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Research Article

Journey of Commitment: Sustaining Marriage for 25 Years and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the long-term sustainability of marriage in the Philippines, addressing a gap in local research on couples married for 25 years or more. Using a qualitative design with purposive sampling, interviews were conducted with five long-married Filipino couples (ten participants) to explore their reasons for marrying, their definition of marriage, the secrets to their longevity, and their marital satisfaction. Results demonstrate that the endurance of these unions is rooted in three key themes: commitment, tradition, and mutual reliance. The initial decision to marry was driven by love and the traditional desire to build a family before cohabitation. Participants uniformly defined marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant and a commitment. The essential ingredients for sustaining high satisfaction were consistently identified as open communication, reciprocal respect, mutual support, and persistent effort. The study concludes that intentional commitment and the adherence to traditional family values are indispensable factors for the long-term survival and stability of these Filipino partnerships, despite shifting societal views.

Keywords: Long-Term Marriage, Marital Commitment, Filipino Couples, Marriage Satisfaction

Introduction

Studies examining long-married couples (25 years or more) indicate that a traditional family background plays a major role in both the choice of spouse and the initial decision to enter into marriage (Uygarer et al., 2015). These couples often view marital success as achieving happiness and peace, characterizing a healthy partnership by the presence of key elements such as understanding, respect, love, and empathy, which collectively enhance

marital satisfaction. Further research reinforces this by showing that successful marriages and strong family units are often built by partners who demonstrate intimacy, mutual appreciation, shared core values, commitment, and supportive actions (Nikooy et al., 2024). Furthermore, thriving partnerships rely on several essential factors, including a deep commitment to religious and cultural values, mutual respect, compatible life goals, effective

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communication, respectful methods for resolving conflict, and durable emotional ties (Mahmudulhassan & Abuzar, 2024).

Broadly defined, marriage constitutes a legal and social bond between a man and a woman, formalized by laws and customs that create the foundational family unit and delineate the duties of the spouses (Nyarks & Hope, 2022). Sustaining a happy marriage necessitates continuous effort, including trust, love, respect, open communication, and shared responsibilities. Among these elements, commitment is arguably the single most crucial factor for overcoming long-term challenges (Bhutia, 2025).

The context in the Philippines shows a marked decline in marriage rates, paralleled by an increase in cohabitation, particularly among younger populations. Factors like financial limitations and changing societal perspectives have contributed to this shift, seen in the drop of married women aged 15-49 from 54% in 1993 to around 42% in recent years (Baclig & Lustan, 2025). Reflecting current cultural changes, marriage in the country is now often perceived either as a sacred, lifelong covenant or as a flexible legal agreement where individual autonomy is prioritized over absolute commitment (Jara et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the law remains firm: Executive Order No. 209, The Family Code of the Philippines, defines marriage as a permanent contract between a man and a woman, maintaining its status as the legally protected foundation of the family.

While extensive research exists on family well-being, communication, and marital happiness globally, there is a notable gap in local studies specifically examining Filipino couples who have been married for more than 25 years. Current findings suggest that these long-term unions thrive through cultural values, strong family bonds, and unwavering mutual commitment, even amid shifting social attitudes. This paper aims to fill this specific gap in local marital research by using purposive sampling to investigate the mechanisms these long-married Filipino couples employ to sustain their relationships and uphold their marriage vows.

Methodology

Qualitative research methods were utilized to explore the reasons behind human behavior, opinions, and experiences—insights often difficult to capture through quantitative data (Guest et al., 2012). Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the sample closely aligned with the research aims, thereby enhancing the study's rigor and the trustworthiness of its data and findings based on four key aspects: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Steve et al., 2020).

Respondents of the study: Ten individual participants (five long-married Filipino couples) were selected via purposive sampling. This sample size is consistent with the research paper entitled, "What is the Secret Behind 25 Years of Marriage," conducted in North Cyprus in 2015 (Ugarter et al., 2015). The marriage duration for the couples ranged from 25 to 34 years.

Research Instrument. The interview questionnaire was adapted from the publicly available instrument used in the research paper, "What is the secret behind 25 years of marriage," by Gulen Uygarter, Huseyin Uzunboylu, and Sertan Kagan, which was conducted in North Cyprus. The researchers modified the location context to the Philippines and ensured proper citation.

Ethical Consideration. The study ensured ethical compliance with general research standards and the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Voluntary participation was secured, and informed consent was obtained, which included permission for voice recording.

Results and Discussion

This paper aimed to determine why long-married couples chose to marry, what marriage means to them, the secret of their long marriage, and their marriage satisfaction. The results consistently rooted the longevity of these marriages in three key overarching themes: commitment, tradition, and mutual reliance.

Table 1: Demographic information of participant

Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Duration of Marriage
Participant 1	Female	56	College Graduate	33
Participant 2	Male	58	College Graduate	33
Participant 3	Female	55	College Graduate	34
Participant 4	Male	63	College Graduate	34
Participant 5	Female	57	College Graduate	27
Participant 6	Male	61	Vocational	27
Participant 7	Female	57	College Graduate	34
Participant 8	Male	58	College Graduate	34
Participant 9	Female	47	College Graduate	25
Participant 10	Male	47	College Graduate	25

Interview Question 1: Reasons for Getting Married (Core Finding/Themes: Love and Tradition)

The research interviews started by asking the participants, "Why did you decide to get married?". The core finding for this question was Love and Tradition. The participants were driven by being *"very in love"* and the traditional mindset that marriage must precede co-habitation/starting a family. This aligns with traditional Filipino customs like panliligaw (courting) and pamamanhikan (asking for the hand in marriage)

Key Quotes/Details: The majority of participants cited being in love and the desire to build a family as their primary motivations, choosing to do so before starting a family. Quotes included: *"We are very in love, and before jumping to any big decision, we wanted to first do it in the right way, which is to get married"* (Participant 1) ; and *"For me, the number one rule before living together is to get married because that is how I was raised by my parents"* (Participant 2).

Interview Question 2: The Meaning of Marriage (Core Finding/Theme: Sacred, Lifelong Commitment)

Participants were asked about the meaning they attribute to marriage. The core finding revealed that marriage was overwhelmingly defined as a Sacred, Lifelong Commitment. It was viewed as a "commitment," a "lifelong commitment," and a "sacred commitment". It was also viewed as "teamwork" in raising children and a deep, mature "partnership".

Key Quotes/Details: Most participants emphasized marriage as a commitment. Quotes illustrating this included: *"Marriage is the right step for a committed relationship; it allows the relationship to become deeper and to be more mature"* (Participant 3) ; and *"Marriage is a sacred commitment, encompassing values, support, friendship, and growing together, navigating challenges with trust and respect"* (Participant 10). This strong emphasis on commitment is consistent with international research on successful marriages.

Interview Question 3: The Secrets of Sustaining a Marriage (Core Finding/Theme : Communication, Respect, and Effort)

Participants were asked to articulate the "secret" they attributed to their long-lasting marriage. The core finding identified the essential ingredients as Communication, Respect, and Effort. Specifically, these included open communication, reciprocal respect, mutual support, trust, patience, and the ability to compromise and work through challenges.

Key Quotes/Details: Participants highlighted that a successful marriage is built on open communication, love, respect, and support. Key quotes included: *"To communicate better, accept each other's imperfections, and, mostly, compromise"* (Participant 3) ; and the importance of having the mindset to *"endure many things for your children"* (Participant 8). This reinforces that commitment is crucial for overcoming long-term challenges.

Interview Question 4: Attaining Marital Satisfaction (Core Finding/Theme: Mutual Support and Shared Goals)

The final question addressed how couples attain satisfaction in their long-term marriage. The core finding was Mutual Support and Shared Goals. Satisfaction is maintained through a strong support system in every situation, mutual respect, spending quality time, and achieving shared goals (especially the success of their children). Consistent effort is also considered crucial.

Key Quotes/Details: Participants frequently mentioned the support system and achieving goals. Quotes included: *"The support system I have with my husband in every situation we are facing is important"* (Participant 1); *"We support each other in achieving our new goals in life as time goes by"* (Participant 4); and *"We celebrate every success of our life, especially the success of our children"* (Participant 8). Consistent effort was also identified as a key factor (Participant 5).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings from this qualitative study on long-married Filipino couples (25 years or more) demonstrate that the endurance and satisfaction of their unions are fundamentally rooted in three interconnected themes: commitment, tradition, and mutual reliance. This research successfully fills a notable gap in local Filipino studies by affirming that, despite shifting societal views in the Philippines (such as rising cohabitation), these long-term unions are sustained by the consistent prioritization of intentional commitment and the adherence to traditional family values.

The initial decision to marry was primarily driven by love and the strong desire to build a family, a motivation deeply aligned with the prevailing traditional Filipino culture that historically mandates marriage before cohabitation and starting a family. The participants uniformly regard marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant intended to protect the family unit. The vast majority of participants identified marriage as a commitment.

The "secrets" to sustaining their long-term marriages and maintaining high marital satisfaction were consistently attributed to open

communication, reciprocal respect, mutual support (mutual reliance), and consistent effort. These elements, particularly the emphasis on commitment, are a key takeaway and corroborate international research on successful marriages, highlighting that commitment, communication, and mutual respect are indispensable factors for long-term survival and stability.

In conclusion, this research confirms that enduring Filipino marriages are characterized by the practice of unwavering mutual support and persistent dedication. By prioritizing companionship, emotional support, and working together to achieve shared goals, these couples reinforce the indispensable role of diligent effort. Given the qualitative nature of this study, future research should consider using a much larger sample size to gain broader, more generalized insights into the factors sustaining long-term marital success in the Philippines.

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