South.** Within the Philippine context, scholarly attention has focused on the strategic use of social media to combat the stigma surrounding *Aspins* (native dogs). Recent research has explored how local organizations use strategic framing, such as the "Adopt, Don't Shop" campaign, to shift public perception (Velasco et al., 2021). While these studies often focus on formal organizational communication, there is a gap in understanding the personal vlog as a medium. This research addresses this gap by examining how individual women use the vlog format to humanize the rescue process, moving beyond polished campaigns to show the raw, unedited "behind-the-scenes" of animal welfare (Perez, n.d.; Viray, n.d.).

**The Psychological Toll: Compassion Fatigue in Public Spaces.** Scholarly conversations regarding "compassion fatigue" and "burnout" among animal shelter workers are well-established (Rank et al., 2009). However, less is known about how this fatigue is performed and managed in digital public spaces. By analyzing videos where rescuers discuss "online bashing" or the emotional weight of their work, this study explores a new dimension of rescue: the "algorithmic-psychological feedback loop." This research examines how the digital visibility of these women exposes them to unique pressures—such as the "crazy dog lady" stigma—while simultaneously providing them with a global community that sustains their emotional resilience (Rubio, n.d.).

By synthesizing these areas, the study demonstrates that the stories of these three women are not merely "rescue videos," but are sophisticated digital performances that renegotiate what it means to be a female advocate in the modern Philippines.

This study addresses a significant research gap by elevating animal rescue from a marginalized hobby to a professionalized form of **gendered social labor** within the Philippine context. By intersecting **Feminist Standpoint Theory** with **Development Communication**, the research validates the "invisible labor" of women who perform high-stakes medical and structural interventions that are often overlooked by traditional labor studies. It specifically fills the void in non-Western communication research by demonstrating how digital platforms are used for "**Aspin Rebranding**" and narrative ownership to challenge systemic institutional failures.

Furthermore, the study bridges the gap between urban-centric advocacy and rural **spatial agency**, documenting how women physically re-engineer landscapes to create sanctuaries of care. Ultimately, the research moves beyond simple empathy by providing a modularized framework that addresses the long-term psychological and financial sustainability of rescuers, thereby reframing animal welfare as a critical component of multi-species social justice.

## II. Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical framework integrates Feminist Standpoint Theory, the Ethics of Care, and Social Cognitive Theory to analyze the lived experiences of female dog rescuers in the Philippines.

The primary lens for this research is **Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST)**, which asserts that knowledge is socially situated and that marginalized groups possess unique perspectives that reveal power dynamics invisible to dominant groups (Harding, 2004). In the context of this study, FST is employed to uncover how the "origin stories" and "stories of agency" of rescuers like Karina Suarez (Rubio, n.d.), Jona Viray (n.d.), and Malou Perez (n.d.) are framed within a patriarchal society. This theory privileges the rescuers' voices as a source of "strong objectivity," allowing for an analysis of how they navigate and subvert social conditions that often dismiss their

labor as merely "emotional" or "irrational" (Hartsock, 1983). By focusing on their situated knowledge, the study identifies how these women exercise agency through radical financial sacrifice and the establishment of independent sanctuaries.

Complementing this is the **Ethics of Care**, a framework developed by Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (2013) that shifts moral focus from abstract rights to the importance of relationships and responsiveness to the needs of others. This theory is used to categorize the common themes arising from the rescuers' experiences, moving the discourse from "charitable work" to a radical form of relational ethics. It provides the necessary vocabulary to discuss the intense emotional labor and the moral imperative that drives these women to prioritize the well-being of "vulnerable others" over their own financial stability and physical health. This lens is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where the care for *Aspins* (native dogs) reflects a deep interconnectedness between the rescuer and the rescued.

Finally, the study utilizes **Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)**, specifically the concept of **self-efficacy**, to identify the leadership and rescue competencies critical to these women (Bandura, 1997). SCT suggests that an individual's belief in their capability to execute specific actions determines their resilience in the face of adversity. This framework is applied to understand how rescuers manage "online bashing" and the logistical challenges of shelter management as documented in their online video features (Perez, n.d.; Rubio, n.d.). By identifying these competencies through a lens of mastery and social persuasion, the study provides a foundation for the proposed **Modular Development Communication Program**, ensuring it is grounded in the participatory model of development communication which seeks to empower practitioners through shared lived experiences (Quebral, 2006).

### III. Statement of the Problem

This paper aimed to uncover the lived experiences of female "stray dog rescuers" in the Philippines as documented in online video features. The paper uses a feminist lens in answering the following research questions: (1) What are the unique and common themes arising from the lived experiences of the selected female dog rescuers in the Philippines?; (2) Using the feminist lens, what stories of agency were privileged in the online videos focused on the lived experiences of each and across the three selected female dog rescuers?; (3) What social conditions shape the origin stories of the selected female dog rescuers?; (4) What dog rescue and leadership competencies are considered critical by the selected female dog rescuers?; and (5) What modular development communication program can be proposed to assist and develop female dog rescuers in the Philippines?

### IV. Methodology

This study is a qualitative research anchored on the interpretive paradigm using the multiple case study approach. It qualitatively analyzed three YouTube videos that featured dog rescuers and animal sanctuary owners.

1. **Title: 104.3 The Capital - The Advocates (Mama's Cradle) 7/11/25.** 104.3 The Capital is an FM Radio Station operated by the Presidential Broadcast Service-Bureau of Broadcast Services (PBS-BBS), the radio broadcasting arm of the Philippine Government. The Advocates YouTube program features dog rescuer Former OFW Carina Jimenez Suarez, founder of Mama's Cradle Animal Sanctuary, in a video with only 39 views on April 1, 2026 since it was uploaded on June 11, 2025. (104.3 The Capital, 2025)
2. **Title: Why JONA VIRAY Built A Farm For Her 70 Rescued Cats & Dogs! | Karen Davila Ep228.** Karen Davila is the YouTube channel of broadcaster Karen Davila of ABS CBN. It featured singer and dog rescuer Jona Viray in a video with more than 3 million views on April 1, 2026 since it was uploaded on November 6, 2025. (Karen Davila, 2025)
3. **Title: MEGA love for dogs – Pawsson Project.** Sharon Cuneta Network is the YouTube channel of entertainer Sharon Cuneta-Pangilinan. It featured dog rescuer Malou Perez who founded Pawsson

Project, in a video with more than 54,000 views on April 1, 2026 since it was uploaded on February 5, 2025. (Sharon Cuneta Network, 2025)

While much has been written about the logistics of animal shelters, the **qualitative narratives** of the women behind the cages remain largely under-explored. These stories are more than accounts of saving lives; they are testimonies of grit, empathy, and social defiance. By documenting these voices, the study aimed to uncover the underlying motivations that drive women to step into spaces of trauma to create outcomes of hope.

Using a feminist interpretive lens, the study thematically analyzed the transcripts of the above YouTube videos to surface lived experiences of female dog rescuers, how they communicate their work online, and the competencies that make a difference in their work. The thematic analysis conducted on the transcripts employed a qualitative interpretive approach rooted in Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Ethics of Care. This methodological framework allowed for a deep exploration of how these women's socially situated positions as female rescuers in the Philippines inform their unique knowledge and actions. The analysis was executed in three distinct phases: an individual case analysis to identify unique "standpoints" and specific stories of agency; a cross-case synthesis to identify shared patterns of lived experience and systemic pressures; and a theoretical integration that mapped these findings onto established academic literature regarding care work and developmental communication (Harding, 2004; Noddings, 2013).

## V. Results

### **What are the unique and common themes arising from the lived experiences of the selected female dog rescuers in the Philippines?**

The following thematic analysis examines the lived experiences of three prominent female dog rescuers in the Philippines. By organizing their narratives into individual and cross-case themes, this study illuminates the complexities of animal advocacy through a feminist lens.

#### **Case 1: Karina Suarez (Mama's Cradle Animal Sanctuary)**

**Radical Financial and Material Liquidation.** Karina Suarez's experience is defined by the total conversion of personal wealth into animal welfare. Unlike casual rescuers, she liquidated her entire life's work to sustain her mission. As the transcript notes, "In her pursuit to save the neglected and the wounded, she sold not just one but three house and lot properties. She gave up her comfort, her fortune, her stability" (Rubio, n.d.). This total divestment from personal security underscores a level of commitment that transcends traditional charity.

**Confrontational Advocacy and Truth-Telling.** Karina occupies a unique space of "whistleblowing" within the rescue community, criticizing what she perceives as the "business" of rescue. She is vocal about her disdain for performative advocacy, stating, "I don't words when it comes to people using animals for selfish games... There's I don't know why *sa* (in) modern times... rescue fundraising *kasama ka sa* (you are part of the) group chat and it takes them like a week... *patay na yung aso* (the dog will be dead)" (Rubio, n.d.). Her agency is rooted in her refusal to participate in systemic inefficiencies.

**Physical Martyrdom and Isolation.** Her lived experience involves extreme physical labor and health decline as a direct result of her solitary mission. Despite being "now 60 years old and facing health issues like rib fractures and scoliosis," she continues to work alone in a mountainous area to ensure the survival of her wards (Rubio, n.d.).

### Case 2: Jona Viray (Farm Healing Sanctuary)

***The Sanctuary as a "Secret" Mutuality.*** For Jona Viray, the rescue site is not merely a facility for dogs, but a shared "healing" space for the rescuer herself, intentionally kept away from the public eye. The farm is described as a "secret sanctuary and a place of peace for both Jona and her rescued dogs and cats," suggesting that the act of rescuing others serves as a mechanism for personal emotional restoration.

***Structural Adaptation of the Environment.*** A unique theme in Jona's case is the literal reshaping of the Philippine landscape to accommodate animal safety. To manage the difficult topography of her sanctuary, "Jona had a 200+ step main staircase built to make the terrain safe for workers and animals." This physical intervention demonstrates her agency in creating a "geography of care."

***Intentional Simplicity vs. Celebrity Persona.*** Her experience involves a conscious "de-glamorization," adopting a "farm uniform" and a "farm-to-table" lifestyle. This shift represents a rejection of her public celebrity persona in favor of an authentic, labor-intensive connection with the marginalized animals under her care.

### Case 3: Malou Perez (Pawssion Project)

***The "Life Worth Saving" Mandate.*** Malou's experience is rooted in an urgent, inclusive philosophy that rejects the "kill" system of local pounds. Her origin story began when she witnessed the plight of dogs scheduled for death, leading to a core philosophy that "every life is worth saving," which prompted her to rescue "all 50 dogs" scheduled for euthanasia.

***Community-Based Mobilization.*** Unlike the more solitary approaches seen in other cases, Malou's experience is defined by building a collective movement and social media engagement. She "utilizes social media and community outreach to change public perception," emphasizing the critical "importance of community support" in sustaining large-scale rescue efforts.

***Joy as a Reward of Rescue.*** Malou's narrative emphasizes the emotional "upliftment" gained from the bond with animals. She describes the reciprocity of care, noting, "It takes so little to smile and what the reward is you feel better you feel good it uplifts your spirit... they're going to love you back and that is it in itself is a big reward."

## VI. Cross-Case Thematic Analysis

***The Ethic of Absolute Sacrifice.*** All three women moved beyond "charity" to a state of total life integration. Whether it was Karina selling properties or Jona modifying mountain terrains, the commonality is a refusal to let animal welfare remain a peripheral "hobby." This aligns with the "ethic of care," where the animal's needs dictate the rescuer's geography and financial status (Noddings, 2013).

***Navigating "Compassion Fatigue" and Social Friction.*** A common lived experience is the struggle against external pressures, including "online bashing" and the emotional toll of witnessing systemic neglect. Malou observes, "I don't understand people that choose not to be [kind]... it takes more muscles for in your face to be *masungit* (grumpy)," while Karina faces "significant online harassment" for her confrontational style.

***Revaluation of the Marginalized "Aspin".*** Each woman shares a commitment to dogs that society has deemed "worthless." This revaluation represents a feminist subversion of hierarchy, caring for the "subaltern" or the native Philippine dog (Aspin) that is often excluded from traditional pet narratives.

***The Anxiety of Sustainability.*** A recurring underlying theme is the worry about the future. Karina “deeply fears for their future should something happen to her,” while Malou focuses on “rehabilitation and rehoming” to ensure a long-term difference.

The narratives of Suarez, Viray, and Perez illustrate a "feminist standpoint" wherein care work is elevated from a domestic chore to a radical act of social defiance (Harding, 2004). The "Ethic of Absolute Sacrifice" documented here mirrors what Donovan (2006) describes as a rejection of the Enlightenment's rationalist detachment, replacing it with a "sympathetic responsiveness" that prioritizes the vulnerable.

Karina Suarez's confrontational advocacy reflects the "strong objectivity" found in Feminist Standpoint Theory, where those on the margins—or those working directly with the marginalized—gain a clearer view of systemic failures than those within the establishment (Harding, 2004). Furthermore, the transition of Jona from celebrity to sanctuary builder highlights the "spatial agency" of women in reclaiming rural environments to establish "heterotopias" of care, which provide a counter-site to urban neglect (Taylor, 2010). Finally, Malou's focus on community joy and narrative rebranding of the Aspin serves as a form of "development communication" that seeks to empower both the animal and the human through shared resilience (Quebral, 2006).

## VII. Using the feminist lens, what stories of agency were privileged in the online videos focused on the lived experiences of each and across the three selected female dog rescuers?

The following thematic analysis utilizes a feminist lens to explore how the digital narratives of Karina, Jona, and Malou privilege "stories of agency." By moving beyond the traditional "victim/nurturer" trope, these features highlight autonomy, resistance, and the exercise of power within the Philippine animal welfare landscape.

**Case 1: Karina Suarez—Economic Sovereignty and Radical Autonomy.** In the digital documentation of Karina Suarez's mission, agency is framed as the power to dismantle one's own middle-class stability to achieve total independence from institutional rescue politics. Her agency is privileged through her role as a solo decision-maker who answers to no board or donor, positioning her as a "strong independent transwoman" who reclaimed her life from ineffective systems. This is best captured in her direct critique of mainstream rescue methods: “I do things which is not the norm... *nung araw* (that day) rescue fundraising *kasama ka sa* (you were part of a) group chat and it takes them like a week, *patay na yung aso* (the dog will be dead). Is this the way you work? *Parang nafo-frustrate ako...* so I decided to do it myself” (Rubio, n.d.). By selling three house-and-lot properties, Karina exercises a form of "economic agency" that rejects the traditional female role of the passive "asker" for funds, transforming her into a primary "provider" and "builder" of her own moral vision.

**Case 2: Jona Viray—Spatial Reclamation and Physical Transformation.** For Jona, the online features privilege a narrative of agency that manifests in the physical mastery of a challenging environment. Her story highlights her role as an "architect of safety" where caring for animals is synonymous with environmental engineering. The narrative emphasizes the literal transformation of a remote landscape: “The property is described as remote and very steep, requiring the installation of a 'main staircase' to make the terrain safe for workers and animals... It serves as a 'secret sanctuary' and a place of peace for both Jona and her rescued dogs.” This privileges "spatial agency," subverting the trope of women as domestic figures confined to the interior of a home. Instead, Jona is shown conquering the "mountain" and creating a "fortress" of care that functions as a private world of peace, largely hidden from the male-dominated public sphere.

**Case 3: Malou Perez—Collective Mobilization and Narrative Reframing.** Malou's agency is presented through her ability to influence public consciousness and lead a grassroots movement. Her story privileges the "leader" over the "laborer," demonstrating how a woman can command a large-scale organization

to challenge state-sanctioned violence, such as the pound system. She is depicted as a disruptive force who halted a systemic process through a single act of will: "Her core philosophy is that 'every life is worth saving'... she rescued all 50 dogs [scheduled for euthanasia], which served as the catalyst for the organization." Her agency is inherently political; she redefines the social value of the "Aspin" and exercises the power to treat marginalized animals with the dignity usually reserved for humans, symbolized by her choice to provide them with high-quality food as a mark of respect rather than mere survival.

**Cross-Case Synthesis and Analysis.** Across these cases, three common dimensions of agency emerge. First is **Agency through "Defiance of the Norm,"** where the rescuers are framed as rebels against "business as usual." As Karina notes, "I don't words when it comes to people using animals for selfish games." This illustrates that their work is not passive; it is a confrontational response to systemic failures. Second is **Agency as "Bodily and Material Sacrifice,"** where sacrifice is reframed not as a "loss" but as a powerful, sovereign choice. The narrator in Suarez's case observes she "gave up her comfort, her fortune, her stability for creatures who can never pay her back," positioning these women as "martyr-agents" rather than victims of circumstance. Finally, **Agency as "Narrative Ownership"** is exercised through the control of the digital "gaze." By defining the "reward" of their work on their own terms—such as Perez's statement that "it takes so little to smile and what the reward is you feel better"—they reject external markers of success in favor of internal emotional fulfillment.

This privileging of agency aligns with **Feminist Standpoint Theory**, which argues that marginalized individuals—including women working in the stigmatized or "unseen" labor of animal rescue—possess a unique epistemic advantage that allows them to see and challenge systemic power structures (Harding, 2004). The "economic agency" displayed by Suarez and the "spatial agency" of Viray reflect what Hartsock (1983) describes as the transition from being an object of history to a subject of one's own life. Furthermore, their "narrative ownership" through vlogging subverts the "male gaze" often found in traditional documentaries, allowing these women to perform what Butler (1990) calls "subversive repetition"—taking the traditional female role of the "caregiver" and expanding it into the public, political, and architectural domains to exercise genuine power.

### VIII. What social conditions shape the origin stories of the selected female dog rescuers?

The following analysis explores the social conditions and institutional failures that serve as catalysts for the origin stories of three prominent female dog rescuers in the Philippines. By examining these narratives through a feminist lens, this study identifies how systemic neglect and social crises provide the impetus for radical advocacy.

**Case 1: Karina Suarez—Reaction to Systemic Inefficiency and Lack of Transparency.** Karina Suarez's transition into rescue was born from a deep frustration with the existing social infrastructure of animal welfare. Her origin story is defined by a shift from being a passive donor to a hands-on rescuer as a direct response to what she perceived as the "business" of rescue. She identifies a critical lack of accountability in digital rescue spaces, noting, "I do things which is not the norm... nung araw rescue fundraising kasama ka sa group chat and it takes them like a week patay na yung aso. Is this the way you work? Parang nafo-frustrate ako" (Rubio, n.d.). This "reactionary origin" saw her move from her life as a successful business owner in Japan to a solitary rescuer in rural Laguna, essentially providing the oversight she felt the formal systems lacked.

**Case 2: Jona Viray—The Pandemic as a Catalyst for Re-evaluating Urban Living.** Jona Viray's origin story is inextricably linked to the global social conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The isolation and high-pressure environment of the entertainment industry during this period prompted a shift toward a "healing" rural environment. The sanctuary was established approximately five years ago, serving as a "secret sanctuary and a place of peace for both Jona and her rescued dogs and cats... away from the noise of the city" (Viray, n.d.). This narrative reflects a need for "mutual healing," where the reclamation of a three-hectare farm allowed Jona to

house animals previously constrained by urban living, creating a sanctuary that mirrored her own psychological need for peace and space during a global health crisis.

**Case 3: Malou Perez—Resistance to State-Sanctioned Euthanasia.** Malou Perez’s entry into rescue was a direct confrontation with the legal and social protocols of the Philippine pound system. Her origin story is characterized by "interventionist agency," sparked by the "kill" policy of local government units where dogs are euthanized due to resource scarcity. The moral flashpoint occurred in 2018 when she established the Pawssion Project “after witnessing the plight of dogs in a pound in Bacolod that were scheduled to be euthanized... she rescued all 50 dogs” (Perez, n.d.). Her story demonstrates how witnessing state-sanctioned violence against animals can transform a private citizen into the leader of a high-visibility non-profit organization.

**Synthesis and Analysis: Common Social Conditions.** Across these cases, three common social conditions appear as primary drivers. First is the **stigma of the "Aspin" and the culture of neglect**. All three women began their work as a response to a culture that treats native dogs as disposable. This reflects what scholarly literature identifies as "speciesism" intersecting with local class dynamics, where native breeds are marginalized in favor of "pedigree" breeds (Taylor, 2010). Second is the **failure of "formal" protection**, where rescuers view the government or established NGOs as insufficient. Suarez’s blunt statement, “I decided to do it myself,” epitomizes a "self-help" narrative necessitated by a broken social contract between the state and its domestic animals. Third is **gendered financial independence**. The rescuers' ability to make radical life changes was enabled by their own economic empowerment—whether through business ownership or successful entertainment careers—providing the necessary "seed money" to exercise agency without needing patriarchal permission.

From a theoretical perspective, these origin stories illustrate **Feminist Standpoint Theory**, which posits that women’s marginalized status in certain sectors allows them to identify systemic flaws that are ignored by dominant institutions (Harding, 2004). The "mutual healing" found in Viray’s narrative and the "interventionist agency" in Perez’s reflect what Gilligan (1982) calls the **Ethics of Care**, where moral action is derived from a sense of responsibility to vulnerable others rather than abstract legal rules. Furthermore, the reliance on digital platforms to document these origins serves as a form of **Development Communication**, turning personal vlogs into tools for social mobilization and community education regarding animal welfare in the Global South (Quebral, 2006).

#### **IX. What dog rescue and leadership competencies are considered critical by the selected female dog rescuers?**

The following analysis examines the specific leadership and technical competencies demonstrated by three prominent female dog rescuers in the Philippines. By organizing their experiences into thematic categories, this study identifies the diverse skill sets—from clinical intervention to strategic advocacy—required to sustain high-stakes animal welfare work.

##### **Case 1: Karina Suarez—Clinical Mastery and Ethical Whistleblowing**

**Intensive Paramedical and Clinical Competency.** For Karina Suarez, rescue transcends administrative oversight; it demands the technical capacity to perform high-stakes medical interventions traditionally reserved for veterinary professionals. She views the ability to sustain life through medical labor as a non-negotiable skill, stating, “I provide intensive, hands-on care, often waking every few hours to medicate sick animals... she lives a simple life in a mountainous area to support them” (Rubio, n.d.). This competency in medical monitoring is essential for her solitary mission in remote areas.

**Ethical Whistleblowing and Financial Integrity.** Leadership, in Suarez's framework, requires the moral courage to challenge corruption within the broader rescue "industry." She has built a reputation for exposing the "darker realities and financial scams within the sector," asserting, "I don't words when it comes to people using animals for selfish games" (Rubio, n.d.). Her leadership is defined by an uncompromising commitment to transparency and maintaining a "clean" operation in a field she perceives as vulnerable to opportunism.

### **Case 2: Jona Viray—Environmental Planning and Holistic Stewardship**

**Strategic Infrastructure and Environmental Planning.** Jona Viray highlights the competency of "spatial management"—the specialized ability to assess and modify a challenging physical environment to guarantee animal safety. Her leadership is characterized by long-term logistical planning, such as when "Jona had a 200+ step main staircase built to make the terrain safe for workers and animals" (Viray, n.d.). This facilities management ensures that the sanctuary's geography supports, rather than hinders, the rehabilitation of its residents.

**Holistic "Healing" Stewardship.** Viray views the rescuer's role as a steward of both animal and personal well-being, emphasizing emotional intelligence and sustainability. She has created a "secret sanctuary" that serves as a "place of peace for both Jona and her rescued dogs... focusing on the well-being and healing" (Viray, n.d.). Her competency lies in maintaining a balanced ecosystem that prevents rescuer burnout, thereby ensuring the mission's longevity.

### **Case 3: Malou Perez—Mobilization and Legislative Influence**

**Large-Scale Organizational and Community Leadership.** Malou Perez's critical competency is the ability to mobilize a collective movement rather than working in isolation. Her leadership is rooted in "Development Communication"—the capacity to utilize social media and community outreach to inspire action. As noted in her transcript, "She utilizes social media and community outreach to change public perception... emphasizing the importance of community support and transparency" (Perez, n.d.).

**Strategic Advocacy and Legislative Influence.** Perez identifies the ability to navigate legal systems and "narrative reframing" as vital tools for systemic change. She is a "prominent advocate for animal welfare legislation and responsible pet ownership... promoting adoption over buying" (Perez, n.d.). By revaluing the "Aspin," she uses her influence to shift national standards and challenge the state-sanctioned protocols of local pounds.

**Cross-Case Synthesis: Common Critical Competencies.** Across all three cases, three common competencies emerge as essential for female rescuers in the Philippines. First is **Psychological Fortitude**, or the ability to withstand "online bashing" and social pressure. Suarez, for instance, "faces significant online harassment and 'bashing' from others in the rescue community" (Rubio, n.d.), yet maintains her mission despite these unpleasant interactions. Second is **Radical Resourcefulness**, characterized by the liquidation of personal assets and the management of limited materials. This is exemplified by Suarez, who "sold not just one but three house and lot properties... she even collects scrap construction materials" (Rubio, n.d.) to build her sanctuary. Finally, **Relational Care** is established as a professional standard. These women redefine leadership not through "command and control," but through an "ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982). As Perez notes, "Kindness is there we have a choice to be kind every day... it takes so little to smile" (Perez, n.d.).

The competencies demonstrated by these women align with **Social Cognitive Theory**, specifically the concept of **self-efficacy**, which posits that a leader's belief in their ability to execute specific tasks—such as Suarez's clinical care or Viray's infrastructure planning—determines their resilience in high-stress environments (Bandura, 1997). The focus on "Relational Care" and "Holistic Stewardship" reflects the **Ethics of Care**

framework, which privileges the maintenance of relationships and the alleviation of vulnerability over abstract procedural rules (Noddings, 2013).

Furthermore, the "Strategic Advocacy" seen in Perez's work illustrates the power of **Development Communication** in the Global South, where narrative ownership is used to empower marginalized groups—both human and non-human (Quebral, 2006). The "Psychological Fortitude" required to face social friction is a documented necessity in female-led social movements, where women often face unique gendered harassment for stepping into public leadership roles (Harding, 2004).

## X. Discussion

### What modular development communication program can be proposed to assist and develop female dog rescuers in the Philippines?

Below is a synthesized table presenting both the **College-Based** and **Community-Based** 6-session educational programs. This curriculum is designed to translate the lived experiences of Karina Suarez, Jona Viray, and Malou Perez into actionable learning modules.

Table 1  
*Comparative 6-Session Modular Program: "Project Bantay-Buhay"*

Session	Module Title	Target: College Students (DevCom/SocSci)	Target: Community Youth (SK/Local Volunteers)	Learning Activities	Success Evaluation Metrics
1	<b>The Rescuer's Standpoint</b>	<b>Outcomes:</b> Analyze socio-economic & gendered factors in rescue "origin stories."	<b>Outcomes:</b> Identify local stray hotspots and the value of empathy.	<b>Activities:</b> Storytelling circles; Barangay mapping; Transcribing the "trigger points" of the three cases.	Participants identify one "Street Buddy" or specific area for stewardship.
2	<b>Street Triage &amp; First Aid</b>	<b>Outcomes:</b> Critique the "Ethics of Care" vs. "Radical Sacrifice" in medical labor.	<b>Outcomes:</b> Safely identify health issues and provide non-clinical first aid.	<b>Activities:</b> Building a "Barangay Rescue Kit"; No-touch health assessments; Role-playing vet reporting.	Demonstration of a safe "First Response" protocol without putting the rescuer at risk.
3	<b>Sanctuary &amp; Safety Design</b>	<b>Outcomes:</b> Audit structural safety and environmental logistics for shelters.	<b>Outcomes:</b> Create temporary weather-proof shelters using recycled materials.	<b>Activities:</b> "Recycled Shelter Challenge" (tires/pallets); Hazard mapping of open sewers and traffic.	Completion of one functional, dry "Safe Spot" for a community animal.

4	<b>Digital Agency &amp; Rebranding</b>	<b>Outcomes:</b> Apply DevCom principles to shift "Aspin" stigma in digital spaces.	<b>Outcomes:</b> Use social media to promote local strays as "Barangay Neighbors."	<b>Activities:</b> "Dignity Photography" workshop; Writing agency-driven bios; Practice de-escalating "online bashing."	Publication of one "rebranding" post that avoids "pity-porn" narratives.
5	<b>Holistic Stray Health</b>	<b>Outcomes:</b> Propose systemic health models involving nutrition and herd immunity.	<b>Outcomes:</b> Master "Clean Feeding" protocols and parasite management.	<b>Activities:</b> Setting up sanitary feeding stations; Designing a "Community Health Ledger" (Vaccination/Deworming).	Creation of a Barangay Health Log to track resident strays' status.
6	<b>Leadership &amp; Sustainability</b>	<b>Outcomes:</b> Synthesize data into a formal LGU/NGO project proposal.	<b>Outcomes:</b> Establish a permanent Youth Animal Welfare Committee.	<b>Activities:</b> "Sustainability Pitch" to local officials; Signing the "Kindness Oath" based on Malou's philosophy.	Formal recognition of the group by the Barangay Council; Proposal submission.

The Project Bantay-Buhay modular program represents a strategic application of the lived experiences of female dog rescuers into a structured educational framework. By bifurcating the curriculum into College-Based and Community-Based targets, the program ensures that academic theory is balanced with grassroots action.

The following discussion analyzes the 6-session table based on the core themes derived from the case studies of Karina Suarez, Jona Viray, and Malou Perez.

**1. Theoretical Grounding and Local Context (Session 1).** The opening session, "The Rescuer's Standpoint," focuses on the origin stories and social conditions that necessitate rescue. For college students, the focus is on Feminist Standpoint Theory, analyzing how gender and socio-economics dictate who performs "care work." For community youth, the approach is spatial; they identify "hotspots" in their own barangays. This dual approach ensures that students understand the systemic reasons for neglect while the youth identify the physical locations of the crisis.

**2. The Ethics of Care and Physical Labor (Session 2).** "Street Triage & First Aid" addresses the theme of physical martyrdom. College students are tasked with critiquing the concept of "Radical Sacrifice"—asking at what point a rescuer's self-neglect becomes a hindrance to the mission. Meanwhile, community youth gain the technical competency to provide first aid safely. This session moves from the "heroic" narrative toward a standardized, professionalized form of care that prioritizes the safety of both the human and the animal.

**3. Environmental Agency and Resourcefulness (Session 3).** The theme of "Spatial Reclamation" is explored in "Sanctuary & Safety Design." Inspired by Jona Viray's structural interventions and Karina Suarez's use of scrap materials, this module teaches participants to see the environment as a tool for health. While college students perform safety audits and logistical planning, community youth engage in the "Recycled Shelter

Challenge." This translates the competency of Facilities Management into accessible, low-cost community solutions.

**4. Narrative Ownership and Digital Power (Session 4).** In "Digital Agency & Rebranding," the program utilizes the theme of "Narrative Reframing" pioneered by Malou Perez. The goal is to shift the "Aspin" from a marginalized figure to a "Barangay Neighbor." By focusing on "Dignity Posts" rather than "Pity Porn," participants exercise communication power to influence public perception. This module empowers participants to take ownership of the gaze, using digital storytelling as a tool for mobilization rather than just fundraising.

**5. Systemic Health and Herd Immunity (Session 5).** The theme of "Holistic Stewardship" is codified in the "Holistic Stray Health" session. Here, the focus shifts to preventive care and community sanitation. College students design systemic models (such as barangay-wide vaccination drives), while youth master clean feeding protocols to reduce neighborhood friction. The creation of a "Barangay Health Log" ensures that care is not random but data-driven, reflecting the "Paramedical Competency" identified in the case studies.

**6. Institutional Sustainability (Session 6).** The final session, "Leadership & Sustainability," addresses the "Anxiety of the Future" found in the case studies. It seeks to move rescue away from the precarious "solo anchor" model toward a Collective Movement. College students learn the formal language of LGU and NGO proposals, while community youth establish permanent "Youth Committees." This ensures that the mission survives beyond the individual, creating a sustainable ecosystem of care supported by local policy and organized volunteerism.

This modular structure is supported by Development Communication (DevCom) literature, which emphasizes the "participatory model" of social change (Quebral, 2006). By requiring a "Success Evaluation Metric" for every session, the program moves beyond awareness and into Social Cognitive Theory's domain of "mastery experiences" (Bandura, 1997). The focus on "Dignity Posts" and "Systemic Models" reflects a shift from the traditional Ethics of Care (Noddings, 2013) to a more political form of animal advocacy that challenges the social conditions of the Philippine "Aspin."

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