

Couple Satisfaction and Relationship Duration in the Philippines: A Quantitative Inquiry

Cherryvic F. Patalita^{1*}, Dominic Bryan S. San Jose, EdD²

¹Graduate School Student, MS Psychology, Recoletos de Bacolod Graduate School, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Philippines.

²Faculty, Recoletos de Bacolod Graduate School, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Philippines.

***Corresponding Author:** Cherryvic F. Patalita, Graduate School Student, MS Psychology, Recoletos de Bacolod Graduate School, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, Philippines.

ABSTRACT

Couple satisfaction is a central construct in measuring relationship quality, which in turn affects the couples' and the family's dynamics, their cognitive, physical, and emotional well-being, and by extension, the society's. This research was conducted to find out if a happy couple will endure in their relationship, and what factors may affect their happiness, amidst the declining trend of marriage in the Philippines and rising pro-divorce sentiments. Using the 4-item version of the Couple Satisfaction Index, the study measured the level of mean couple satisfaction of respondents grouped by sex, age, type of relationship, and length of relationship. Results revealed that scores as a whole were satisfied, with some notable differences: males, younger respondents, those in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, and couples in shorter relationships were more satisfied than their counterparts. Spearman rank-order correlation and eta coefficient analyses showed that age and length of relationship could be determinants of couple satisfaction, whereas sex and type of relationship are not. The results suggest that marriage counselling and therapeutic interventions may have to be specifically tailored to sub-groups that are likely to experience relationship distress and be made accessible to them at critical stages in their relationship to strengthen their ability to resolve conflicts, improve their level of couple satisfaction, and enhance their overall well-being..

Keywords: Marriage, couple satisfaction, relationship duration, descriptive correlational, Central Philippines.

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INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction determines the emotional climate of the family, the learning environment at home, and the family's emotional expressiveness (Jimenez-Picon et al., 2021). Couple satisfaction is affected by various factors and changes over the course of a relationship. In young adults, relationship length is a predictor of relationship satisfaction, especially among men (Josefacka et al., 2023). Marital satisfaction is positively correlated with social support (Rashidi Fakari et al., 2022). Duration of marriage, and other factors like sex, age, number of children, economic status, education, religiosity, cultural considerations, and even the countries' gross domestic

product, have also been taken into consideration to determine if they contribute, and if so to what extent, to marital satisfaction (Dobrowolska et al., 2020).

In Asia, marital satisfaction among Malaysians is affected by marital duration, levels of financial well-being, and mindfulness (Shakir et al., 2021). Among married Indian men, marital satisfaction is significantly associated with higher levels of education among married men and their parents, their household income, and their affiliation with a non-scheduled caste/scheduled tribe (Chauhan & Sekher, 2023). In China, mothers who reported high levels of satisfaction in their marriage were less likely to get into marital conflict, develop depression, and experience parenting stress (Dong et al., 2022).

In the Philippine family setting, marital satisfaction is seen as having a mediating effect between the family's quality of life and marital well-being. Where there is a high level of marital satisfaction, there is a high to very high level of quality family life, and a high level of well-being of married couples (Brigoli & Sandoval, 2023). For couples in a relationship, emotional intimacy directly influences sexual and relationship satisfaction, with sexual satisfaction exerting more significant relationship to relationship satisfaction (Cruz & Caringal-Go, 2021). Even among young and middle-married adults who had high levels of adverse childhood experiences, their marital satisfaction is high (Camus et al., 2024).

The researchers notes that while 57% of Filipinos oppose the legalization of divorce (OCTA, 2024), half of them are in support of it (Social Weather Station, 2024). As of the 2020 Census of Population, 39.7% of Filipinos were never married, higher than the 39.2% of those who married. Almost 15% are in a cohabitation/common-law marital arrangement, while 1.9%, or two Filipinos out of 100, are either divorced, separated, or annulled (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). From 1993 until 2017, there was a decreasing trend in the proportion of legally married Filipino women and an increasing trend in the share of Filipino women who were instead cohabiting (Abalos, 2023). Taken altogether, these numbers suggest that satisfaction in marital relationships may no longer be viewed by Filipinos as important and therefore may cause erosion in marital or intimate relationships. This propelled the researchers to conduct this study, as findings might help inform couples and family therapy the researchers intend to pursue later on.

The researchers explored several studies conducted on the marital satisfaction of married Filipinos. Some looked into the mediating effect of work commitment on the family relationship and marital satisfaction of social workers (Robles & Sarcon, 2023), the level of marital satisfaction of Filipino women in cross-cultural marriages (Callangan & Lorenzo, 2025), the level of relationship satisfaction of couples in a cohabiting relationship (Akmad & Abatayo, 2024), and relationship satisfaction among same-sex couples in marital-like relationships. A few studies examined transnational married couples, such as migrant wives working abroad and their left-behind husbands (Bernadas et al., 2025), and those who eventually reunited abroad (Dayot-Nedumoceno, 2022). Studies on marital longevity in the Philippines are scarce, and a study on the relationship between couple satisfaction and relationship duration in the country is not available. This is the gap this study fills in.

Therefore, this study assessed the relationship between the level of couple satisfaction and relationship duration

in a rural area in central Philippines. It also investigated demographic factors that affect couple satisfaction concerning the number of years the couples have been together. The findings may serve as a basis for developing intervention programs tailored to the demographic aspect of family and couples' therapy at crucial milestones in a couple's relationship.

Framework of the Study

This study theoretically assumed that couple satisfaction is related to the love couples feel for each other. This assumption was based on Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love (Sorokowski et al., 2020, citing Sternberg, 2019), which states that "love is understood in terms of three components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment." The intensity of each component varies as a function of the duration of the relationship. This means that passion is likely to peak quickly but also decrease rapidly over time, while commitment generally increases in long-term relationships. Intimacy, in contrast, increases slowly. Manifest, or fully conscious, intimacy often decreases with time (Sorokowski et al., 2020 citing Sternberg, 1986). In the context of couples in three types of relationships – marriage, cohabiting, and boyfriend/girlfriend – the triangular theory of love sheds light on the relationship between the level of couple satisfaction to relationship duration; and the age, sex and type of relationship to the level of couple satisfaction.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design, in particular, a descriptive-correlation method. Couple satisfaction is a construct that yields non-numerical information. The descriptive approach allows this non-numerical information to be collected in numerical form using specifically designed instruments (Taherdoost, 2022). This method enables collecting data that can be quantified even if they are about beliefs and attitudes (Taherdoost, 2022), or in this study, the subjective evaluation of one's relationship. The descriptive approach used in this paper measured the respondents' levels of couple satisfaction. Meanwhile, the correlational approach was used to investigate the relationship between the level of couple satisfaction and the possible factors in a relationship it affects or that affect it. Correlational research design is utilized to identify variables that may be possibly connected in such a way that a change in one affects a change in the other (Ghanad, 2023). This design allows the researcher to establish whether there is a statistically significant relationship between two variables without manipulating them. Correlational research design yields three possible outcomes: a) positive correlation; b)

negative correlation; and c) no correlation (Ghanad, 2023). In this study, the correlational research design was used to examine the association between the level of couple satisfaction and the respondents' sex, age, relationship type, and relationship duration.

Respondents

There were 50 respondents chosen through purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was employed to include only the population that is of specific interest (Andrade, 2021) to this study; that is, respondents who are at least 18 years old, and in a relationship, regardless of the union type, where partners consider themselves as couples. Convenience sampling was then applied to select respondents from the target population based on ease of access (Golzar, et al., 2022). After identifying respondents in a coupled relationship, the researcher approached them at a social event and invited them to answer a set of questions. Only one of the couple of partners needed to answer the questionnaire. To help the researchers find more people who are representatives

of the group the researchers are interested in studying, snowball sampling was carried out (Hossan et al., 2023). The researchers asked the first-generation respondents to share the online version of the research instrument with people they know who are also in a coupled relationship. This process went on until the researcher gathered all the necessary information.

Table 1 shows that the research involved 50 respondents with an average age of 40.6 years. A greater percentage of the subjects were senior citizens, amounting to 54.0% or 27 respondents, while 46.0% or 23 respondents were younger adults. The sex variable showed far greater representation among females at 76.0% (n=38) as compared to 24.0% (n=12) among males. Relationship status-wise, the married respondents made up the highest percentage at 66.0% (n=33) of respondents, while 18% (n=9) were in a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship, and 16% (n=8) were cohabiting. The average relationship duration was 12.7 years, while the 54% (n=27) of respondents in less than 5 years made up a larger proportion than the other 46% (n=23) who were in longer-term relationships.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	n	%
Age (M=40.6 years Old)		
Younger	23	46.0
Older	27	54.0
Sex		
Male	12	24.0
Female	38	76.0
Relationship		
Marriage	33	66.0
Cohabiting	8	16.0
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	9	18.0
Length of Relationship in years (M=12.7 years)		
Shorter	27	54.0
Longer	23	46.0
Total	50	100.0

Instrument

The researchers used the 4 CSI(32), or the 4-item version of the 32-item Couples Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The 4 CSI(32) consisted of items 1, 12, 19, and 22. Item 1 asked about the respondents' perception of the degree of happiness of their relationship using a 7-point Likert scale from 0 to 6 where 0 is "extremely unhappy" and 6 is "perfect." Item 12 rated the respondents' perception of their relationship with their partner using a 6-point Likert scale from 0 to 5 where zero is "not at all true" and 5 is "completely true." Item 19 asked the respondents to rate how rewarding is their relationship using a 6-point Likert scale from 0 to 5 where zero is "not at all" and 5 is "completely." Item 22 asked the respondents how satisfied they are with their relationship using a 6-point Likert scale from 0 to 5 where zero is "not at all" and 5 is "completely."

The possible range of scores is 0 to 21, with higher scores indicating higher levels of couple satisfaction. The distress cut-score is 13.5 indicating distress in the relationship. The CSI scales demonstrate excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha score of .98 for CSI(32), and .94 for the 4-item version (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI scales also demonstrate strong convergent validity with the existing measures of relationship satisfaction.

Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, the instrument was converted into a 4-item survey questionnaire including questions related to demographics. The paper version was administered in person while the online version was administered through a survey link forwarded to respondents. During in-person and online data collection, the respondents were informed of the nature and goals of the study and what it aimed

to measure. After data collection, the instruments were checked for completeness of answers. Questionnaires with incomplete data were not incorporated in this study. The online version of the questionnaire was shared with second-generation respondents until the sample quota was reached. The answers were tabulated, and the raw data submitted to the statistician to undergo a normality test.

Data Analysis Procedure

Descriptive and correlational analyses were utilized to analyze the data. The descriptive analysis measured the level of couple satisfaction using mean and standard deviation. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine the normality of the variable. The normality test yielded a variable proficiency that was not normally distributed, so nonparametric statistics were employed for inferential questions. Spearman rank-order correlation and eta coefficient analyses were used to assess the relationship of the respondents' level of couple satisfaction to their demographics. Lastly, the general principles of respect for persons, justice, and beneficence were observed to ensure that the study adhered to ethical standards.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of this study, which explored the level of couple satisfaction of respondents from a rural area in Central Philippines who are in different types of unions or romantic relationships. By putting the findings of this study in the context of available research in relationship science, this discussion enriches our understanding of the factors that influence the happiness and relationship longevity of couples.

The level of couple satisfaction by subgroups is summarized in Table 2 and discussed in the succeeding paragraph. Paragraph 3 discusses the interpretation of the CSI scores while age, sex and type of relationship and its correlation with couple satisfaction are discussed in Paragraphs 4 to 7. To round out the findings indicated in Table 2, the correlation between relationship duration and couple satisfaction is discussed in Paragraph 8. Results listed in Table 3 are discussed in Paragraphs 9 to 11 while the last paragraph links back to the theoretical framework.

The Level of Couple Satisfaction of Respondents According to Demographics

Table 2 shows that the level of couple satisfaction among the respondents as a whole is satisfied ($M=15.76$, $SD=4.24$). Although both groups are in the satisfied range, by age, younger persons ranked higher in satisfaction ($M=16.74$, $SD=4.56$) than older persons ($M=14.93$, $SD=3.83$). In terms of sex, male respondents ($M=16.17$, $SD=4.06$) rated themselves a higher level of couple satisfaction than female respondents ($M=15.63$, $SD=4.34$). All respondents also indicated they were satisfied with their relationship,

regardless of the type. Notably, satisfaction was highest among those in boyfriend/girlfriend relationships ($M=16.78$, $SD=5.07$) and then decreased for those who were married ($M=16.00$, $SD=3.27$) and those who were cohabiting ($M=13.63$, $SD=6.39$). Finally, respondents in shorter relationships had higher satisfaction ($M=16.44$, $SD=4.70$) than respondents in longer relationships ($M=14.96$, $SD=3.56$), although both remain satisfied in their relationships.

Table 2 indicates that all respondents are satisfied with their relationships, with a mean score of 15.76 and a standard deviation of 4.24. Using the 4-item Couples Satisfaction Index, the possible range for scores is 0-21, with a distress cut-score of 13.5. Scores at or higher than the distress cut-score are interpreted to be satisfied, with higher scores indicating that the relationship is at the high end of the satisfaction scale. Scores lower than 13.5 indicate dissatisfaction and may signal relationship distress. While all respondents indicate satisfaction in their relationship, it is worth noting some subtle differences among the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Most notably, younger respondents ($M=40.6$ years) reported a higher level of mean couple satisfaction score ($M=16.74$, $SD=4.56$) than older adults ($M=14.93$, $SD=3.83$). This could be because younger respondents in a relationship tend to view romantic relationships, whether short-term or long-term, as having "fun, fling and passion" as well as having "love, trust, commitment and loyalty" (Mengzhen et al, 2024). Evolutionary psychology may also play a role in priming younger people to form romantic relationships for better reproductive fitness. When the evolutionary drive for propagation of species declines, as they do in older adults, having an exciting but fleeting relationship may not be as compelling. Older respondents, who are likely to have been in multiple relationships, or relationships of longer length than their younger counterparts, may likely have experienced more variability in long-term relationship satisfaction and therefore assess their level of relationship satisfaction more realistically without the "rose-colored glasses" that are usually associated with young love. This finding is in line with an earlier study in the Philippines showing that there is a high level of marital satisfaction among young and middle-married adults (Camus et al., 2024).

A good marriage is important in the life satisfaction of older adults, mainly in reducing their mortality risk (Ma & Gu, 2022). An individual's marital satisfaction is also associated with an increase in their active social engagement (Kim, 2023). On the other hand, the effect of declining marital satisfaction on cognitive function is significantly greater for older adults than middle-aged adults (Kim & Hwang, 2024). Given the impact of couple satisfaction

on the health outcomes of older adults, Filipino cultural attitudes toward their romantic well-being may need to be more welcoming of non-traditional couple arrangements (widows/widowers cohabiting without remarriage or huge age gaps between romantic partners). Government policies and programs in the Philippines geared for senior citizens may need to expand to include mental health planning specifically tailored for older couples to ensure that they are happy in their intimate relationships.

While both men and women are satisfied in their romantic relationships, males are notably more satisfied ($M=16.17$, $SD=4.06$) than females ($M=15.63$, $SD=4.34$). This finding supports a Korean study on middle-aged married men and women, which reported that men had higher perceptions of love, passion, commitment, and marital satisfaction compared to women (Yoo & Joo, 2021). A Polish study on predictors of relationship satisfaction showed that males value sexual satisfaction more than females who also value a sense of closeness in their romantic relationships in addition to sexual satisfaction (Jozefacka et al., 2023). Women also engage in emotion work more than men, and show a greater desire for love and intimacy, according to a study of young married people in Vietnam (Vu, 2020). This discrepancy in intimacy between sexes supports the general observation that men are not as affectionate as women. Together, these data may be used to rationalize therapeutic interventions that encourage men to be more in touch with their emotions and to be emotionally intimate with their female partners.

Interestingly, those in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship have the highest level of mean couple satisfaction score ($M=16.78$, $SD=5.07$) than all the other relationship types. This could be attributed to the exploratory stage and the low-commitment nature of dating compared to the demands that marriage and cohabiting relationships entail. This finding, however, contradicts a Canadian study on adolescents in a dating relationship whose relationship satisfaction decreased as a result of using destructive conflict-resolution strategies, and increased as a result of using constructive strategies (Todorov, et al., 2021). In the Philippines, the higher level of mean couple satisfaction of dating relationships may help explain the increasing trend of non-marriage relationships (Abalos, 2023). For married or cohabiting couples, this paper's finding supports the common notion that bringing back the spark of the dating stage may help rekindle the dying embers of a stale relationship, just like a famous song's declaration that "It's all brand new, I'm crazy for you." Insight from the Canadian study also suggests that (adolescent) couples in dating relationships need to "fight fair" to remain satisfied in their relationships.

In terms of relationship duration, Table 2 shows that longer does not necessarily mean happier. While those in both short and long-term relationships indicated a satisfied score, couples in shorter relationships ($M=12.7$ years) are on the higher end of the couple satisfaction scale ($M=16.44$) than couples in longer relationships ($M=14.96$). This finding is consistent with a United States-based study on predictors of relationship satisfaction, which showed that many couples experience declines in relationship satisfaction over time (McNulty et al., 2021 citing Lavner & Bradbury, 2010). From 1994 to 2020, the marital satisfaction of Chinese couples showed a downward trend, with women's marital satisfaction more evident (Li et al., 2022). The variability in the level of couple satisfaction over time was tracked by Swiss researchers Buhler et al. (2021) who observed that relationship satisfaction trended downward from the first to the tenth year, reached the lowest point at 10 years, then picked up again until the 20th year before trending downward once more. Understanding that long-term relationships go through highs and lows may require providing timely interventions to couples at crucial points in their relationships, and not just at the beginning when soon-to-be-wed partners undergo Pre-Cana seminars given by the Catholic Church or pre-marriage orientation and counseling (PMOC) given by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD, 2025).

Among all subgroups, Table 2 shows that the lowest level of couple satisfaction, while still in the satisfied range, are among partners of cohabiting couples ($M=13.63$, $SD=6.39$), supporting previous research that found cohabitation is usually associated with reduced levels of satisfaction and happiness compared to marriage (Abreu-Alfonso et al., 2021 citing Vanassche et al., 2013). Results from a British study also found that those in cohabiting partnerships are significantly less happy in their relationship as compared to those married (Ciritel, 2022). Earlier research in the United States indicates that negative partner effects of previous relationship and work-family balance on relationship satisfaction are significantly stronger among cohabiting couples than among married couples (Yucel, 2017). This reduced level of marital happiness could be attributed to the lack of legal protection conferred to cohabiting couples than to married couples, leaving the former with a sense of insecurity in their coupled status. Looking at the religious aspect of cohabitation, in a country with an overwhelmingly Catholic population (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023), this paper's finding on the level of couple satisfaction among cohabitators supported by current literature strengthens the position of the Catholic Church in the sanctity of marriage and its preservation amidst the rising sentiment of pro-divorce voices (SWS, 2024).

Table 2. *Level of Couple Satisfaction.*

Variable	M	SD	Interpretation
Age			
Younger	16.74	4.56	Satisfied
Older	14.93	3.83	Satisfied
Sex			
Male	16.17	4.06	Satisfied
Female	15.63	4.34	Satisfied
Relationship			
Marriage	16.00	3.27	Satisfied
Cohabiting	13.63	6.39	Satisfied
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	16.78	5.07	Satisfied
Length of Relationship in years			
Shorter	16.44	4.70	Satisfied
Longer	14.96	3.56	Satisfied
Whole	15.76	4.24	Satisfied

The Relationship Between Couple Satisfaction and Demographics

The Relationship Between the Respondents' Age and Couple Satisfaction

Table 3 provides the results of Spearman rank-order correlation and eta coefficient analyses used to assess the relationship of couple satisfaction to respondents' demographic factors. There was a significant negative correlation between age and couple satisfaction ($r_s = -.315$, $p = .026$). This implies that as age increases, couple satisfaction also tends to decrease, corroborating findings of a Swiss study that found people had lower relationship satisfaction the older they get (Buhler et al., 2021). This could be because older adults may be undergoing milestone changes, like a professional, identity or health crisis, that spills over into their intimate relationships. They could also be experiencing challenges within their own relationships that are brought about by age such as decreased libido. Hence, marriage and relationship programs may need to be adapted to the needs of older adult couples, incorporating their perspectives and life experiences.

The Relationship Between the Respondents' Relationship Length and Couple Satisfaction

Similarly, length of relationship significantly and negatively correlates to couple satisfaction ($r_s = -.286$, $p = .044$): that is, couples in longer relationships reported slightly lower satisfaction levels. This finding aligns with a New Zealand study that found relationship satisfaction increased leading up to marriage, dropped significantly shortly after marriage, and among those who remained married, continued to steadily decline in the years following the transition to marriage (Dupuis et al., 2025). Past literature into relationship science provides a wealth

of evidence corroborating this paper's and that of New Zealand's findings. Karney and Bradbury (2020) found that married couples tend to experience a steady decline in their relationship satisfaction over time while Amato and James (2018) found that during the first 20 years of marriage, happiness declines gradually and then stabilizes, although deterioration is not as evident as compared to other studies. In one longitudinal study of marriage, the findings remain similar: marital satisfaction declines as years go by (VanLaningham et al., 2001). Contrary to the wealth of literature supporting this finding, Buhler et al. (2021) found that relationship satisfaction did not differ depending on people's relationship duration.

Anticipating that marital satisfaction may change as a function of marital longevity, sprinkling the relationship with novelty, variety and surprise - elements that are usually abundant when couples are just starting to get to know each other - may bring back the feelings couples once had during the early years of their relationship. Rethinking the timing of interventions may also be necessary. Couples may need to put in conscious effort, a type of "couple continuing education," into strengthening their bonds and not wait until they actually need an intervention when the relationship may already be on the verge of collapse. As to why couples in long-term relationships stay despite no longer being happy as they once were, commitment might be the answer (Blake & Janssens, 2021). Some couples may have already sufficiently invested in a relationship that leaving would entail practical and emotional difficulties in untangling what has already been established. Couples who find themselves in this situation may instead have to find a way to work through challenges. This entails developing communication and conflict-resolution skills that may need to be emphasized in marriage counselling and interventions.

Table 3. Relationship between the Level of Couple Satisfaction and Demographic Profile

Variable	r_s	df	p
Age	-.315*	0.026	
Sex	-0.054	0.711	
Length of Relationship in years	-.286*	0.044	
	η		p
Relationship	0.233	0.270	

Note: *correlation is significant when $p < 0.05$

The Relationship Between the Respondents' Sex and Relationship Type and Couple Satisfaction

Finally, Table 3 indicates that couple satisfaction and sex do not show any significant correspondence ($r_s = -.054$, $p = .711$). Furthermore, the eta coefficient showed that there was also no significant relationship between couple satisfaction and relationship type ($\eta = 0.233$, $p = 0.270$). This means that age and length of the relationship could be determinants of couple satisfaction, whereas sex and type of relationship, among others, are not. This implies that if couples are satisfied, or dissatisfied, in their relationship, it is not because they are male/female, or in a marriage union or otherwise. Some other variables could determine their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but not their sex or union type.

This study theorized that couple satisfaction is related to the love couples feel for each other. The assumption is anchored on Sternberg's Triangular Theory Of Love where each component of love - intimacy, passion and commitment - varies as a function of relationship duration. Respondents in shorter relationships indicated a higher level of couple satisfaction, validating the theory that passion peaks quickly and plummets with time. Intimacy, defined as the "closeness, connectedness, communication, caring, and emotional investment," increases slowly and often decreases with time, evident in the finding that couples in longer relationships experience decrease in relationship satisfaction. Among older respondents and those in longer relationships, their level of couple satisfaction, while still in the satisfied range, is much lower than the younger respondents and those in shorter relationships, supporting Sternberg's theory that long-term relationships endure because of the couples' commitment, which is a cognitive decision to remain in their relationships for the long haul.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sheds light on which gender, age group, relationship type, and length of relationship tend to be happiest. Seeing that females, older individuals, individuals in cohabiting relationships, and individuals in longer relationships have lower couple satisfaction

levels than other demographics, suggests that relationship enhancement programs may need to be focused on them and tailored to their needs before they reach the point of distress. While women in abusive relationships receive the protection of the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act, women in dissatisfying but not necessarily injurious relationships have few remedies when it comes to their marriage troubles. If women were given intervention when they felt their marriage or intimate relationship was no longer satisfying, then perhaps they would have avoided continuing with relationships that are no longer beneficial for them.

Similarly, senior citizens receive privileges, but these do not extend to their life as one-half of a couple, seeing as how vulnerable they can be after losing a life partner to the inevitability of illness or death. In the Philippines, assistance is often sought by or provided to at-risk individuals when they are already on the verge of crisis, and not before, when prevention would have benefited them more and cost them less. The prevailing notion of marriage counselling in the Philippines may have to be rethought to include couples in various stages of relationship and levels of relationship satisfaction, and not just when those relationships are already in distress.

LIMITATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The study was limited only to respondents residing in municipalities of central Negros Occidental who are either in a marriage, cohabiting and boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. The study was limited to quantitative methods using descriptive and correlational analysis. The findings were limited to the data captured by a standard questionnaire that only asked questions pertaining to how satisfied the respondents are with their partner and their relationship. The study investigated the relationship of the respondent demographics, such as sex, age, and length of relationship, to their level of couple satisfaction. The study was limited to only using the 4-item instrument of the Couple Satisfaction Index instead of the full 32-item instrument. This study was also limited to the use of the original language (English) used in the instrument.

PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE PAPER

The study may be used as a reference by family and couples therapists to provide intervention programs to groups that have been found to have lower levels of couple satisfaction; namely, females, older adults, individuals in cohabiting relationships, and individuals in long-term relationships. The study may also be used as a reference by civic government agencies, organizations and institutions focused on marriage and married life to rationalize developing community-based mental health planning that supports and advocates for couples at various milestones in their relationship. In particular, with the increasing acceptance of divorce as a way out of a marriage, the Catholic Church may want to tap into the insights gleaned from this study to strengthen its family life ministry by focusing on the couples' satisfaction not just as parents but also as husband and wife.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has only quantitatively investigated the level of couple satisfaction concerning the respondents' demographics, which included sex, age, union type, and length of relationship. Further research using qualitative inquiry would answer "why" and "how" respondents achieved higher levels of couple satisfaction compared to other demographic groups. Mixed-method research design may be employed to further delve into factors influencing the rise or decline of couple satisfaction. Marriage is a sacrament for the Catholic Church. With married life at stake, tapping into the social network and material resources of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines may need to be undertaken to conduct a broader and in-depth study of the Filipino couples' subjective assessment of their relationship quality. Hence, future research may want to investigate a bigger sample size from a wider geographical area for better representation of demographics that were underrepresented in this study: namely, males, younger individuals, and individuals in non-marriage relationships. The 32-item version of the research instrument may also need to be used for a richer understanding of variables affecting couple satisfaction.

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