

Article

Gender-based Perspectives among Formerly Married Individuals on Intimacy, Passion, and Commitment

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Abstract

The family serves as a cornerstone of Filipino society and cultural identity. However, Filipino families are significantly impacted by marital dissolution, which, despite its high financial and emotional costs, is becoming more prevalent. This comparative case study investigates the gender-based differences and similarities in perceptions, expectations, and expressions of intimacy, passion, and commitment across three marital stages (pre-marital, marital, and post-marital) and their contribution to marital breakdown. Using a researcher-designed questionnaire, in-depth interviews were conducted via Zoom with 12 participants (five males and seven females). Furthermore, the researchers did 11 collateral interviews to aid in validating findings from the in-depth interviews. A thematic analysis of interview transcriptions and observations revealed notable gender-based differences and similarities in these dimensions across the marital stages. Findings indicate that misunderstandings, arguments, and communication problems stemming from gender differences often escalate into unresolved conflicts, potentially leading to marital dissolution and long-term emotional distress. To address these challenges and promote healthier, more resilient marriages, the study recommended the development of targeted programs by government and non-government organizations. These initiatives should focus on strengthening marital relationships and fostering a nurturing environment for families and enhancing communication skills. Additionally, the researchers proposed a two-week, twice-a-week gender-sensitive intervention program to assist couples experiencing marital difficulties or crises, with the aim of improving their relationships and safeguarding family stability.

Keywords: commitment, expectations, expressions, intimacy, marital dissolution, passion, perceptions



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INTRODUCTION

Marriage has long been regarded as a sacred and essential foundation of family and society, a notion upheld by various cultures worldwide (Vazhappilly & Reyes, 2009). It is a union freely entered into by individuals, regardless of its legal formality, binding partners sexually, socially, and economically (Carandang & Guda, 2015). In the Philippines, marriage is deeply rooted in strong religious beliefs, often perceived as a covenant not just between a man and a woman but also with God. However, with the rapid pace of economic development and modernization, societal perceptions of marriage have shifted, even in a predominantly religious country like the Philippines (Abalos, 2023). This global trend reflects a transition from rigid traditional views to a more nuanced understanding of individual circumstances, whether related to marriage or the choice to remain unmarried. These changing perceptions have been accompanied by a notable decline in marriage rates.

In the Philippines, marriage rates have steadily decreased over the years. From 2007 to 2016, there was a 14.4% decline, with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) (Personal communication, September 24, 2020) reporting 431,972 registered marriages in 2019 compared to 449,169 in 2018. Similarly, marital dissolution cases have fluctuated over the years. Data from the PSA (2020) show a peak in annulment filings in 2018, with 7,041 cases, while 2020 recorded the lowest at 1,137. Records from Regional Trial Court XI, Branch 33, further highlight this trend, with 125 annulment cases filed between 2017 and 2021, of which 52 were granted.

While various studies have explored the dynamics of intimate relationships, limited research in the Philippines has focused on gender-based differences in perceptions, expectations, and expressions of intimacy, passion, and commitment in marriage. Most studies on marital dissolution emphasize the experiences of one partner, the reasons for the separation, the decision-making process, and its impact on children and families (Amato, 2000; Hughes & Waite, 2009). However, little attention has been given to understanding how gendered perspectives on intimacy, passion, and commitment interact and contribute to marital breakdown.

To address this research gap, the study aimed to accomplish two research objectives. The researchers first aimed to analyze and compare gender-based differences in how men and women perceived, expected, and expressed passion, intimacy, and commitment in relation to marital conflict and separation. Upon accomplishing this, the researchers then developed a gender-sensitive intervention program for professionals from the implications of the study's findings. Accomplishing these two research objectives was done to help professionals prepare couples considering marriage to be more ready for the challenges ahead of them, particularly in terms of early conflict resolution and aid in reconciliation processes. Furthermore, the study hoped to inspire future research that considers the nuanced role of gender in understanding marital dynamics and dissolution.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Comparative Case Study Method

The researchers used a qualitative research design using the comparative case study method. Comparative case studies involve the analysis and synthesis of the differences, similarities, and patterns across two or even more cases that share a common focus or goal in a way that produces knowledge that is easier to generalize about causal questions – how and why marriages break, leading to dissolution (Goodrick, 2014). The researchers used this method to understand marital breakdown through the similarities and differences of perceptions, expectations, and expressions among genders. This method is particularly useful in understanding how an element influences the success or failure of marriage and how to tailor the intervention to the specific element to achieve the intended outcomes.

Research Participants

This research study was conducted in Davao City, Philippines, via Zoom. Twelve (12) formerly married individuals – five males and seven females – took part in this study. Inclusion criteria were set as individuals who were male or female and formerly married, whose marital dissolution cases were granted by Family Courts, currently residing, are residents or former residents of Davao City, and willing to be interviewed online due to the physical restrictions during the pandemic.

The participants were selected purposively using snowball sampling. Guided by Palinkas et al. (2015), the initial respondent was identified to have been a party to marital annulment. This individual referred the researchers to other similarly situated individuals for the invitation to take part in the study, consistent with the snowball sampling procedure outlined by Crossman (2020). Furthermore, none of the participants were married to each other. While this method of sampling is prone to selection bias and lack of representativeness, the researchers aimed to balance the distribution of participants by gender and recruited them from diverse sociodemographic backgrounds.

To validate the in-depth interview data from the participants, the researchers also conducted collateral interviews, which were interviews with third-party individuals (family, relatives, or friends of the participants) who have knowledge or insights about the formerly married individuals and their previous married life. The researchers conducted one collateral interview for each participant. Note that one female respondent was not able to provide a respondent for her collateral interview. Thus, a total of 23 people (12 study participants and 11 persons for collateral interviews) were interviewed in this study.

Research Instruments and Tools

To address the research objectives, the study utilized two primary tools: a personal demographic sheet and an in-depth interview guide. The personal demographic sheet gathered essential background information about the participants, including their age at marriage, number of children, and key details related to their marital annulment or dissolution.

The In-Depth Interview Guide served as the framework for conducting semi-structured interviews, designed to explore participants' perceptions, expectations, and expressions of intimacy, passion, and commitment. It also examined how these factors may have contributed to the breakdown and eventual dissolution of their marriages. The interview guide was specifically developed by the researchers for this study and underwent a rigorous validation process conducted by three expert professionals specializing in marriage counseling and family therapy. Additionally, a separate In-Depth Interview Guide was developed for collateral interviews. This guide was formulated using the same systematic process as the primary interview guide and tailored to gather corroborative insights from additional sources.

Research Procedure

Ethical Foundations

This study adhered to the Code of Ethics of the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) to ensure that all procedures were conducted in alignment with ethical research principles, safeguarding the welfare and rights of all participants.

Development and Validation of Research Instruments

In preparation for data gathering, in-depth interview questionnaires were meticulously developed for the participants and their family members or friends. To ensure validity and reliability, these questionnaires underwent evaluation by three (3) expert validators: (a) a licensed psychologist with a doctorate in psychology, (b) a licensed psychologist and full-time guidance counselor at a local university, and (c) a licensed guidance counselor, and a Ph.D. candidate. Additionally, an interview protocol was designed to provide clear guidance on the administration and implementation of the interviews.

Recruitment of Participants

Participants were identified using the snowball sampling technique. The recruitment process involved approaching prospective participants to explain the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Key elements of this process included discussing and obtaining informed consent, detailing the purpose of the study, interview process, and expected contributions. Additionally, the researchers also secured additional consent for collateral interviews with family members or friends who could provide insights into the participants' marital experiences. Separate informed consent forms were provided for these individuals.

Scheduling and Preparation

Upon agreement, participants provided demographic data, and an interview schedule was arranged to accommodate their availability.

Conduct of In-Depth Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with each respondent and their corresponding family member or friend. To mitigate potential emotional distress, a licensed psychologist was present during the interviews. Interviews were conducted online via Zoom due to the ongoing Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Despite the virtual format, precautions were taken to ensure that the researchers, licensed psychologists, and participants were fully vaccinated. A debriefing session was facilitated by the licensed psychologist and researchers after each interview to provide emotional support and ensure participants' well-being. Lastly, all participants were assigned unique codes to uphold confidentiality and protect their identities.

Data Transcription and Analysis

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and re-read. To ensure the fidelity of the transcript, these were checked against the video recording along with a researcher's observation notes written during the interviews. After transcription, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data and selected quotations that provide diverse perspectives that are pertinent to the research objectives, specifically towards the perceptions of intimacy, passion, and commitment about marital dynamics and dissolution. Because of this, the researchers note that a deductive approach

to thematic analysis was used (Clarke & Braun, 2017), where codes and subsequent themes were identified under existing constructs, particularly in terms of Sternberg's three components of love. The codes were assigned to the transcript data of the 12 participants, and themes were developed that connected the study's objectives with the data gathered. During the analysis, it was noted by the researchers that imaginative variation (Howitt & Cramer, 2011) was used to clarify the thematic meanings of the transcript's utterances, especially based on how the respondent perceived their marital experience. After developing the themes, concept maps for each major construct were also drawn.

Validation of Findings

Ideally, triangulation would allow for a substantive validation of findings from the research participants. However, the researchers could only find one family member, friend, or another individual who was willing to be interviewed, making triangulation infeasible. Instead, collateral interviews were made with them to be incorporated into the data, enhancing the researchers' understanding of the participants' experiences.

Data Storage and Retention

To maintain data security, all gathered information was stored in an encrypted and password-protected Universal Serial Bus (USB) device with one of the researchers being the custodian of the data (INRDJ). The data will be retained for a period of five (5) years and subsequently destroyed to ensure confidentiality and compliance with ethical research standards.

RESULTS

Profile of Participants' Marital Experience

Seven formerly married women and five formerly married men aged 44 to 56 years old participated in this study. None of the study participants were ever married to one another. The profile of their marriage experience is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' age across the marital stage

Gender	Pre-Marital		Marital			Post-Marital Dissolution				
	18-23	24-29	20-25	26-31	25-30	31-36	37-42	43-48	>49	Cannot remember
Male	4	1	3	2		1	2			2
Female	5	2	4	3	1	1	2	2	1	

Table 1 shows that the romantic relationship the participants had with their ex-spouse began in their early adulthood, with 75 percent reporting the romantic initiation happening when they were between 18 to 23 years old. The range of romantic relationships for the participants before they entered into marriage was one to 2.5 years for the females and two months to four years for the males. One female respondent reported to have been seven years in a relationship before the couple decided to get married. Before getting married, they were engaged to their ex-spouse for three months to a year.

The participants entered marriage between the ages of 20 to 31 years. They had all graduated from college and were employed or in business. One female respondent pursued a postgraduate degree, while one male respondent had an associate's degree.

Most participants were already in their forties when their annulment cases were granted. The youngest age at annulment was 27 and the oldest was 52; both were female. Two male participants can no longer remember their age when their petition for marital dissolution was granted.

Marital Living Conditions

Table 2. Living conditions of participants during the marriage.

Gender	Separate home provided by family	Type of Residence			Living Conditions		Number of Children	
		Lived in the same home owned by in-laws	Owned	Rented	Lived with in laws	Lived without in-laws	0-2	3-5
Male	2	2	1		3	2	5	
Female	2	4		1	4	3	6	1

During their marriage, three male participants lived with their in-laws, while the other two did not. Two male participants came to live under their in-laws' roofs upon marriage; two had family-provided housing; and one had conjugal ownership of the family home. Four female participants were living with in-laws or family, and three were living apart from their in-laws. While none of the female participants owned a home with their ex-spouse, two had been provided a separate home by their family, four lived with their in-laws, and one female respondent disclosed that she began family life in a house the newlyweds rented. The majority of the participants had at least one to three children during the course of their marriages. Two female participants had no children.

Reason for Marital Dissolution and Child Custody

Most of the participants claimed they initiated the petition for annulment. All cases were filed and granted under the reason of Psychological Incapacity. One male respondent filed for Adultery, but it was not mentioned if the adultery case was decided in favor of him or not. Most of the participants were granted custody of their children. Only three participants – one female and two males – had joint or shared custody. It was also noted that only one female respondent had remarried. On the other hand, three of the male participants had remarried, while two are currently in a relationship. Tables of the participants' narratives, summary of themes, and definition of concepts are provided in the succeeding pages.

Pre-Marital Experiences of Participants

Table 3 summarizes the thematic analysis of pre-marital experiences of male and female participants across the domains of background, intimacy, passion, and commitment. Some differences between male and female perspectives were noted. Female perspectives before marriage, for example, centered around communal and emotional aspects of the relationship, while men's perspectives centered around duty-centered notions such as reciprocity and a sense of responsibility towards their partners. Both males and females had similarities in perspectives, such as the importance of physical closeness and commitment to one another. The themes identified provide valuable insights into how these factors may have influenced their marital dynamics later on.

Table 3. Summary of Themes of Participants' Pre-Marital Experiences

Aspect of Pre-marital Experience	Theme	Female Narratives	Male Narratives
Background	Meeting Circumstances	Proximity (i.e., schoolmate, family friend, workmate)	Proximity – schoolmate
	Description of relationship	Fast-paced, spontaneous, typical boyfriend/girlfriend, close friends	Natural development, typical girlfriend/boyfriend
	Dealing of conflicts	Not much conflict, red flags are seen but ignored	Not much conflict apologizes if at fault
	Reason/s for marriage	Pregnancy, pressure from family and society	Pregnancy, pressure from family and society, natural progression of relationship
	Perceptions	Milestone, eventuality of life	Responsibility imposed by society
	Expectations of Marriage	Roles, stability, happiness	No expectations, and no change in lifestyle, entail readiness and maturity
Intimacy	Perception and expression	Physical touch/intimacy, including sexual and carnal activities, dating and traveling together	Physical closeness and touch, sexual activities, quality time, reciprocating acts and enjoying things privately, bonding activities such as dates and traveling
	Frequency of deep conversation	Deep conversations seldom occur	Rare due to perception, career growth, and changes in priorities
	Frequency of bonding activities	Often bonds with each other	Frequently bonds, incorporated into routine
Passion	Perception and expression	Being sexually intimate, giving gifts, quality time, words of affirmation, and acts of service	Doing what you like or love which makes you happy; physically and sexually affectionate; always doing their best; being thoughtful; going out on dates; reciprocating gestures
Commitment	Perception and expression	Willingness and commitment to stay in the relationship despite what happened or through thick and thin	Having a sense of responsibility towards partner and their decisions, keeping promises to one another, showing support towards each other, taking care of each other, and doing things together
	Challenges	Partner's infidelity, religious belief, family involvement, sudden change in proximity	Uncontrollable jealousy, financial stability, maturity/readiness, career growth, time management
	Reason/s to stay	Did think twice but chose to ignore red flags and stayed; love	Thought twice but chose to resolve challenges because of commitment; strong faith; commitment to relationship

Table 4 presents a summary of the themes that emerged from the married life experiences of male and female participants, highlighting both similarities and differences in their perspectives. Differences between male and female perspectives were noted. In showing love, for example, females expressed it through being supportive towards their spouses and showing love through physical intimacy and other forms. Meanwhile, men during their marriage showed love mainly through providing for their spouse and child's needs. Some similarities were also noted in both genders' experiences. Notably, distrust and disagreements in certain aspects, such as finances, were sources of conflict for them. These insights shed light on how males and females perceive aspects of their married life, from differences in expressing love to common sources of conflict with their spouse.

Table 4. Summary of Themes of Marital Experiences

Aspect of Marital Experience	Themes	Female Narratives	Male Narratives
Changes	Changes in behavior, feelings, expectations	Felt more pressure from family expectations, additional responsibilities, and less time for each other	Refused to change lifestyle as single but expects the wife to embrace roles; changes in priorities like having children and seeing to their needs first
	Contributing factors	Infidelity, domestic violence	Emphasis and expectations on gender identity/roles, equal distribution or sharing of responsibilities
Intimacy	Expressions and changes	Same as physical touch and sexual activities – changes due to proximity and the pressure from external and internal factors.	Same during pre-marriage but not the same intensity or frequency due to changes in priorities, household chores, or other responsibilities
	Communication	Communication breakdown: discussions turn into arguments that remain unresolved, creating emotional barriers	Deep conversations are far and in between due to proximity changes, new priorities creating communication gaps
	Bonding activities and their frequency	Dates, dining out, travel together – less intimate bonding due to new priorities (children or extended family) and responsibilities	Same bonding activities – still frequent but considers children, preference to stay at home rather than go out on dates, and affected by time management or financial stability
Passion	Expressions	Serving him (e.g., cooking for him, preparing his needs), passionate expressions of love, physical intimacy (e.g., cuddling, physical touch, sexual activities), giving gifts or words of affirmation	Being responsible, providing for their family's needs; physical touch including sexual activities; giving things or favorite food
	Frequency	Became less and less, especially when child or children arrived or personality changes with their partner	Became little to none due to circumstances such as mental health problems, infidelity, and changes in priorities
	Intensity	Intensity and excitement waned and diminished as time went by due to differences; excitement dwindled due to lack of proximity and time	Intensity lessened due to job, child priority, responsibilities, or distance; Excitement later turned to suspicions due to differences surfaced

Table 4. Summary of Themes of Marital Experiences (*continuation*)

Aspect of Marital Experience	Themes	Female Narratives	Male Narratives
Commitment	Expression	Staying despite challenges, fixing problems, by providing needs	Providing for family's needs and future
	Sources of conflicts	Distrust, partner's affair, philandering, abuse	Accusations made repeatedly or absurdly, money and financial stability, arguments
	Frequency of conflicts	Frequently during the later part of the marriage	Not often at first, but frequently later on
	Conflict resolution	Conflicts mostly remained unresolved due to lack of communication or ignored	Conflicts remained unresolved
	Marital breakdown	When infidelity was found out	Infidelity
	Deciding factor for marital dissolution filing	Partner's infidelity, domestic abuse, trauma	Infidelity

Table 5 summarizes the themes that emerged from the post-marital dissolution experiences of male and female participants, highlighting both differences and similarities in their perspectives. A notable difference is found in their idea of marriage after dissolution: many of the female participants had their faith in the idea of marriage profoundly changed, while most of the male participants noted little change in how they perceived marriage. Both the male and female participants shared the notion that they should know more about their partners, assess their compatibility with them, and be more attuned to their needs. These findings shed light on the gender-based nuances and commonalities in coping with the aftermath of marital dissolution and redefining relational and emotional connections.

Table 5. Summary of Themes of Post-Marital Dissolution Experiences

Aspect of Post-Marital Experience	Themes	Female Narratives	Male Narratives
Effects of dissolution of marriage	Changes in behavior, feelings, expectations	Felt more pressure from family expectations, additional responsibilities, and less time for each other	Refused to change lifestyle as single but expects the wife to embrace roles; changes in priorities like having children and seeing to their needs first
	Plans of remarriage	Most have none; others are open	Most are open but not ready; one has remarried already
	What to do differently if married again	Make sure of compatibility, be more understanding, realistic, conversant, or expressive	Be more sensitive, and appreciative of each other
Intimacy	Importance	Very important, physically and emotionally	Important, spice of relationship, factor for longevity
	Importance of quality time	Important for marriage to work	Very important for the relationship, must be consistently present
Passion	Frequency of expression of love	Always, constantly, every day, and in any way you can, in thoughts and feelings	Frequently, daily
	How someone expresses love to her/him	Quality time, showing respect, thoughtfulness, service, showing efforts	For some, even in simple things, giving them respect and love, showing support, taking care of them, being thoughtful
Commitment	Reason/s to stay in the marriage	Commitment to marriage and family; compatibility	Being respected, taken care of, love, and intimacy

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study offered critical insights into the distinct and shared gender-based perspectives on intimacy, passion, and commitment that influence marital dynamics and, ultimately, lead to dissolution. The observed differences in perception, expectation, and expression of these core elements of love, as defined in Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love (1986), reveal significant implications for understanding marital conflict and separation.

Gender Differences in the Foundations of Love

One key observation is the pronounced divergence in how men and women perceive and express intimacy, passion, and commitment during different stages of the relationship. Women predominantly associate intimacy with emotional and physical closeness, emphasizing affection, communication, and attentiveness from their partners. Regarding gestures of intimacy, one female respondent (Female Respondent 6) said: *Yung physical, yung making gestures that would make his heart flutter, mga ganon, ayun minsan mga small gifts or small surprises* (Physical and other gestures that would make his heart flutter. Things like giving small gifts or surprises.) Men, on the other hand, view intimacy more pragmatically, associating it with shared time and reciprocal acts. This fundamental disparity often creates a mismatch in expectations and unfulfilled needs that may escalate into marital dissatisfaction (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010).

Similarly, the perception of passion differs significantly between genders (Yin et al., 2018). Women see passion as deeply tied to emotional and physical intimacy, expressed through gestures such as gift-giving, acts of service, and affirmations. For men, passion is tied to happiness, physical affection, and shared activities, with one male respondent saying “...masaya ka kapag ginagawa mo yan. Regardless mababaw, mababaw sa ibang tao. (You are happy when you do something regardless of if it's shallow for others)”. These differences suggest that women prioritize emotional depth in passion, while men focus on tangible expressions and shared enjoyment.

In terms of commitment, women express it as steadfastness and willingness to endure challenges for the sake of love and family (Stanley et al., 2010). This was also echoed by a female respondent: “I stayed with him, despite of, and in spite of” (Female Respondent 4). Men, however, frame commitment as fulfilling responsibilities and upholding promises. For one male respondent (Male Respondent 5), commitment means that “I try to follow the bargain... a promise

is something that I don't want to break." These contrasting views on commitment underscore the challenges couples face in aligning their expectations and definitions of marital dedication.

Gender-Based Drivers of Marital Conflict

The recurring themes of indiscretion, unfaithfulness, and unmet expectations highlight how gender differences contribute to marital strife. Women often feel burdened by increased responsibilities, emotional neglect, and their partner's refusal to adapt to married life. This notion was echoed strongly by one female respondent (Female Respondent 3) saying that *"it was unfair [that] I was putting more effort than he was. I felt like I was the only one working hard for the marriage."* Men, in contrast, cite financial instability, jealousy, and unrealistic accusations as sources of conflict. These differences reflect not only divergent priorities but also a lack of mutual understanding and communication about roles and expectations in the marriage (Pathan, 2015).

The study reveals that women are more likely to remain in the marriage despite challenges, driven by a commitment to family and a belief in the sanctity of the union, concurrent with findings from Sadeghi et al. (2016). Conversely, men's willingness to stay is often rooted in their desire for respect, love, and intimacy. This disparity highlights a critical gap in how each gender perceives and values the marital bond, contributing to dissatisfaction and eventual separation.

Post-Marital Reflections: Shifts in Perception and Outlook

Post-dissolution, women experience a marked shift in their faith in marriage, often expressing disappointment and reluctance to remarry. According to one female respondent (Female Respondent 3), *"... It broke the traditional perception of marriage, how it should be..."* They prioritized compatibility, communication, and emotional fulfillment should they consider future relationships. Men, however, tend to retain a more optimistic view of marriage, with many remaining open to remarriage or new relationships. This contrast underscores the deeper emotional toll that marital dissolution takes on women, as well as their more cautious approach to future commitments.

Both male and female participants, however, agree on the importance of intimacy, quality time, and consistent expressions of love. Yet, their reasons for staying in the marriage during conflicts differ. Women cite devotion to family and compatibility, while men emphasize respect, care, and affection. These differences reflect the varied ways in which men and women derive meaning and fulfillment from their relationships (Schoenfeld et al., 2012).

Implications for Marital Interventions

The findings of this study underscored the importance of addressing gender differences in the perception and expression of intimacy, passion, and commitment. Effective interventions must focus on fostering mutual understanding, open communication, and realistic expectations in relationships. The twice-a-week two-week marriage intervention program proposed by the researchers is a significant step toward bridging these gaps. As an essential outcome of this study, the researchers developed the intervention program with the title *"On the Same Page: Balancing Love Components for Couples"* abbreviated as OSP.

OSP was designed to address the multifaceted dynamics of relationships, informed by findings from the researchers' study and the principles of Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love (1986). The program's key focus areas—gender roles and communication, the pursuit of lasting passion and commitment in marriage, and the cognitive dimensions of relationships—not only reflect the depth of the study but also provide couples with actionable insights and tools. In particular, OSP uses several activities such as psychoeducation regarding Sternberg's model, journaling, group discussions, and dyad activities. The modular program also allows for organizing activities based on the availability of schedule, among other considerations.

Several stakeholders can leverage the OSP to nurture Filipino couples and families in synergy with their existing functions. Local government units can integrate this program into a community-focused initiative to promote family stability and well-being. This intervention can also complement the Pre-Marriage Orientation and Counseling (PMOC) program provided by pre-marriage counselors with assistance from Local Government Units and other agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). An example of integrating a psychological intervention into government programs is the Emotion-Focused Couples' Communication Program (EFCCP), anchored in Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication (NVC) model (2015). The EFCCP found much success due to its specialized and specific approach to handling couples and their marital issues, which is something that the OSP aimed to emulate once implemented in practice.

Another key institution that can use the OSP in furthering its mission are religious institutions such as the Church. In particular, the OSP can enhance the existing Pre-Caná curriculum being implemented as a pre-requisite for members of Christian denominations such as the Catholic Church. It can also be utilized in post-marriage retreats and enrichment sessions, enabling married couples to rediscover and strengthen their bonds through faith-based counseling and community advocacy. Incorporating into religious settings interventions such as comprehensive assessments and counseling has been implemented in programs like PREPARE/ENRICH (Stanley et al., 2006). Integrating psychological perspectives in addition to a faith-based lens can establish a stronger foundation for marriage (Clyde et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The study on gender-based perspectives among formerly married individuals underscored the significant influence of gender differences on perceptions, expectations, and expressions of intimacy, passion, and commitment throughout various stages of marriage—pre-marital, marital, and post-marital. The findings revealed that misunderstandings, communication problems, and differing expectations stemming from these gendered perspectives often escalate into conflicts that can lead to marital dissolution and enduring emotional distress. Recognizing these dynamics highlights the critical need for targeted intervention programs aimed at improving communication skills and strengthening marital relationships. The researchers advocate for the development of gender-sensitive approaches that can effectively assist couples facing difficulties, proposing a two-week intervention designed specifically to enhance relationships and promote family stability. By addressing the unique needs and perspectives influenced by gender, stakeholders can create more supportive environments that not only aid couples in navigating their relationships more effectively but also serve to reduce the prevalence of marital breakdown in society. Ultimately, understanding these gender dynamics is crucial for fostering healthier, more resilient marriages and enhancing the overall well-being of families.

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Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare no conflict of interest in the publication of this manuscript.

AI Disclosure

We declare that this manuscript was prepared without the assistance of generative artificial intelligence.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

In-Depth Interview Guide

Pre-Marriage

1. How did you and your partner meet?
 - a. What was your relationship like before getting married?
 - b. How did you deal with conflicts in the relationship before?
 - c. What was/were the reason/s when you finally decided to get married?
2. What perceptions of marriage did you have before?
3. What were your expectations when you decided to get married?
4. On Intimacy (Pre-marriage)
 - a. What were your expressions of intimacy before marriage?
 - i. In what ways did your partner express his/her intimacy towards you?
 - ii. How often did you have deep conversations with your partner?
 - iii. What were your bonding activities?
 - iv. How often did you do these bonding activities?
5. On Passion (Pre-marriage)
 - a. How do you show your love to your partner before marriage?
 - i. How did your partner express his/her love to you before marriage?
6. On Commitment (Pre-marriage)
 - a. How do you both show commitment before marriage?
 - i. What was the biggest challenge, in general, that you had encountered in the relationship before getting married?
 - ii. Did the relationship problem/challenge make you think twice about staying in the relationship?
 - iii. What made you decide to stay in the relationship despite this/these challenges?

Marital Experience

7. What were the changes in both your behavior, feelings, and expectations after or during the marriage? If yes, what were those?
 - a. What do you think were the factors contributing to these changes?
8. On Intimacy (Marital experience)
 - a. What were your expressions of intimacy during the marriage?
 - i. In what ways did your partner express his/her intimacy towards you?
 - ii. How often did you have deep conversations with your partner?
 - iii. What were your bonding activities?
 - iv. How often do you do these bonding activities?
9. On Passion (Marital experience)
 - a. How do you express your love towards your partner during married life?
 - i. How does your partner express his/her love for you?
 - ii. Have you felt the love of your partner for you while you were married?
 - iii. In what way/s did you feel excited when you were with your partner?
10. On Commitment (Marital experience)
 - a. What were your ways of showing commitment during the marriage?
 - i. What were your source/s of conflict?
 - ii. How often was it happening?
 - iii. How soon did you resolve your conflicts?
 - iv. When did you acknowledge that your marriage was breaking down?

- v. What was the last straw that led you to decide to file or agree to file for a marital dissolution?

Post-Marital Dissolution

11. Does your experience of marital breakdown influence your perceptions and expectations of marriage?
 - a. Do you have plans or intentions of getting married again? Or, what you decide to get married again despite what you had gone through?
 - b. What would you do differently if you were to get married again? Or what are the things that you are doing differently now that you are married again?
12. On Intimacy (Post-marital dissolution)
 - a. How important, do you think, is intimacy in marriage?
 - i. How important is quality time with your spouse even when you have been married for years or when you already have children?
13. On Passion (Post-marital dissolution)
 - a. How often should married couples express their love to one another?
 - i. How can someone make you feel loved?
14. On Commitment (Post-marital dissolution)
 - a. What can make you stay in a marriage that you were not able to feel previously?

Collateral Interview Questions

1. What is your relationship with the ex-couple?
 - a. Can you tell me the story of how she/he met his/her ex-spouse?
 - b. How is she/he as a friend or family member?
 - c. How is she/he as a girlfriend or boyfriend?
2. How are they usually when outside their home or with family/friends?
 - a. Are they expressive of their love towards each other? How?
 - b. How often do they spend quality time with each other alone?
3. Does the respondent confide in you when they have marital conflicts?
 - a. What are usually the source/s of their conflicts?
 - b. How do they resolve these conflicts, and how soon do they resolve them?
4. How did you react when the respondent informed you of their plan and/or decision to file for marital dissolution?
 - a. What were your thoughts when they filed for their marital dissolution?
 - b. What were the struggles, known to you, of the participant when their marriage broke down and eventually decided to dissolve their marriage?
 - c. How was the participant after their marital dissolution case was granted by the court?