

EXPLORING THE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF FILIPINO YOUNG ADULTS WHOSE PARENTS COMMITTED INFIDELITY

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ABSTRACT

Filipino young adults whose parents committed infidelity often experience changes in perceptions about relationships, love, and marriage. Their parents' infidelity reduces their ability to trust and develop commitment issues which hinder them from experiencing romantic relationships, yet, the influence of parental infidelity on Filipinos is not widely studied and considered. Hence, this study explored the influences of parental infidelity on Filipino young adults' romantic relationships and their coping strategies. The researcher used a qualitative case study method and snowball sampling of six participants aged 18-25. Data were collected through online interviews. Findings showed that parental infidelity changes their perception of relationships and marriage, making it difficult to maintain relationships and be open to people. Participants also cope with their experiences through topic avoidance, isolation, and non-suicidal self-injury. This study provided evidence that the influence of parental infidelity on young adults is irreversible and long-lasting, and they have to bear it for the rest of their lives. The results of this study offer valuable insights into the creation of programs that might mitigate the negative influences of parental infidelity on the romantic relationships of young people and give them the chance to learn more effective coping mechanisms as they navigate through their experiences.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Parental Infidelity, Romantic Relationships, Family Studies, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Infidelity, in general, is defined by all forms of covert affairs transgressing the inherent exclusiveness of relationships (Rokach & Chan, 2023). Ever since, infidelity has been one of the leading phenomena that significantly affected marriages repeatedly. Understandably, the well-being of the betrayed spouse takes precedence; however, children whose parents had infidelity issues are affected in more ways than one. Numerous studies were found on the impact of infidelity on a couple's romantic and non-romantic relationships (Peluso, 2007; Salih & Chaudry,

2021); the absence of trust within the relationship (Hammer, 2021; Salih and Chaudry, 2021); and the overall psychological distress brought by the issue within couples (Hammer, 2021; Fincham and May 2017; Arantes et al., 2020), but very few studies focused on the influence of parental infidelity on the offspring (Siguan et al., 2021). Most times, people prioritize the feelings and well-being of the betrayed parent. What most people do not know is that the issue can also leave the children with irreversible impact and feelings of anger, confusion, guilt, sadness, and increased anxiety (Callander, 2015). Children who know about their parent's infidelity may experience a long-lasting impact of the said



issue (Borst, 2015; Davis, 2011). When individuals experience issues in the family, such as parental infidelity, poor communication skills, and maladaptive behaviors, are most likely to develop, and individuals are less likely to achieve conflict resolution (Borst, 2015). Similarly, young adults or adolescents may react to infidelity by engaging in risky behaviors like using alcohol, drugs, or sex to act out, while older children might end up demonstrating externalizing behaviors (Borst, 2015; Fish et al., 2012). Meanwhile, children with more developed cognitive abilities may be given a responsibility to take care of the victimized parent, which may create unilateral loyalties between the parents and dysfunctional triads, which may bring feelings of anger and resentment to the unfaithful parent (Negash & Morgan, 2016). In addition, studies also showed that a major and unexpected shift in family dynamics, such as infidelity, may change the attachment style of a child, which in turn, may disrupt the understanding of intimacy alongside shattered trust (Ben-Ami & Baker, 2012).

Among the 500, 000 marriages that take place in the Philippines annually, 20% or 100 000 are reported to have turned into broken marriages (Butuyan, 2015). While the reason remains unknown, studies revealed that one of the common causes of broken marriage is infidelity (Moller & Vossler, 2014; Lansford, 2009; Barbare, 2012). Infidelity is still considered a taboo in the Philippine setting. Despite this, Filipinos still engage in this act (Ong et al., 2014; Abalos, 2011) without considering the possible impact on the affected individuals. More often, young adults have to deal with the repercussions of parental infidelity throughout their lives (Israel et al., 2020). Similarly, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women reported in 2009 that 2% of women and 36% of men are involved in marital infidelity (Lee, 2015). Parental infidelity may not only threaten the family functions of an individual but also impact the relationship of the child with their parents beyond family ties; parental infidelity may also negatively influence an affected individual's relationship with others (Negash & Morgan, 2016). When parents are unable to take the role as the secure base for a child, maladaptive responses may be developed that can be reflected as behavioral school

problems, inappropriate social responses, and inability to engage with people. The influence of parental infidelity on Filipinos is not widely studied and considered. Hence, this research aims to explore the influence of parental infidelity on Filipino young adults, particularly on the aspect of romantic relationships. Moreover, this study seeks to identify the coping strategies of individuals who were exposed to their parent's affairs. This research would contribute to the literature that could be used to support research for similar future studies. The study would provide additional data on the influence of parental infidelity that can bring a new perspective and light to new knowledge of topics that may have been overlooked. In addition, this paper will highlight the experiences Filipino young adults had to endure concerning their parent's infidelity and provide knowledge on how this issue affects the lives of the children who were exposed to their parents' marital issues.

Infidelity

Infidelity can be understood as feelings or behaviors that violate the commitment and trust built in a relationship; and the spouse's expectation for monogamy which may elicit feelings of betrayal, disappointment, anger, shame, guilt, and sadness (Fife et al., 2008; Hall & Fincham, 2006; Siguan et al., 2021; Hammer, 2021). An individual can commit infidelity in three ways. First is physical infidelity, also known as sexual infidelity. This can be defined as the type of infidelity where a person engages in sexual activities or intercourse with another person outside the monogamous relationship (Whitty & Quigley, 2008). Emotional infidelity, on the other hand, is when an individual falls in love, shares an intimate bond or emotional intimacy, and/or spends intimate time with another person other than one's partner (Hertlein et al., 2005). The last type of infidelity is cyber infidelity, or the use of technology like laptops, tablets, cellphones, or any technological medium to communicate and/or engage in sexual or emotional interactions with other individuals outside one's marital relationship (Young et al., 2007). Sexual infidelity can occur without emotional involvement. Similarly, emotional infidelity may or may not lead to sexual involvement.

Influence of Parental Infidelity on Children

Infidelity can have a detrimental impact on the couples involved. Still, studies have shown that parental infidelity can also have a life-long influence on children, including changes in perceptions about relationships, love, and marriage (Hammer, 2021) which may impact their cognitive process and may result in having fewer positive thoughts about others and themselves (Borst, 2015). Individuals who experience parental infidelity might also believe that the act of infidelity is acceptable (Borst, 2015) and may also involve themselves in the same behavior. Furthermore, parental infidelity may ruin the expectations of children they had with their parents as sources of security and safety which may cause distress (Lusterman, 2005). While some individuals do not blame themselves, they may still have difficulty processing the reasons behind the infidelity and may feel confused, which can turn into fear that they may internalize (Negash & Morgan, 2016). Younger children may also feel neglected and feel their parents no longer love them (Duncombe & Marsden, 2004). Parental infidelity may also result in emotional turmoil, feelings of abandonment and trauma, and mental health difficulties, which affect the lives of individuals who are exposed to this issue. Further, individuals who feel immeasurable pain may find it challenging to regulate their emotions and make sense of their situations. This may result in engaging in unhealthy coping strategies that may involve negative self-talk and harmful activities such as emotional eating, alcohol abuse, and self-harm (Stalman et al., 2021). One study also found that people who experienced parental infidelity felt personally attacked as a part of the family elicited feelings of being unlovable, not good enough, a sense of worthlessness, and being replaced, which resulted in mental health difficulties (Negash & Morgan, 2016). Some participants also described the issue as something that changed their lives and left long-lasting pain (Negash & Morgan, 2016). Additionally, adolescents go through parentification by taking care of the betrayed parent, which may add pressure on them, which in turn could bring feelings of resentment and anger toward the unfaithful parent. One of the roles of a parentified adolescent is to control the aspects of their

environment (Negash & Morgan, 2016). They may also be assigned inappropriate roles within the family, such as acting as the messenger between both parents (Siguan et al., 2021; Salih & Chaudry, 2021). Taking the unfulfilled role and responsibilities of their parents because of infidelity deprives these children of their childhood and the supposed feelings of joy for having trusted authority figures in their lives.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are characterized by the mutual and voluntary interaction between individuals accompanied by current or anticipated sexual attraction and affection (Collins, 2009). Individuals who are exposed to parental infidelity are less likely to engage in romantic relationships for fear of being abandoned or betrayed (Borst, 2015). One study revealed that 80% of its participants' attitudes were influenced by their parents' infidelity towards love and marriage, and 70% of the participants shared that their parents' affair reduced their ability to trust their romantic partners resulting in limited willingness to accept their partner's guidance and support in exploring their sexual curiosity (Negash & Morgan, 2015; Salih & Chaudry, 2021). Moreover, the loss of trust is not only limited to their romantic partners, but participants also felt the need to question the honesty and motives of the people around them in fear of being manipulated for their gain (Salih & Chaudry, 2021). This may also result in having a negative view towards others, assuming that other people have negative intentions and are not trustworthy (Platt, 2008).

Parental infidelity is also a significant predictor of women's horizontal relational ethics, which indicates that women's knowledge of their father's infidelity lowered their trust and justice, loyalty, and entitlement towards their romantic partner; and may also influence their self-esteem (Schmidt, 2013). Some individuals also try to overcompensate in a relationship due to fears of being labeled as 'having daddy issues' or 'damaged goods' (Salih & Chaudry, 2021). Children who were exposed to their parent's affair may also develop commitment issues and become more cautious and less interested in committing themselves to a

romantic relationship in fear of involving themselves with the wrong person or someone better than them. Similarly, it may also result in possible celibacy as children who witnessed their parent's infidelity may fear tying a knot with someone only to get cheated on in the end (Borst, 2015). Some individuals also experience hyper-vigilance as a result of their parent's affair, which made them investigate the shared similarities of their romantic partners with their unfaithful parents, which they will perceive as the negative aspects of their partner regardless of how general these similarities could be.

Coping strategies

According to Lazarus and Folkman's transactional theory of stress and coping (1984), individuals are presented with possible coping strategies when exposed to a stimulus that is presented as either harmful, challenging, or threatening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping is considered process-oriented and dynamic, and it also involves deliberate and intended action to evaluate a stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping strategies aim to directly manage the stressor by modifying or eliminating the stressor, while emotion-focused coping strategies focus on regulating emotions brought by the stressor. This includes regulating negative emotions such as guilt, sadness, and anger (Amnie, 2018). Emotion-focused coping also involves topic avoidance as a way to relieve the negative emotions brought by the situation. Coping efforts to resolve stress coincide with new information from the environment that ensues cognitive appraisal, a process in which the situation is reappraised to determine whether the coping strategies done are successful or unsuccessful. Successful coping attempts lead to positive emotions, while unsuccessful ones may trigger meaning-focused coping, which uses one's values, beliefs, and goals to reorder life priorities, give meaning to ordinary events, and find and remind oneself that stress can be beneficial. This coping effort may bring out positive emotions that may relieve the stressor from the individual, sustain coping strategies, and resources that influence

cognitive appraisals may also be restored (Bigss et al., 2017).

When individuals go through a major life event that may change their perspectives in many aspects, it is important to have coping strategies that may help them overcome these experiences. Exposure to positive support systems and modeling may help people who are exposed to parental infidelity to have more positive relationships in response to stressors and develop healthy coping strategies (Borst, 2015). However, some individuals cope with this situation by avoiding the topic to convey their feelings of unhappiness and condemnation towards the infidel parent (Thorson, 2017). On the other hand, there is a higher possibility of children's forgiveness towards the unfaithful parent if the betrayed individuals personally receive a sincere apology.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine how Filipino young adults in romantic relationships were affected by parental infidelity. Additionally, to shed light on the effects of infidelity, which is a common occurrence in the Philippines, the coping strategies of young adults who are Filipino and whose parents have committed infidelity will also be investigated to provide valuable insights into developing programs curated to improve the coping mechanisms of young adults.

METHODOLOGY

Participants. The qualitative case study design was utilized in this research to explore the influences of romantic relationships and coping strategies. A qualitative case study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the case that is being studied and derive meaning from the cases, which are then reported at the end of the study (Creswell, 2013). Snowball sampling was used to select the participants for this study. The participants were young adults aged 18 to 25 years old whose parents committed infidelity. Six Filipino young adults participated in this study who have discovered their parent's infidelity more than once. The interview was conducted using Google Meet, and questionnaires were given to the participants



through Google Docs. The participants answered the interview questions without needing a video call interview, as some of them felt uncomfortable sharing when asked to interview via video conference platforms.

Data Collection. After the study was approved, the researcher proceeded with the recruitment process through snowball sampling. The prospective participants were given the informed consent form, which included the purpose of the study, its risks and benefits, ethical considerations, and the researcher's contact information. Confirmed participants were scheduled for a one-on-one interview through Google Meet, which lasted 30 to 45 minutes. In order to accommodate participants who indicated that they felt uneasy in a video conference interview, Google Docs interviews were requested, allowing them to answer freely. The data from the interview were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis.

Data Analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify the influences of parental infidelity on the participants' romantic relationships, and coping strategies were categorized according to the research theme. The researcher used between-cases analysis to compare the participants' answers in each question and come up with themes; after utilizing the between-cases analysis, the researcher then used within-cases analysis to identify the underlying themes across all the questions. The recurring thoughts among the six cases were considered and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the researcher presents the experiences of Filipino young adults whose parents committed infidelity and its influence on their romantic relationships. The researcher also identified the coping strategies of the participants in handling their parent's infidelity.

The average age of the participants when they discovered their parent's infidelity was 14 years old through the internet and other people. Their parents' disloyalty was also found through other people.

Table 1
Themes and subthemes identified on young adults' experiences and coping strategies of parental Infidelity

Themes	Subthemes
Young adults' experiences of their parents' infidelity	<i>Initial Emotional Reaction after the infidelity</i>
	<i>Changes in Family Dynamics after the Infidelity</i>
	<i>Influences on Romantic Relationships</i>
Coping strategies of Filipino young adults on their experiences of their parent's infidelity	<i>Topic Avoidance and Isolation</i>
	<i>Non-Suicidal Self-Injury</i>
Emerging Theme	<i>Realizations of the Participants on their Parents' Infidelity</i>

1. Young adults' experiences and coping strategies of parental Infidelity

Three themes emerged from the narratives of the young adults about their experiences of their parent's infidelity. The themes highlighted the initial emotional reactions, changes in family dynamics, and influences of parental infidelity on young adults' romantic relationships.

1.1. Initial Emotional Reaction after the Infidelity

Emotional reactions brought by the discovery of their parent's infidelity can be experienced on many levels and emotions. When parents commit infidelity, children are left with irreversible impacts and feelings of guilt, resentment, and anger toward the infidel parent (Callander, 2015). They may also start doubting and questioning why their parents could do such a thing to them and their family, which may result in feelings of betrayal (de Castro-Bofillm, 2016; Negash & Morgan, 2016). Thoughts of separation caused by their parent's infidelity may also result in emotional distress to children. Moreover, as children often look up to their parents as the source of security, when parents commit infidelity, children often feel disappointed because of their unmet expectations of their parents (Lusterman, 2005). Participants expressed various emotional reactions to the discovery of their parent's affair. This includes feelings of disappointment, anger, and confusion. One of the participants also expressed

that she felt tired from her parents' infidelity as it happens continuously.

Disappointed, especially when I found out that he wasn't the ideal man I was looking up to.

On the other hand, one of the participants felt fine and happy for his mother as this allowed her to provide for their family, and it was for her mother's happiness. While most children who discover their parent's infidelity may feel anger, guilt, feelings of abandonment, and disappointment, some individuals can empathize with their infidel parents and make sense of what they went through. They can understand the causality of the event, which may have helped them become more accepting of the situation and reduce feelings of resentment (Salih & Chaudry, 2021).

I'm happy because my mother can provide us with daily necessities. She contributes a lot from what she gets to her xxx.

1.2. Changes in Family Dynamics after the Infidelity

Parental infidelity affects the interpersonal relationships of children, including their relationships with their family members, particularly with the parent who committed the infidelity. When parental infidelity happens in a family, occurrences of hostility and loss of communication are expressed. This may include a loss of trust in their parents and distancing themselves from their infidel parents as feelings of resentment still linger on them (Siguan et al., 2021). Participants described their experiences with their parent's relationships as losing respect and doubting the acts of sincerity as they find it difficult to understand how their parents can still be together just for the sake of their children.

Conversely, one of the participants revealed that their parents' marital relationship had changed, as they were not together anymore. One of the participants experienced changes in parent-child relationships and their parents' marital relationships.

...because at some point, he blamed me for what happened. In the second incident, he said that it was my fault because I didn't keep an eye on my mother, and that's why it happened again.

The participant was expected to observe her mother's behaviors and was blamed for the recurrence of the infidelity. Individuals who go through parentification are expected to take care of the betrayed parent. In this case, the participant was expected to watch over her mother to prevent infidelity, which added pressure and unnecessary expectations (Negash & Morgan, 2016).

1.3. Influences on Romantic Relationships

Among the six respondents, five of them described the influence of their parent's infidelity in their romantic relationships as traumatizing. They become afraid of being cheated on and have developed trust issues. The participants' trust issues are not only in their romantic and interpersonal relationships, particularly with their friends. Individuals who experience parental infidelity may develop an increased negative view of others, assuming the other people have negative intentions and are not trustworthy (Platt, 2008). People who witness parental infidelity are less inclined to enter into romantic partnerships because they are afraid of being abandoned or deceived by the people they trust. Some may similarly experience commitment problems, grow more cautious, and lose interest in entering into romantic relationships. They experienced the loss of trust and the need to doubt other people's intentions for fear of being used for their gain (Salih & Chaudry, 2021).

It definitely affected my view of a romantic relationship. Growing up, I realized that romantic relationships require commitment and trust from everyone involved. When someone expressed interest in me, my mind just always went to the worst-case scenarios... I never had a partner, but I already struggled with sharing my thoughts and feelings with the important people in my life right now, so it's not a surprise if I'm also wary of expressing myself to my partner in case I might have one in the future.

Infidelity can have a long-lasting impact on children's romantic relationships, as studies have shown that parental infidelity may influence children's perceptions of marriage, relationships, and love (Hammer, 2021). They may also be less likely to involve themselves in relationships for fear of abandonment and betrayal (Borst, 2015). Additionally, children may also develop commitment issues and possible celibacy as individuals who have discovered their parent's infidelity may fear settling down in fear of being cheated on and having no way out of the relationship. Some people also suffer from hypervigilance as a result of their parents' extramarital affair. This causes them to look into any similarities between their romantic partners and their adulterous parents, which they interpret as a reflection of their partner's shortcomings, no matter how slight these similarities may be. Some individuals may find themselves trying to overcompensate in a relationship, fearing being viewed as 'damaged goods' (Salih & Chaudry, 2013).

I can't stay in a relationship for a long time. I never reached one year of a relationship with someone. When a problem arises, I tend to give up the relationship. I can also easily detach myself from someone and it doesn't come back anymore.

The participant's experience with her parent's infidelity resulted in commitment issues, which she can easily detach from when she experiences conflicts in a relationship as she believes that committing to a romantic relationship that only brings conflict is not necessary. The participant's tendency to detach may be due to her fear of being abandoned and betrayed in the end (Borst, 2015).

2. Coping strategies of Filipino young adults on their experiences of their parent's infidelity

Four coping strategies were identified in this study as young adults try to cope with their parent's infidelity. Avoidance and isolation, non-suicidal self-injury, and emotional release through social support were highlighted in this study.

2.1. Topic Avoidance and Isolation

Parental infidelity has greatly influenced the romantic relationships of the respondents and some of them revealed that until now, they still have a hard time making sense of what they had experienced. One of the respondents shared that until now, she doesn't understand why her mom cheated on her father and their family - why her mother didn't feel content with what they have as a family. Participants have managed to find ways to cope with their parents' infidelity. Three of the participants resorted to isolation and avoidance. They would always isolate themselves and not tell anyone what they were going through as they do not trust others all the time and they have a hard time expressing themselves. When faced with immense pain, individuals may find themselves coping with the situation by avoiding the topic (Thorson, 2017). Topic avoidance or mental disengagement from the experience is an emotional-focused coping in which individuals try to regulate the emotions brought by the event by trying to avoid it and isolate themselves from others. This includes regulating negative emotions such as anger, guilt, and sadness (Amnie, 2018).

...I learned how to handle it on my own. That's why I never knew how it felt when I had someone to lean on when it comes to this matter. My close friends of 9 years know my mother, and I wouldn't want them to change how they view my mother because of this. I can't say that it helped me when I deal with it alone compared to when I have someone to lean on, but when I'm alone, it's easier to forget, and it's easier to ignore because no one would make me remember it.

While one of the participants also resorted to avoidance by keeping himself busy, focusing on his studies, and meeting with his friends, he also shared that crying and releasing his emotions helped him in overcoming the pain of his parent's betrayal. Individuals who are victims of their parent's infidelity may also resort to emotional coping strategies through seeking support for emotional release, as the two cases revealed. Two of the participants were able to seek support for

their emotional turmoil by crying and having a positive support system (Borst, 2015).

My best friends accompany me and do stuff with me. They often invite me to their homes to play games and watch movies. They let me cry when I'm really sad, and they let me curse my father's actions. They listen to my rants and give me advice.

Utilizing support systems that enable individuals who experienced parental infidelity may help them develop more positive relationships and healthier coping strategies in response to the stressors they have faced (Bort, 2015).

2.2. Non-Suicidal Self-Injury

In some cases, individuals who feel immeasurable pain may find it difficult to regulate their emotions and make sense of their situations. This may result in engaging in unhealthy coping strategies that may involve negative self-talk, and harmful activities such as emotional eating, alcohol abuse, and self-harm (Stalman et al., 2021).

I came to a point where I self-harmed. My teacher saw me and talked to me about it. Then she said that I should live for my siblings, and I made that my inspiration until now.

The participant felt so unbearable pain that she resorted to non-suicidal self-injury. This incident happened during her mother's first infidelity and she recalled not wanting to do the same thing again and become a source of strength to her family and siblings instead. Participant's experiences of parental infidelity may result in mental difficulties which affect their lives (Negash & Morgan, 2016).

3. Emerging Theme

Realizations of the Participants on their Parents' Infidelity

Participants experienced parental infidelity and did not hinder them from moving a step forward to healing and forgiveness of what has happened. They were able to overturn their experiences which

they can learn from. This shows that individuals who discovered their parent's infidelity can move on and learn from their experiences to use it as a guide in their future (de Castro-Bofill, 2016). There is a realization to move forward as they all have a chance to be happy and that there is no sense in agonizing over their mother's infidelity as it wouldn't change what already happened.

...because there is no point if I let myself get stuck in the situation. That's what I told my siblings. We don't have to let this ruin our lives with the mistake. We have to move forward because we have a chance to be happy.

On the other hand, parental infidelity is an unpredictable and unexpected event that one wouldn't want to experience and individuals who became victims of their parents' mistake would describe their parent's infidelity as a life-changing experience that leaves an everlasting pain in their lives (Salih & Chaudry, 2021). Children who know about their parents' infidelity have to bear the consequences of their parents' actions and heal from the things that they didn't ask to experience.

It hurts you once and you'll bring the pain until you grow old and die. It just doesn't stop. I will always be second-guessing everyone's intentions, will not trust anyone fully, and will doubt myself for a very long time. I just want to say that even if I grew up seeing this kind of love, I still believe that love is a nice thing to feel and experience. I am not afraid to love. I will always love my family and friends. I am just afraid to be left alone by someone who promised to love me and stay by my side. Relationships would hurt, I just don't want to hurt like my family fell apart.

CONCLUSIONS

Children of parents who committed infidelity see what happened as a life-changing event that may give children a myriad of ways to understand the complexities of married life. Some of the children view their parents' infidelity as nothing of their doing, or they have little or no contribution to it, while others see themselves as one of the



reasons why their parents were able to commit the same mistake. Additionally, some of these individuals whose parents committed infidelity believe that they don't deserve what they had to go through. They still don't understand how their parents can betray their families. Their experiences of their parent's infidelity influence their perceptions not just of romantic relationships but also of how they communicate and interact with others. Children with parents who committed infidelity became more doubtful and hesitant to connect with others. They often have a hard time opening up to and trusting other people, fearing being betrayed once again. Some of these individuals also experienced changes in their understanding of marriage and relationships. Love and marriage have become something that they find hard to commit to as they still have remnants of what they experienced with their parent's marriage and their own family. Some of them shared that they do not believe in marriage anymore, while others try to overcompensate in their relationship just to make it work, unlike their parents' relationship. On the other hand, individuals still find the best way to cope with this experience. For some of them, isolation and avoidance became their companions as they dealt with the pain of what happened to their family. In contrast, others found solace in resorting to non-suicidal self-injury to lessen the pain they had to experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study on the romantic relationships and coping strategies of Filipino young adults whose parents committed infidelity sheds light on the influence of parental infidelity on the perception of love, marriage, and self-identification of Filipino young adults. As a community that values the dynamics of a family, this study can serve as a framework for family therapy, allowing everyone in the family to seek an understanding of their situation and encourage personal agency. Moreover, the findings of this study explored the coping strategies of Filipino young adults, which encompassed unhealthy coping strategies such as self-injury and overcompensation. Digging deeper into the coping strategies of young adults in dealing with their parent's infidelity allows school

counselors to develop programs that will aim to teach students the importance of emotional regulation and developing healthier coping strategies.

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