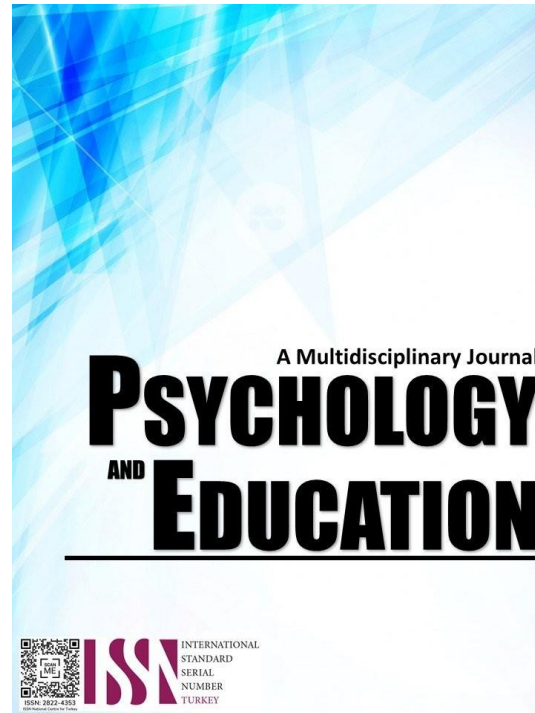


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## Exploring Views on Marriage among Individuals with Separated Parents: Basis in the Development of Premarital Modules towards Family Building and Resiliency

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### Abstract

While getting married and starting a family are still widely regarded as important life events toward adulthood, young adults nowadays are delaying getting married and establishing their own families. The study incorporated a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to understanding how young adults formed meanings based on their experiences with parental separation. A semi-structured interview was conducted to freely express their thoughts, views, and beliefs, as their responses were not confined to a simple yes or no. Through purposive sampling, fifteen (15) participants, aged between 18 and 25 years old, who have experienced parental separation from the City of Bacoor, Cavite, were interviewed face-to-face or online platforms, depending on the availability of the participants. All recorded responses were carefully analyzed using Collaizi's procedure. Responses were grouped according to the interview transcripts; hence, the range of outlooks was uncovered. The findings of the study revealed three (3) main themes: Perception of Marriage, General Prerequisites of Marriage, and Effects of Parental Separation on Views of Marriage. The study obtained views on marriage from people who had gone through parental separation. Some participants had negative emotions like anxiety and trust issues, which shows that they needed support. On the other hand, some people kept a positive attitude, and they were able to tolerate the situation. This shows the different ways people deal with the separation of their parents and how it affects their attitude towards marriage. The findings of this study contribute to the existing knowledge about young adults who experienced parental separation, which can be used to create effective interventions that would help young adults who experienced parental separation with their difficulties.

**Keywords:** *family building, marriage, marriage perception, parental separation, young adults*

### Introduction

Family is considered the smallest and most fundamental unit of society, from which socialization and development of values begin. It is a social institution that provides the basic needs of its members in terms of psychological, emotional, and social aspects. Additionally, it fosters a sense of love, belonging, and security while also shaping values, beliefs, and behaviors that individuals conform to throughout their lives. While society's definition of a complete family includes parents who are married and their children (Lanoso et al., 2021), this is not applicable to all families. Parental separation, defined by Dahmann et al. (2022) as parents ending their relationship and living apart, is a major cause of family dissolution. Dagami et al. (2022) found that the primary factors for high parental separation rates in Barangay Zone II, Santa Fe, Leyte, include negligent behavior, infidelity, criminal activities, and emotional shifts. The Philippine Statistics Authority (Mapa, 2023) reported that 5 million Filipinos experienced divorce, separation, or annulment. This increasing trend of broken families highlights the ongoing issue of parental separation in the Philippines. Since the family is crucial for a child's love, care, and attention, parental behavior profoundly affects children's upbringing and future views on relationships and marriage (Calmerry Care Team, 2023). While local studies on broken families focus on children's behavioral well-being and academic performance, research on young adults' perceptions of marriage is outdated and insufficient. Thus, understanding how parental separation impacts young adults' views on marriage and identifying factors influencing their marital decisions is necessary.

### Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondent in terms of the following:
  - 1.1. Age
  - 1.2. Gender
  - 1.3. Highest Educational Attainment
2. What are the perspectives of young adults regarding marriage?
3. What are the factors influencing the views on marriage among individuals with separated parents?
4. How do experiences of parental separation influence attitudes and perceptions towards marriage among young adults?

### Literature Review

#### *Concept of Family and Dysfunctional Family*

Family is often considered the smallest and the most important unit of society. It plays a significant role in shaping an individual's

development, behavior, beliefs, values, and overall identity. A family refers to a group of people traditionally consisting of parents, living alongside their children under the same roof. In the Philippines, the nuclear family is the average and traditional family structure which is usually composed of parents with their children. This family system plays an important role in providing guidance, support and fostering a sense of belonging. While society's notion of a complete family comprises married parents and their biological or adopted children. However, having a complete and intact family does not apply to every family (Lanozo, Tabieros, Solmiano, Paras & Tus, 2021). The definition of a family extends beyond structures that have been disrupted or gone through significant adjustments, and this is commonly referred to as broken families. Dysfunctional family is another term for a broken family. It is defined by (Nittle, 2023), as a family structure whose one or both parents are absent due to separation or divorce. In some instances, it includes abandonment, death of one of the parents, and prolonged conflict.

### ***Parental Separation***

Parental conflicts and arguments leading to separation are a significant cause of broken families. Dahmann et al. (2022) define parental separation as parents ending their relationship and living apart. In the Philippines, where divorce remains illegal, marriage dissolutions are steadily increasing. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023), 14.7% of the population lived in common-law/live-in arrangements in 2020, up 5.5% from 2015. The 2020 Census revealed that of the 108,667,043 individuals in households, 79.4% were aged 10 or older. The percentage of individuals who were divorced, separated, or annulled rose from 1.5% to 1.9% in 2020, indicating a small but growing trend of marital dissolutions. Despite the availability of annulment and legal separation, these processes are costly, complex, and time-consuming, leading many couples to separate without legal procedures. Dagami et al. (2022) investigated the causes of high parental separation rates in Barangay Zone II, Santa Fe, Leyte, using qualitative research and explanatory case studies on five separated couples. Semi-structured interviews revealed that parental separation was due to irresponsible behaviors, adultery, crime-related activities, and changing feelings towards each other. These findings highlight the complexities and challenges surrounding marital dissolution in the Philippines.

### ***Marriage***

Marriage is a legally binding contract that establishes conjugal and family life, influenced by religious, cultural, legal, and personal beliefs. Sedberry (2023) explores contrasting perspectives on marriage, focusing on religious and secular views. The religious perspective sees marriage as a sacred covenant established by a higher power, often involving prayers, blessings, and religious ceremonies to signify divine presence and commitment. Religious teachings emphasize marriage's purposes, including procreation, family formation, companionship, support, and faithfulness. Conversely, the secular perspective views marriage as a social and legal institution, a civil contract between consenting individuals recognized and governed by law. This perspective values personal choice, legal acknowledgment, and the protection of the couple's rights under national laws. In the Philippines, marriage is governed by both civil and religious laws. Until 2020, divorce was illegal, and annulment was the only legal way to end a marriage, although it was complex and lengthy (Barrero, 2023). The new divorce law marks a significant shift, aligning the Philippines more closely with global norms while still balancing civil and religious considerations. These diverse perspectives reflect the evolving societal norms and values influencing marriage worldwide.

### ***Young Adult's Perception Towards Marriage***

In addition to procreation and family formation, marriage offers emotional support, social interaction, financial advantages, and legal advantages that all help to maintain the stability and security of both individuals and families. It provides a stable environment for raising children and fosters a sense of community and belonging. In addition, marriage serves as a social institution that fosters a feeling of community and social support. It gives people access to a network of friends and family, fostering a sense of belonging and support (Fisher, 2019). Falculan et al., (2019) reported that young adults hold varying perspectives regarding the significance and purpose of marriage. For some individuals, marriage is perceived as a sacred covenant established by a divine entity, often reflecting religious beliefs and values. On the other hand, there are those who primarily view marriage as a legal contract aimed at formalizing a relationship in a societal and legal context. These differing viewpoints highlight the diverse interpretations of marriage within younger demographics, influenced by factors such as religious upbringing, cultural norms, and personal beliefs.

National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2019) studied the insight within the broad 18-30 young-adult age group on the topic of marital relationship and attitudes toward marriage through qualitative research. The findings show marriage carries significant emotional weight and stress for young adults today, especially as it has transitioned from a social obligation to an individual choice. Many single young adults are overwhelmed by the pressure to be certain about marriage, worried that they may lose their sense of self in a relationship. There is a considerable attitudinal difference between married and unmarried young adults, with married people having a sense of personal fulfillment in their relationships while unmarried people have concerns about losing their own identity due to marriage.

### ***Factors associated with Marital Readiness***

Keldal and Yıldırım's (2021) study used a mixed-method approach to examine the factors influencing marital preparedness among unmarried Turkish young adults. Six (6) themes were identified as prerequisites that single young adults consider when determining their marriage preparedness. These themes include financial preparedness, emotional and interpersonal development, family life and

family formation, sexual readiness, and social responsibility. Another study showed that there is a significant positive effect of financial well-being on marital satisfaction. That is, when people feel financially secure, they are more likely to be satisfied with their marriage. Essentially, the data indicates that conflicts over money and spending can negatively affect marital satisfaction and family harmony (Zainol et al., 2023). In a study with university students, Özyiğit (2019) suggests that marriage generally elicits positive emotions among participants. The analysis identified several key marital themes. In the premarital phase, themes include "self-knowledge, spouse selection, and ceremonies." During the marriage process, the focus shifts to "marital functions." Finally, in the post-marital phase, themes cover "possible divorce/separation reasons and the emotions accompanying divorce/separation."

### ***Effects of Parental Separation on Young Adult's Perception Towards Marriage***

Given the prevalence of divorce in today's culture, it is critical to investigate how young adults from separated households manage the process of developing their own perception of marital relationships. Studies investigating whether parental marital status affects young adults' attitudes toward marriage and divorce have produced conflicting findings. In this review, Ludden (2023) shed light on the potential long-term effects of parental separation during adolescence on individuals' romantic relationship quality in emerging adulthood, highlighting the importance of considering familial experiences when examining relationship dynamics later in life. Utilizing correlational design and utilized self-report questionnaires, the study suggested that the quality of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood is positively correlated with parental separation during adolescent. In particular, compared with individuals who did not experience parental separation, those who had gone through parental separation during adolescence tended to report higher levels of conflict and poorer levels of satisfaction in their romantic relationships as emerging adults.

In the Philippines, Falculan et al. (2019) explored how parental separation impacts young adults' perceptions of marriage, identifying four key themes: fear-inducing negative experiences, trust issues, low self-esteem, and attachment problems. Most respondents viewed marriage negatively, fearing relationship failure and struggling with trust due to perceived betrayal or abandonment during their parents' separation. Many also experienced low self-esteem, doubting their abilities and finding it difficult to establish relationships. Attachment issues were common, with respondents heavily relying on partners and finding it hard to let go. Supporting these findings, Ludden (2023) showed that individuals from separated families had lower levels of commitment, satisfaction, and attachment in relationships compared to those from intact families. These studies highlight the significant impact of parental separation on young adults' outlook on marriage and relationships.

Despite parental separation, many young adults perceive minimal influence on their marital decisions. McAdam (2023) studied the impact of parental divorce on UCF college students' romantic relationships using Qualtrics questionnaires. Results showed no significant effect on students' relationship or life satisfaction. However, unaccounted factors like commitment levels and interpersonal skills, such as communication and empathy, might have influenced the outcomes, leading to response bias. Conversely, Salih and Chaudry (2021) explored individuals' experiences with parental infidelity through phenomenological analysis, identifying themes like adultification, relationship challenges, psychological experiences, and healing. Despite the trauma, some participants reported positive outcomes, learning to avoid replicating their parents' unfaithful behaviors and gaining insights into healthier relationships. These studies highlight varied impacts of parental separation on young adults' perceptions and relationship choices.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study used a qualitative design anchored on a phenomenological approach to provide a deeper understanding of how young adults with separated parents perceive marriage; by exploring their perceptions, feelings, and meanings they attach to the said phenomenon (Jain, 2023).

### **Participants**

*Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents*

<i>Demographic Profile</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Sex at Birth	Male	7	46.7
	Female	8	53.3
	Total	15	100
Age	18 to 21 years old	4	26.7
	22 to 25 years old	11	73.3
	Total	45	100
Marital Status	Single	23	51
	Married	22	49
	Total	45	100
Highest Educational Attainment	College Undergraduate	14	93.3
	Bachelor's Degree	1	6.7
	Total	45	100

The table above presents the frequency of demographics of the 15 participants, which are categorized into three variables: gender, age, and educational level. It reveals that eight (8), or 46.7% of the respondents are female, while seven (7), or 53.3% of them are male. In terms of age, eleven (11), or 73.3% of respondents are between 22 and 25 years old, and the remaining four (4), or 26.7%, are between 18 and 21 years old. Additionally, the table shows that fourteen (14), or 93.3% of the respondents are college undergraduates, while only one (1), or 6.7%, is a college graduate.

### Instrument

Data were gathered through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. This type of interview is ideal for discovering and exploring perceptions, experiences, and perspectives from different views of participants. The researchers prepared self-made questionnaires that were presented to professionals in the field of study for validation to ensure that it would provide the data needed to answer the research questions. Validated interview questions covered the topics that meet the required information for the perception of young adults on marriage as well as the factors that they consider before entering marriage.

### Procedure

Within the selected barangays, the researchers identified individuals who meet the study's criteria, namely young adults aged 18 – 25 who have experienced parental separation. Prior to the interview, the participants who met the given criteria were issued an invitation letter to know if they are willing to participate in a face-to-face or online interview through Google Meet and Zoom. Upon approval, the participants signed an informed consent protecting their privacy and data security. In the interview itself, the researchers informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights as participants. The researchers documented the conversation through a voice recorder and noted some important details from the respondents which were meticulously kept as it was deemed essential.

### Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of St. Dominic College of Asia based on the compliance with the minimum standards of the SDCA Research Guidelines. Respondents were deployed based on their willingness to participate in this study with informed consent.

## Results and Discussion

### Emergent Theme 1: Perception of Marriage

#### *Constructs of Marriage*

##### Secular View

In a secular context, participants regarded marriage as a legal and social contract recognized and regulated by civil authorities rather than religious institutions. The advantage of marriage, as highlighted by the participants, lies primarily in the legal and financial benefits it affords. Being married grants individuals' rights and legal protections concerning their spouse and shared property. This includes handling finances and legal matters more effectively compared to unmarried individuals. This is supported by an article by Sedberry (2023) which sees marriage as a legal and social aspect between two individuals, which is in contrast with religious views of marriage that emphasize a sacred covenant. When asked about their opinions about marriage, the participants' responses were as follows:

*“Ang advantage n’ya of course ‘pag married ka, you have the rights unang-una... umm you have the rights doon sa spouse mo, rights sa property gamun”.* (Participant 2-B; Line No. 63-64)

*“legally speaking, ‘yung mga finances – s’yempre ‘pag married ka, yung mga finances and legal considerations na mga bagay-bagay, mas naha-handle siya at maayos s’ya compared sa hindi married.”* (Participant 5-E; Line No. 217-219)

*“may mga legal vibe ‘yan, kung lupa niya lupa mo din, kung ano ang mga pa mamay ari niya pagmamay-ari mo din”* (Participant 9-I; Line No. 433-434)

##### Religious View

Five (5) participants, on the other hand, believed that marriage was more than just a contract; rather, they regarded it as a sacred covenant that God had ordained, signifying the bond between Christ and the Church. This viewpoint differs from secular views of marriage, which emphasize the roles of husbands and wives – with wives expected to submit to their husbands, and husbands expected to love their spouses as Christ loved the Church (Sedberry, 2023). It also includes religiously particular teachings, ceremonies, and rituals that represent the values and customs of each faith group, reflecting the beliefs and practices of each faith tradition.

*“I...still believe pa rin naman sa sanctity rin ng marriage no?”* (Participant 2-B; Line No. 73-74)

*“Yung kasal para sa kin, s’yempre sagrado siya”* (Participant 3-C; Line No. 119)

*“Perception sa marriage, ahh ano tawag dito... di ba marriage ay ano divine, if ico-connect ko ‘yung sa topic natin dapat ang kasal ay tawag dito... kasi di ba di na dapat naghihiwalay kasi ‘yun is divine nga.”* (Participant 4-D; Line No. 165-167)

*“Ah...sakin, siguro ‘yung marriage is sacred talaga... importante sa ‘kin na, may blessing talaga ‘yung relationship, lalo na naniniwala ako na, isa ‘yun sa reason makakapag-patibay sa relasyon”.* (Participant 8-H; Line No. 368-377)

*“Bond s'ya between magasawa forged by the Lord, sacramental thing. Eternal bond ng magasawa, through thick and thin”* (Participant 12-L; Line)

### **Social Expectations on Marriage**

#### Partnership

For a marriage to work out, two people must have a mutual understanding in terms of sorting out things together. Different statements, but one thought has been described in the statements below by the participants in a marriage where partners do things together and support each other. According to Fisher (2019), marriage is a partnership, which means that both partners have an equal say in all marital decisions. Furthermore, both partners believe they can influence one another, and there is a sense of equality in the marriage. This enhances the relationship because it makes both parties feel appreciated and promotes a sense of teamwork.

*“Advantage ng marriage for me is you have emotional support. tsaka nakakatulong din siya for financial stability since dalawa yung may source of income sa isang household. You can split the bills or may katulong ka magbayad ganon. tsaka may mga responsibilities na pwede mong i-share which nakakatulong din mapabilis yung pagtapos sa mga responsibility or tasks.”* (Participant 1-A; Line No. 16-20)

#### Lifetime Commitment

Moreover, Victor (2023) argued that people in relationships see marriage as a commitment that lasts for a lifetime which helps them to grow and support one another's development. They enter into marriage ready to overcome obstacles as a couple, improve communication, and provide a supportive atmosphere for raising kids, and impart values to one another that their upbringing may have lacked.

According to Lioe (2023), commitment in marriage varies from wanting to personally stay in the relationship, due to a sense of obligations, or being constrained in leaving the relationship, hence why commitment in marriage is important for a couple to provide long-lasting support and resolution in times of challenges.

*“Marriage is a lifelong commitment”* (Participant 2-B; Line No. 59-60)

*“mas deep ‘yung relationship once you're married as compared to mag-partner lang kayo”* (Participant 2-B; Line No. 65-66)

*“So for marrying...uh...life-long commitment... deep kasi ang understanding ko sa relationship so I think to marry is to-is like saying I'm ready to commit my life to you. It's a lifelong commitment so gusto ko pa rin siya in the future, regardless of what my past is”* (Participant 2-B; Line No. 80-85)

*“‘pag sinabing marriage, ‘and ‘un ka na sa point ng life mo na parang wala ka ng chance na umatras pag ginawa mo ‘yung bagay na yun”*, (Participant 6-F; Line No. 269-270)

*“kasi ang marriage sobrang laking factor niya sa isang tao sobrang laking commitment na ibibigay mo doon sa, sa bagay na ‘yun”.* (Participant 6-F; Line No. 270-271)

*“It's a partnership and lifetime commitment.”* (Participant 14-N; Line No. 681)

*“kung hindi naman kaya ang reponsibilidad sa pag papakasal ‘wag na lang ituloy”* (Participant 14-N; Line No. 695-696)

### **Challenges in Marital Commitment**

#### Marriage as a Trap

In the Philippine culture, marriage holds immense cultural and societal significance, deeply rooted in Filipino values and traditions. However, the absence of a divorce law in the country presents a significant challenge for couples facing marital difficulties.

While divorce is still not acknowledged by the law, couples have an option to file for an annulment or declare the nullity of their marriage. The absence of a divorce law in the Philippines significantly contributes to the feeling of being trapped in marriage (Barrero, 2023).

*“Disadvantage naman if ‘di talaga kayo magkasundo, syempre ‘di maiiwasan conflict, mahirap ‘pag walang divorce ‘yung bansa n'yo”* (Participant 1-A; Line No. 22-23)

*“dahil nga dito sa Pinas walang divorce, ang hirap tuloy makipag – magkaroon ng legal separation sa asawa mo kapag if ever na mangyayari ‘yun”* (Participant 9-I; Line No. 421-423)

*“...knowing here in the Philippines we don't have divorce meaning you will be stuck with forever even with an abusive partner.”* (Participant 10-J; Line No. 513-514)

*“Sa disadvantages siguro I think it would...siguro ano lang siya..doon sa mga tao na pumapasok sa hindi magandang marriage ayun nga lang mahirap din kung mawala kasi nga it take a lot of process pa before nilang maalis ‘yung marriage.” (Participant 2-B; Line No. 69-71)*

*“what if ano na siya, physical abuser talaga siya, gusto mo na kumawala , ang hirap na magkaroon ng legal process from that, kasi sa annulment ang daming kailangan bayaran, tapos kung sino pa yung naka witness ng relationship niyo kailangan pang magbigay ng testimony, kung ganun ba talaga yung nangyayari so one of the disadvantage of marriage is ‘yung, kapag too much na ‘yung mga nangyayari, ang hirap makawala from that.” (Participant 9-I; Line No. 430-435)*

In response to a question concerning their thoughts on marriage, some participants highlighted the complexities of marriage in terms of preventing the individual from leaving unhealthy marriages, hence prolonging feelings of entrapment and constriction. Some participants answered that being bound by marriage can be a reason for individuals to stay in toxic relationships simply because they are married.

*“pero yung ibang tao parang iniisip nila na kasal sila kaya hindi sila makaalis sa isang toxic marriage, ganyan.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 120-121)*

*“parang nagiging reason siya para hindi basta-basta — alam mo ‘yung na kahit toxic na ‘yung marriage iniisip nalang ng iba na ‘hindi, kasal kasi kami eh” ayun hindi nila mahiwalayan.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 126-128)*

*“I don’t believe in marriages na.. parang alam mo ‘yun, form of ano.., iniisip ko form of cage as an individual, parang kasing kapag tinanong kayo “ay married kayo?” tas ‘pag nagkaroon lang kayo ng away na, “nako maghihiwalay din kayo.” (Participant 9-I; Line No. 423-425)*

*“if you married the wrong person and now, you’re tied to them for life for me that’s suffocating.” (Participant 13-L; Line No. 643-644)*

*“ang hirap kumawala ‘pag kasal kayo. Ang hirap makipaghiwalay, mahirap maghanap ng iba kasi nga kasal kayo.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 152-153)*

#### Limitation of Freedom

Some respondents expressed their concerns about the challenges and sacrifices that they may encounter upon entering marriage and establishing a family. While marriage brings mutual support for both partners, it is also associated with issues such as loss of freedom, loss of independence, and the need to prioritize family responsibilities over personal interests or hobbies. Marital constraints have made them feel as though they are unable to pursue their own interests and hobbies since they are now focused on providing for their family rather than themselves. The pattern observed was consistent with the findings of the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2019), which found that a significant number of young adults are concerned about losing their sense of self, losing “power” in the relationship, and/or being taken for granted by their significant others.

*“and also, kapag pamilyado ka na, mawawala na ‘yung independence mo. di tulad ng dati, pwede kang gumimik anytime you want.” (Participant 1-A; Line No. 23-24)*

*“Ahh, disadvantage...Kung halimbawa ‘yung mga hobby mo... kasi kasal nga eh meron ka ng mga responsibilidad.. may pamilya ka na so kailangan mas mag-focus ka sa pamilya mo so ‘yung mga dati mong ginagawa like ‘yung mga hobby mo nga di mo na s’ya magagawa kahit na gusto mo.” (Participant 4-D; Line No. 173-176)*

*“some marriages are not healthy kasi ‘yung one party is masyado siyang nare-restrict sa marriage so parang ‘di na siya nagkaroon ng freedom to do things for themselves, gan’on.” (Participant 5-E; Line No. 223-224)*

#### Losing Autonomy

Two participants highlighted that being in a marriage often necessitates a significant degree of openness and sharing with a partner, which may occasionally feel like a compromise of personal privacy. For them, once married, there’s an expectation that you’ll be more transparent about your thoughts, feelings, and daily activities with your spouse. This can feel like a disadvantage for some individuals who value their privacy and autonomy. The participants referenced certain negative aspects of marriage, such as the loss of autonomy, which is parallel to the study of the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2019), saying that unmarried people have concerns about losing their own identity due to marriage.

*“once na nasa marriage ka na parang kailangan open ka lagi ka sa ano mo, sa buhay mo, parang nasi-share mo dapat siya sa partner mo-ewan ko nasi-see ko yun minsan as disadvantage” (Participant 6-F; Line No. 278-279)*

*“One disadvantage I see is lesser privacy.” (Participant 10-J; Line No. 512)*

The second disadvantage pertains to gender roles and expectations within marriage. Traditionally, societal expectations have placed a greater emphasis on women prioritizing their roles as wives and mothers, often at the cost of their own career aspirations or personal freedoms. This expectation can be seen as a constraint factor, limiting a woman’s autonomy and opportunities for personal growth.

*"I also believe that the woman should have something to hold on, and they should not be stuck at home, and they can do what they want in their careers (not if they decided to be a stay-at-home wife). Marriage should not be a constraint factor." (Participant 11-J; Line No. 570-572)*

### **Marriage is not a priority**

Although the participants acknowledge the significance of marriage, their personal experiences of parents' separation appear to be the reason for their decision not to pursue marriage. The respondents firmly state that they don't want to get married since they feel uneasy about the idea of committing to someone for life and taking on the responsibilities that come with marriage. Similarly, Tendido (2021) noted that Filipino youth are choosing to delay parenthood or live child-free, further reflecting the changing societal views on traditional family structures and marital expectations.

*"For me 'yung marriage ah...hindi naman siya ganun ka significant sa kin" (Participant 1-A; Line No. 08)*

*"Ever since, wala even my mom knows it na ano, na never akong magpapakasal even though nung hindi pa sila separated, ganun na talaga 'yung thinking ko na never akong magpapakasal, never din akong ikakasal, kasi ayoko talaga ng feeling of commitment and responsibility ng marriage, sobrang bigat." (Participant 9-I; Line No. 447-450)*

*"Syempre sobrang laki talaga ng impact, from a single thought lang na ayaw ko na talagang magpakasal na wala talaga akong main reason at all, I just don't like marriage at all." (Participant 9-I; Line No. 448-489)*

In the context of marriage, the participant (14) expresses a strong desire to repay their mother for all she has done by prioritizing their education and providing assistance. It seems that he prioritizes fulfilling his personal goals and responsibilities before considering entering into a marital commitment. This observation aligns with the findings of the study by Graham et al. (2022), which revealed that young adults are delaying marriage and parenthood compared to previous generations. This trend is attributed to evolving societal norms, increased aspirations for education and careers, as well as a desire for independence and personal freedom among young adults.

*"hindi dahil iniisip ko na makapag tapos muna ng pag-aaral at matulungan ko ang aking nanay na sumusuporta sa pag-aaral ko, gusto ko na suklian muna s'ya sa mga sakripisyo n'ya samin lalo na s'ya lang nagtataguyod sa'min magkakapatid." (Participant 14-N; Line No. 678-681)*

## **Emergent Theme 2: General Prerequisites of Marriage**

### **Financial Security**

Financial security emerged as a factor that respondents see as a foundational element for a successful marriage. Their viewpoints reflect a pragmatic approach to marriage, emphasizing the practical aspects of marriage that love alone is not sufficient for a successful marriage; financial preparedness and responsibility are also crucial. This proved the study of Zainol et al. (2023) that financial stability plays a crucial role in shaping marital happiness and overall relationship quality among young married couples. Couples with higher levels of financial well-being tended to report higher levels of marital satisfaction. The statements below highlight the necessity of having a secure financial foundation not only for themselves but also for their prospective partner and future family.

*"Iniisip ko siya pero in the future pa. Basta pagka may magandang trabaho na." (Participant 4-D; Line No. 179-180)*

*"nakikita ko lang 'yung marriage from a financial perspective, papayag lang din ako magpakasal din kung same kami ng financial goals, may kalakip din na financial responsibilities ganun so ayun." (Participant 1-A; Line No. 09-13)*

*"and pinakamahalaga talaga is meron ka talaga dapat pangsuporta na if gusto mo na agad mag pamilya." (Participant 4-D; Line No. 184-185)*

*"Factors... Uhm, financial – first and foremost. Hindi lang d'un sa magiging partner ko pero pati sa'kin, I think kapag nagpakasal kasi kailangan financially ready ka." (Participant 5-E; Line No. 232-233)*

*"Siguro ano 'yung ipon ko syempre, hirap magpakasal 'pag walang ipon. Feeling ko 'yun lang concern ko eh, 'yun lang 'yung ano ko, kino-consider ko." (Participant 7-G; Line No. 343-344)*

*"Financial stability, I wouldn't settle for someone who see marriage as love being enough to be able to live. I would want someone who can provide for the relationship the same as I can." (Participant 10-J; Line No. 521-523)*

*"My perception about marriage is very practical. I will not easily engage in marriage if one of us is not physically, emotionally, and financially ready." (Participant 11-K; Line No. 548-549)*

*"First foremost, financial status-- mahirap magpakasal ng walang pera-- what more magprovide ng needs sa asawa and magiging mga anak." (Participant 12-L; Line No. 612-613)*

*"hahaha tsaka ano pala, dapat may pera. dapat may pinagkakaabalahan parehas dahil di pwedeng puro mahal lang." (Participant 15-O; Line No. 726-727)*

Moreover, two respondents underscore the notion that addressing financial concern is crucial before focusing on other aspects of marital relationships. Both of them emphasized that most of the problems stem from unresolved financial issues that affect not only the couples themselves, but also their children.

*“Pero pinakamahalaga sa kin yung financially talaga kasi halos lahat naman ng problema, diyan nag-uugat lahat eh, so kung alam mo yun struggling na kayo sa pagmi-maintain ng household niyo, dapat di na yan ‘yung ano eh... di ka dun magpofocus” (Participant 1-A; Line No. 31-33)*

*“Siguro ano, pinaka-importante talaga na factor na mako-consider ko – ‘yung financially kailangan mo talaga siyang mapaghandaan – hindi lang yung sarili mo syempre, ‘pag nagka pamilya kayo paano pag hindi kayo ready sa pera ninyo, syempre hindi lang kayo mag-asawa yung magsa-suffer, madadamay din anak niyo so kailangan talaga bago ka mag enter marriage, kailangan stable ‘yung job mo, may regular na income ka ganun” (Participant 6-F; Line No. 289-284)*

### **Emotional Maturity**

Emotional readiness and stability also emerged as critical factors before deciding to get married. The participants emphasize that both partners should be emotionally prepared and stable before committing to a lifelong partnership. Keldal and Yıldırım (2021) identified emotional readiness as one of the considerations attached to marital preparedness. Some participants expressed reluctance to enter into marriage if they are not emotionally prepared, suggesting that committing to a lifetime partnership should only occur when both individuals are emotionally stable and certain about their feelings for each other.

*“Bali, ico-consider ko ‘yung emotionally, physically okay kami, stable, ganyan.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 135-136)*

*“Dapat kong i-consider siguro ‘yung state rin naming mag partner – emotionally.” (Participant 1-A; Line No. 30-31)*

*“I will not easily engage in marriage if one of us is not ... emotionally ready.” (Participant 11-K; Line No. 548-549)*

*“Second, is kung emotionally ready ka ba na may makasama sa buhay mo na for lifetime.” (Participant 11-K; Line No. 233-234)*

*“para sa akin, factor yung nararamdaman mo sa tao. una dapat sigurado ka sakanya, dapat kaya ng puso mo makasama sya sa hirap at ginhawa.” (Participant 15-O; Line No. 722-723)*

Additionally, Participant 15 reiterates that marriage should only be pursued when there is certainty and emotional stability. These reflections collectively point to the belief that emotional maturity and certainty are fundamental prerequisites for a successful and enduring marriage.

*“Para saakin, dapat ginagawa lang to kapag sigurado na talaga, kapag emotionally stable na”. (Participant 15-O; Line No. 706-707)*

### **Ideal Qualities of a Mate**

The respondents have indicated that their future spouse must possess specific attributes that collectively contribute to a successful and fulfilling marriage. One respondent believes marriage should be centered around a connection to God and encompasses more than just love. They also emphasized the importance of establishing trust, faithfulness, shared personal beliefs, values, loyalty, and cultural compatibility in a marital relationship. Additionally, they prioritize qualities such as good intentions, morals, courtesy, and respect in a potential partner, highlighting the significance of recognizing each other's worth and value as individuals and partners.

*“God-centered talaga” (Participant 8-H; Line No. 388)*

*“I personally think marriage is not just about love, we also need to establish trust, faithfulness, personal beliefs, likes and dislikes, loyalty, culture, and many more.” (Participant 10-J; Line No. 501-502)*

*“The factors for me are if that person's intention is good, their morals, and courtesy, for me those are the qualities I would consider in marrying someone.” (Participant 13-M; Line No. 649-650)*

*“Pagpapakasal para saakin ay ginagawa ng dalawang tao na may pagmamahal at respeto sa isa't isa.” (Participant 15-O; Line No. 704-705)*

In their study involving university students, Özyiğit, M. (2019) arrived at conclusions regarding the attributes of an ideal spouse. Final-year students participating in the study expressed a preference for partners who exhibited qualities such as psychological strength, independence, responsibility, compassion, humanity, non-authoritarianism, respectfulness, affection, adaptability, tolerance of differences, sociability, and trustworthiness.

### **Seeking the Perfect Match**

Compatibility is crucial in marriage as it forms the foundation of a successful and fulfilling relationship. It encompasses various aspects, including shared values, beliefs, interests, and objectives. The participants reflect on the importance of finding a partner who is truly compatible and suitable for marriage. Interestingly, a participant claimed that when the right person is chosen, there will be

fewer challenges or problems encountered. It is also noteworthy that one of the participants believes that compatibility encompasses traits, likes, and dislikes, which is deemed crucial for a successful and harmonious relationship.

*“yung taong makakasama mo if talaga bang fit sa 'kin para mapakasalan siya”. (Participant 15-O; Line No. 236-237)*

*“pag tama ‘yung makakasama mong tao sa bagay na ‘yun, parang ano lang less ‘yung ma-eencounter mong disadvantages or problema” (Participant 6-F; Line No. 274-275)*

*“Compatibility in terms of traits, likes and dislikes.” (Participant 10-J; Line No. 523)*

### **Certainty in Commitment**

In addition, the participants perceive marriage as a lifetime commitment, recognizing the importance of taking it with sincerity and highlighting the importance of being completely certain about the decision to get married. Below are some of the responses of the participants on how they perceive marriage:

*“I think to marry is to-is like saying I'm ready to commit my life to you.” (Participant 2-B; Line No. 80)*

*“pinakaunang una dapat, is sure ka talaga na magpapakasal ka na” (Participant 4-D; Line No. 183-184)*

*“Eto na ‘yung step kung kelan ramdam mo dapat na handa mo na i-commit ang sarili mo sa tao ‘yun habang buhay.” (Participant 15-O; Line No. 705-706)*

Particularly, they mentioned the traditional vows and the willingness to face any challenges together, reflecting the notion of "for better or for worse.". This demonstrates the commitment to support each other through all circumstances, whether good or bad. Furthermore, a respondent shared that being certain to your partner is linked with your willingness to stand by them through thick and thin; and to remain faithful, both physically and emotionally.

*“dapat for better or for worse, na kahit anong mangyari dapat ‘di kayo maghihiwalay” (Participant 4-D; Line No. 185-186)*

*“una dapat sigurado ka sakanya, dapat kaya ng puso mo makasama s'ya sa hirap at ginhawa. at dapat alam mo sa sarili mo na hindi ka na dapat naa-attract physically and emotionally sa ibang tao” (Participant 15-O; Line No. 722-725)*

A participant also shared the necessity of fulfilling all responsibilities and not running away from them when entering into marriage.

*“dapat like magawa lahat ng responsibility or ‘wag dapat tatakbo sa responsibilidad.” (Participant 7-G; Line No. 328-329)*

### **Emergent Theme 3: Effects of Parental Separation on Views Towards Marriage**

#### **Anxiety about Relationships**

The sentiments of the participants reveal how their parents' separation has deeply affected their perspective on love and marriage. Most of them showed a strong sense of doubt and fear to believe in the possibility of long-lasting love and commitment, since they are worried that they will experience the same betrayal and abandonment in their own relationships. For them, witnessing their parents' separation indicates that love is not genuine and that marriages inevitably end in separation. According to their responses:

*“Pero parang syempre dahil nga sa nangyari sa parents ko, parang naisip ko na parang ganun din ‘yung mangyayari sakin.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 130-131)*

*“hindi ako naniniwala na totoo ‘yung love kasi nga, naghihiwalay eh, parang for me dapat pag nagpapakasal diretso ding maghihiwalay din after” (Participant 8-H; Line No. 409-411)*

*“Sa negative, parang iniisip ko rin na baka in the end pag nagpakasal kami ganun din ‘yung mangyayari samin, maghihiwalay ganon.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 155-156)*

*“‘yung fresh pa ‘yung hiwalayan ng parents ko, nasa isip ko syempre... hindi ako naniniwala na totoo ‘yung love kasi nga, naghihiwalay eh, parang for me dapat pag nagpapakasal diretso ding maghihiwalay din after.” (Participant 8-H; Line No. 408-411)*

*“ang naiisip ko palagi kapag papasok ako sa relasyon, baka lokohin lang din ako at ipagpalit sa iba” (Participant 15-O; Line No. 741-742)*

The anxiety of committing to a relationship that was mentioned above leads the participants to doubt and develop a sense of caution and mistrust towards relationships, particularly influenced by negative experiences within their own family. For Participant 5, there is a need to be extremely cautious in choosing a spouse, particularly in considering the character of the potential spouse's family, due to the negative experiences she experienced.

*“kailangan sobrang cautious ko kung sino ‘yung magiging mapapangasawa ko, kung ‘yung pamilya ng mapapangasawa ko anong klaseng mga tao sila, so parang mas nagiging ‘yun nga mas nagiging cautious ako dahil sa mga na-experience ko” (Participant 5-E; Line No. 254-256)*

Participant 15 also stated that he finds it difficult to trust people considering the repeated infidelity of their father towards their mother. This shows how the lack of a positive role model in a family makes it challenging for them to trust others, leading to constant worry and doubt in their interactions with other people.

*“Ngayon, nahihirapan akong magtiwala sa tao. kung ang tatay mo mismo ang paulit ulit nanloko sa nanay mo, papaano ka nalang magkakaroon ng maayos na modelo sa pagpili ng para sa’yo?” (Participant 15-O; Line No. 735-737)*

This result is consistent with the findings of the study by Facunla et al., (2019), in which most participants identified negative experiences as a contributing factor to a pessimistic view of marriage. They struggle to commit to an intimate relationship, fearing that they may encounter the same fate as their parents, whose marriages ended in dissolution.

### **No change in Perception**

Several participants assert that their view of marriage has remained unchanged despite whatever difficulties they may have had as children. According to them, their future marriage depends on their own actions and choices rather than being influenced by their parents' divorce. Additionally, participants emphasized that their parents' experience of divorce does not necessarily imply a higher likelihood of experiencing the same outcome in their own future marriages. They indicate that their views on marriage were not negatively affected by their parents' divorce. This can be reflected in the responses of the participants:

*“parang sa’kin..parang sa’kin pa rin naman nakadepende kung ano magiging future ng marriage di ba? Hindi naman sa kanila...And di naman siya nakaapekto totally kasi growing up naman di naman nagbago pagtingin ko sa marriage.” (Participant 2-B; Line No. 108-110)*

*“syempre hindi naman porke’t nangyari yun sa ano mo – sa magulang mo may bigger chance na mangyari din sa’yo.” (Participant 6-F; Line No. 315-316)*

*“It did not change naman whatsoever, my perception remains intact regardless of the separation from my parents na witness ko.” (Participant 12-L; Line No. 625-626)*

This is demonstrated by the research of McAdam (2023) which claims that parental divorce has no significant impact on the relationship or life satisfaction of college students. However, factors like relationship commitment and interpersonal skills might have influenced these results. Young adults from broken households do not always regard their own experiences as influencing their views on marriage or increasing the chance of their own marriages ending in divorce.

### **Hopes for the Future**

Despite witnessing their parents' separation, the participants claim that their future marriage ultimately depends on their own choices and actions and maintain a positive outlook on the possibility of healthy relationships. For some individuals, experiencing parental separation can be a positive experience since it enables them to become better people and teaches them not to follow the example of their parents. The statements demonstrate how the participants made decisions for potential relationships in the future, which may have inspired them to pursue better lives for themselves. Regardless of their past experiences, the participants acknowledged that they still possess the ability to decide whether to enter into a committed relationship.

*“Yung positive, s’yempre eager din ako na magpakasal ako sa okay na tao.” (Participant 3-C; Line No. 153-154)*

*“mas nagkaroon ka ng idea pagdating sa marriage kasi nakita mo na ‘yung pinagdaanan ng parents mo, so alam mo na kung paano mo siya magri-ready in the future, ganun” (Participant 6-F; Line No. 317-319)*

*“kung ako naman ang magpapakasal, kumbaga, na-realize ko na, bago ako magpakasal dapat, parang alam ko muna ‘yung mga consequences tsaka ‘yung mga..mga responsibilities na kailangan kong gawin.” (Participant 7-G; Line No. 357-359)*

*“Ahh, yes naman. Yes, pa din. Kasi despite naman nung nangyari sa parents ko, naniniwala pa rin naman ako na merong marriages na possible na maging healthy, so naisip ko pa rin sya. And if magkakaroon, I think magpapakasal pa rin naman ako.” (Participant 2-B; Line No. 226-229)*

### **Breaking the Cycle**

Committing oneself to not be involved in wrongdoings of what happened in the past by their parents can break the cycle of what a life should be. This shows that involving into a more committed relationship without involvement of parents' past may have a huge impact in life as it shows maturity on how to handle a problem that may occur in similar to the past events. Participants stated that anything that involves the past should not be brought up in the future as they hold the reality and future, especially that they don't want their kids to experience what they experienced in the past. The statements of the participants are aligned with the study of Salih and Chaudry (2021), although parental infidelity can have negative effects and cause emotional distress, individuals learned to compare their relationship to that of their parents and learned that the previous actions of the unfaithful relationship should not be condoned.

*“Dahil ayoko naman na ma-experience ko din ‘yung na-experience na ng mom ko.” (Participant 5-E; Line No. 256-257)*

*“I will not let my future kids experience a household that is full of doubts, full of regret, and full of bad mornings.” (Participant 11-K; Line No. 549-550)*

*“I do not see myself naman echoing the same actions and attitude,” (Participant 12-L; Line No. 628)*

*“basta ang pangako ko sa sarili ko hindi ko gagawin ‘yun sa magiging asawa ko para di matulad saming mag kakapatid ang nadas namin.” (Participant 14-N; Line No. 693-695)*

Overall, the finding shows that the majority of the respondents who participated in the study were female rather than male, ages ranging from twenty-two to twenty-five years old, residing in Bacoor City. Furthermore, fourteen of the participants were college undergraduates, while only one participant graduated from college.

Marriage is seen in two different constructs; some interpret it as sacred and blessed while others view it as a legal contract that formally makes a couple official by the law. The results also highlighted the pressures and expectations that society places on marriage, which may have an influence on an individual's perspectives and decisions. While some participants acknowledged the traditional notion of marriage as a lifelong commitment, others expressed a desire for personal freedom and independence, suggesting a shift in societal norms and values. This aligns with the study by Graham et al. (2022) which found that young adults nowadays are postponing marriage and entering parenthood compared to previous decades due to shifting societal norms, greater ambitions for education and careers, and a desire for independence and personal freedom. Similarly, Tendido (2021) noted that Filipino youth are choosing to delay parenthood or live child-free, further reflecting the changing societal views on traditional family structures and marital expectations.

There are several components and standards when choosing a partner, and participants have stated their considerations of getting married to someone, such as being financially secure to help the family fulfill and support the needs of each one of them, having a stable mental state is also crucial for them to be able to manage their feelings, and someone being sincere of having a commitment.

Young adults experiencing parental separation have varied perceptions of marriage, influenced by both positive and negative impacts. Some struggle with abandonment and trust issues, making it difficult to form relationships. However, others use their experiences as lessons to avoid repeating their parents' mistakes, showing resilience and a determination to build healthier futures. Despite the challenges, many maintain firm views on marriage, reflecting a sense of personal responsibility and independence in making their marital choices.

## Conclusions

Participants' narratives revealed that parental separation significantly impacts their views on marriage. Some respondents struggle with anxiety and trust issues, while others maintain a positive outlook, managing their feelings and accepting reality. The study emphasized that while young adults from separated families face challenges, these experiences can shape their own marriage expectations and standards. With strong support systems, including family, friends, and mental health professionals, they can use these experiences to improve their future relationships. Overall, the findings stress the need for tailored interventions and support networks for individuals affected by parental separation.

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