

GUSTO KO NANG BUMITAW: THE STRUGGLES OF SPOUSE IN MARITAL INFIDELITY

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Abstract

A descriptive qualitative multiple case study design was used to explore the struggles of spouses in marital infidelity relationships in this research. Further, this study applied thematic analysis in analyzing the data gathered from seven (7) participants who had experienced marital infidelity. Results suggest that several themes emerged in the lived experiences of the participants. These include emotional distance, which led to severe psychological issues. The participants reported that the reason for the betrayal was due to long-distance relationships and the distrust in the sacrament of marriage as a result of marital infidelity. However, the participants believed that forgiving their husband was the best way to restore the relationship, and they stayed in the relationship for economic dependency. Furthermore, their coping mechanisms included relying on their children and seeking social support and effective advice from significant others. Additionally, it is interesting to note that younger participants appear to have high hopes for their marriage after the marital infidelity. The struggles of spouses in marital infidelity relationships play a significant role in demonstrating that it is a complex issue that can have significant implications for both the individuals involved and their families. Lastly, social workers can advocate for policies and programs that promote healthy marriages and family relationships.

Keywords: *Marital infidelity relationship, struggles, spouse, experiences, coping mechanisms, hopes, multiple case study.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is the most sacred commitment of person in his lifetime and it is the foundation of the social institution of family. However, today the sanctity and devoutness of this settlement is gradually faded (Sassler & Leitcher, 2020), the lack of satisfaction of the need of couples is not fulfilled and this could lead to marital infidelity (Allendorf & Chimir, 2013). Infidelity is a secret and for hidden relationship that violates agreement of marriage, more specifically it is the act of being unfaithfulness in a partnership. It is usually known as: adultery, cheating, unfaithfulness, extramarital affair and marriage betrayal among others (Barbare, 2012), which falls under a common types; physical infidelity, emotional infidelity, cyber infidelity. However, emotional infidelity takes a heavier impact on an individual's mental health (Sly, 2021).

The issues of infidelity have been a major societal problem exists that can cause marital and family dysfunction including the emotional responses and behaviors such as increase anxiety and depression, suicidal ideation, threat of divorce and physical aggression not only in couples but also in children performance (Okere & Ubani, 2020). A recent study shows that family conflict due to parental infidelity have a different impact on the family and on the children self-concept (Siguan et al., 2022). As the family stands as a basic unit of society which everything learned and experience the way a person deals with others, parental infidelity may serve as a model promoting children to also engage in this behavior in their own relationships (Spence, 2012). In other words, infidelity may cause of poor secure attachment styles during childhood stage. Furthermore, family conditions have significant impacts on tendency to marital infidelity which includes economic, social, cultural, educational, and religious factors (Nazoktabar, 2020).

The struggles on the impact of infidelity not only on the couple but also on their family, resulting on the dysfunction of societal emotional process. On the contrary, there have been a theory of protective factors in order to prevent the infidelity and restore the relationships which should be continuous and consistent efforts in order to prevent the infidelity such as; building a secure attachment or emotional bond, sex in marriage, behavioral, cognitive and relationship boundaries, practicing congruence, fostering values and beliefs that support monogamy and coping individually and as a couple (Fye & Grace, 2018).

It is evidently that infidelity affects the both psychosocial well-being of couples and the family involved in the marital betrayal which influence shaping and conceptualize the future. The case of infidelity in the Philippines which apparently happens in the family setting, the struggles of spouse in marital infidelity relationship are not being investigated. The researchers believe that infidelity influences the quality of marital relationship or sacred commitment of marriage and on their self-concept which could lead to psychological

problems. However, the researchers believe that they have different ways of coping mechanisms and hopes in this experience.

The study primarily ask: What are the struggles of spouse who are in marital infidelity? The research would contribute to the literature that could be used as basis to the future other similar studies, the study would provide new relevant data on the struggles of spouses who are in marital infidel relationship that can bring source of new knowledge to topics that may have otherwise undiscovered.

The current study aimed to investigate the struggles of spouse in marital infidelity. Infidelity and spouses are the variables that will be focusing on. Despite of the literature provided, the researcher should be interested in how infidelity contributes to marriage and the discovery will fill the gap of existing body of knowledge, which has an important role in social work practice with family.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to explored the struggles of spouse who are in marital infidelity. Specifically, this research sought to answer the following questions:

1. *What were the lived experiences of the participants in an infidel relationship?*
2. *What were coping-mechanisms of participants?*
3. *What were the hopes of the participants?*

1.2 Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on John Bowlby's (1958) Attachment Theory. The theory suggests that when babies are born, they form a close emotional bond with their main caregiver usually the mother, which eventually expands to include close family members. Attachment theory not only applies to infants and children but also to adults and romantics relationships (Brennan et al.,1998). The most basic tenet of attachment theory is the drive to find safety, security, and protection in close relationship (Benoit, 2004).

Moreover, the attachment theory identified different attachment styles; healthy attachment occurs as a secure and safe attachment formed during infancy with primary caregiver. While anxiety and avoidance attachment are both increase an affair's likeliness of occurring (Njus & Okerstorm, 2016). The anxiously attached adult desires closeness and protection from the spouse; however, the anxious attached individual's worries are centered on their partner's availability and their partner's worth. Additional predictors of infidelity is the avoidant attachment spouse's behaviors, especially when uncomfortable with closeness to others. The avoidant attached adult prefers to be self-reliant and emotionally distant, which are unfavorable to marital satisfaction.

In contrast, the individual who on the dimension of anxious or avoidant attachment is more susceptible to violating the marriage vows (Njus & Okerstorm, 2016). It is essential to recognize and identify attachment factors; secure attachment contributes to a high-quality marriage, while anxious and avoidant will contribute to miserable quality of marriage. Building a secure attachment is vital protective factors in preventing infidelity and strengthening the marriage (Fye & Mims, 2019).

The theory related to the study because adult attachment style had a significant effect which influence the infidelity tendency and provides a useful for addressing marital infidelity relationship.

The other two theories involved in the study are; The Evolutionary Theory by Charles Darwin (1859), define as "descent with modification" the idea that species change over time, give rise to new species, and share a common ancestor. This means that if an environment changes, the trait that enhance survival in that environment will also gradually change, or evolve. In relation to the marital infidelity, people cheat based on the biological and reproductive purposes to achieve the best outcome for survival (Ward et al., 2012). And the Social Exchange Theory (1958) developed by George Homans, which belief that people will help others only when the benefits to themselves outweigh the cost of helping. The idea is that most of our behavior comes from a desire to maximize the rewards and minimize the costs. When it comes to infidelity, this theory suggests that individuals may engage in extramarital affairs if they perceive the potential benefits to outweigh the costs (Lammers & Maner, 2016; Munsch, 2015).

1.3 Scope and Delimitation

The study primarily focused only on the experiences, reasons, coping-mechanism, and hopes of spouse who are in marital infidelity. It will be limited to gather the data from responses of married participants who

aware of their spouse's infidelity. The study does not include spouses who are not aware in marital infidelity relationship.

The purpose of this study was to determine the struggles of spouse who are in marital infidelity and other factors contribute it. This study was delimited to seven (7) married participants which are residents of Cotabato city, BARMM.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The descriptive - qualitative research design using multiple case study method used in this study. It explores the experiences, reasons and coping-strategies, and hopes of the spouse who were in marital infidelity. Multiple case study involves selecting and analyzing two or more cases that share common characteristics, but also differ in some aspects. The cases can be chosen based on different criteria, such as typicality, diversity, replication, contrast, or theory testing (Khadija, 2023).

Moreover, multiple case study method used in the study to conduct of collecting the data with an in-depth analysis which provide a detailed and comprehensive data that is needed in the study. The conclusion merely tried to understand what individual struggles about a phenomenon.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Cotabato City which the target participants were residents of different barangays of the city.

The researchers chose to conduct the study in Cotabato City since this is the most populated among the independent cities in the Philippines (Philippines Statistics Authority, 2020). Moreover, individuals in urban areas would mostly stay with an abusive partner because of financial gains (Ngcece & Ngubane (2022).

In Mindanao, Cotabato City is included in 1 (26%) out of 4 Filipino every-married women aged 15-49 experience intimate partner violence such as emotional, physical, or sexual violence committed by their husband or partner (National Demographic and Health Survey, 2017).

2.3 Population and Sampling Techniques

The study used purposive sampling technique specifically snowball for selecting the participants in the study. The snowball sampling technique is non-probability sample in which research participants are asked to assist researchers in identifying other potential subjects or participants, while purposive sampling technique refers in which units are selected based on the purpose characteristics need in sample. The 7 married participants were involved in the study which served as the interviewees.

2.4 Research Participants

The participants of this study were the spouse who were in marital infidelity. The participants were married for at least one year, had experienced infidelity of the spouse, and had agreed to continue the marriage.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used an interview-guide questionnaires which subjected for validation by the experts. The interview guide is composed of four parts; Part I is the question on the experiences of the participants in infidelity, Part II talk about the reasons of why do participants chose to an infidel relationship, Part III is the question on the coping-mechanisms of participants and finally, Part IV asked about the hopes of the participants to restore their marriage.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The study conducted during the school year 2022-2023 at Cotabato State University it was considered

the following technical procedure.

During the month of January, planning on the context and procedure of the study was done. Included in the planning were the preparation of source of data in interviewing the participants included in the study. Formulation of question statement regarding the study was also done on the month of January. During the late part of January and early part of month of February, pre-surveying of related literature and related studies was conducted in Cotabato State University library and Bangsamoro Library and Archives. Internet resources were browsed for addition. Literature and studies development of research methodology was also done simultaneously in the month of February. The finalization of draft for the colloquium was done during the second week of the month of March.

The researchers secured approved letter to conduct the study from the office of the Dean of College of Arts and Sciences during the second week of February. After securing the permit, the researcher was immediately worked on the revision of research questionnaire instrument that was validated by some experts in the field. Following the validation of the instrument, the researcher were personally administered the questionnaire to all the participants on from the month of March up to April.

The data researcher came up with the general findings, conclusion, and recommendation during the month of May. The adviser on the research subject of the researchers arranged for the scheduling of the final oral defense during the last week of May, 2023 and first week of June after the submission of manuscript. The revision and book binding of manuscript for final distribution was conducted from the week of July and was last as early as January 2024.

2.7 Data Analysis

The researchers used a thematic analysis in analyzing and evaluating the data to be gathered. It was defined as a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. Which the researchers closely examined the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas and pattern of meaning that come up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2019).

Thematic analysis, a method to understand patterns within qualitative data, will be applied to analyze and interpret the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Six processes will be followed: (a) The transcripts were read repeatedly to become familiar with the data; (b) the important features of the data were presented by generating codes; (c) appropriate themes were constructed and the related codes were clustered; (d) the proper matching of potential themes in relation to coded extracts and data was checked; (e) each theme was provided with clear definitions and names; (f) and a review of the interrelation of themes, research questions and literature review was conducted, and an analytical report was produced.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Before gathering the data, the researchers will make sure that researchers' adviser approved the study.

This study observed research ethics all phases of the study to ensure that the participants will be respected. Prior to the actual conduct of the interview, participants will be asked to sign the informed consent after thoroughly explaining to them the objectives of the study. Furthermore, confidentiality will be strictly observed: First, the right of the participants to be treated as human beings who have the right to be respected in a significant manner. Second, the participants had a free will to participate in the study, the researchers respected the decisions of the participants whether they want to participate or not. Third, as confidentiality was one of the principles in social work profession, the participants were preserved by not revealing their names and identity in the data collection, analysis and reporting of the study findings.

In line with this, the researchers seek the approval of the participants to conduct the research. After the approval of the participants, they will be asked for their availability. The interview will be either virtual or face-to-face, depends upon to the convenience of the participants considering their time and the currents situation. Further, the researchers shall observe proper manner of communication as not to offend and cause the participants to feel uncomfortable.

Therefore, the researchers ensured that the participants have a power of freedom of choice to involve in the study, protection of identity throughout recruitment and dissemination process, and promote clear and honest research reporting without deception to readers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of the Participants

Researchers explore the background information of the participants as this might help understand more about the participants such as their age, sex, religion, address, occupation, highest educational attainment, years have been married, and years experienced marital infidelity.

Table 1
Profile of the Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Religion	Address	Occupation	Highest educational attainment	Years have been married	Years experienced marital infidelity
Hida	28	Islam	Rosales, street. Cotabato city	Student	College level	8 years	3 years
Dia	40	Islam	Campu Muslim Cotabato city	Housewife	College graduate	19 years	9 years
Sara	22	Islam	MB. Bagua Cotabato city	Student	College level	4 years	1 year
Mira	47	Islam	Poblacion 1, Cotabato City	Housewife	Elementary graduate	19 years	5 years
Maya	55	Islam	Poblacion 7, Cotabato City	Housewife	None	30 years	5 years
Ain	34	Islam	Poblacion 7, Cotabato City	Housewife	Highschool level	18 years	2 years
Charm	32	Islam	RH 7, Cotabato City	Student	College level	14 years	12 years

3.2 Analysis and Discussion

Table 2.
Major Theme and Thematic Statement, on the Lived Experiences of Participants in Marital Infidelity.

Major Themes	Thematic Statements
Emotional Distress	Every night, you feel weak and cry, but you cannot tell your family what's going on.
	I am very stressed. it is really painful, especially since I was pregnant when I found out about his betrayal.
	I felt so much pain, maybe it affected me emotionally. Sometimes I hurt him because of the pain I felt.
	It is so hard and painful that you can hardly eat properly and sleep well due to his betrayal.
	The stress I felt was also the reason why our firstborn was born prematurely at seven months.
	My emotions were affected even more because my family was far away from me.
Long Distance Relationship	He teaches in Kabacan while our family resides with my family here in Cotabato.
	I was unaware when he cheated, and the children allowed their father to do what he did.
	Because of my husband's occupation that he met the other woman.
	There were things that I could not give that he was searching for because I was working abroad at the time he betrayed me.
Distrust	You cannot say with 100% certainty that he will tell the truth.
	I have lost my trust and love for him.
	My trust in him is broken, and it is not the same as before.
Forgiving the Husband	The more we do not accept it, the more we cannot move on from what happened.

Mothers Sacrifice	Forgiveness is the best thing for couples who experience marital infidelity.
	Give him a chance to change. If he does not change, it is your choice whether to stay or divorce him.
	Accepting to forgive and move on for the sake of our children.
	Forgiveness should also come first, as it is what can heal the wounds caused by the mistake of the wronged spouse.
	As a mother, you can endure everything for your children.
	Because I do not want him to feel that he grew up without a father like me.
	I love my children so much, everything I do now is dedicated to them.
	if I divorced my husband, nothing good would come out of it for our children.
	The important thing is that they have a father they can call and see his presence.
	If we separate, how can our family be called complete?
	I do not want them to grow up distant from their father.

Emotional Distress

The emotional distress and subsequent psychological issues reported by the study's participants following experiences of marital infidelity are both striking and concerning. Feelings of being undervalued and worthless emerged as recurrent themes among the betrayed spouses, highlighting the profound emotional impact of infidelity. This pervasive sense of worthlessness can have severe repercussions on one's self-esteem and self-worth, potentially leading to prolonged psychological distress.

The distress experienced during pregnancy by one participant, resulting in the premature birth of her baby, underscores the physical consequences of emotional turmoil. This instance highlights how the emotional burden of infidelity can spill over into physical health, affecting not only the individual but also the well-being of their offspring. Additionally, the financial hardships faced by participants due to their husbands' infidelity further exemplify the ripple effect of such experiences. These financial struggles can compound the emotional distress, creating a vicious cycle of adversity. Furthermore, the participants grappling with how to raise their children while their husbands were involved with other women showcase the intricate challenges of balancing parental responsibilities with the emotional turmoil of infidelity. Collectively, these accounts underscore the urgent need for psychological support and interventions to address the multifaceted repercussions of marital infidelity on individuals and families.

Marital infidelity stands out as a prevalent and distressing issue in the realm of couples counseling, as evidenced by research findings (Leeker & Carlozzi, 2014). This phenomenon not only disrupts the trust and stability within relationships but also inflicts profound emotional wounds on the individuals involved. The betrayed spouse often experiences a spectrum of negative emotions akin to post-traumatic stress, including feelings of depression, anger, and a profound sense of loss of identity and worthlessness. These emotional responses are akin to the aftermath of a traumatic event, emphasizing the deep emotional scars left by infidelity. Conversely, the unfaithful spouse grapples with emotions such as doubt, depression, and remorse (Azadnam, 2012), reflecting the complex inner turmoil that can follow one's betrayal of trust. These emotional consequences can be paralyzing and require therapeutic intervention to navigate effectively.

Furthermore, negative reactions to infidelity extend beyond the immediate couple involved. Research suggests that when a partner's infidelity is revealed, it can trigger a range of intense emotions in the betrayed spouse, including rage, a significant blow to personal and sexual confidence, sadness, and damage to self-esteem (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). These emotional responses can culminate in a strong impulse to justify leaving the relationship, highlighting the profound impact of infidelity on the individual's commitment and perception of the relationship's viability. In essence, the emotional fallout from marital infidelity is a complex and distressing aspect of human relationships, necessitating the expertise of couples counselors and therapists to address the multifaceted emotional and psychological challenges it presents.

Long Distance Relationship

In a recent study, a significant number of participants revealed that they had experienced their partners' infidelity, and a common thread among these instances was the physical distance created by their respective workplaces. Many participants expressed that the extended periods of separation from their spouses due to work commitments led to feelings of loneliness and disconnection, which in turn contributed to their partners straying from the relationship. This emotional distance often played a pivotal role in pushing their husbands toward infidelity, highlighting the importance of maintaining emotional bonds even amidst physical separation.

Furthermore, it was noted that some participants only became aware of their partners' infidelity through social media. Their husbands' posts featuring pictures of themselves with other women served as a painful and public revelation of the betrayal. This digital exposure compounded the emotional distress and humiliation experienced by those affected. The prevalence of infidelity in the context of workplace-related distance and the role of social media in exposing these instances underscore the need for open communication, trust-building, and emotional connection in long-distance relationships to prevent such heartbreaking occurrences.

Separation and physical distance between romantic partners have long been recognized as significant stressors in relationships (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). Studies, such as those by Helgeson (1994) and Holt & Stone (1988), have consistently shown that maintaining emotional connections across geographical boundaries can pose considerable challenges. This is often reflected in lower levels of relationship satisfaction, as evidenced by the findings of Maguire and Kinney (2010), and a higher degree of relationship instability. Notably, Knox et al. (2002) discovered that many individuals involved in long-distance relationships express reluctance to engage in similar arrangements in the future, reflecting the strain such separations can exert on romantic bonds.

In these more unstable long-distance relationships, feelings of insecurity tend to proliferate, leaving partners susceptible to heightened jealousy and suspicion of infidelity (Schutzwohl et al., 2011). The physical separation amplifies the potential for misunderstandings and trust issues, which can further erode the foundation of the relationship. Recognizing these challenges, couples navigating long-distance relationships must actively work on maintaining trust, communication, and emotional connection to mitigate the stressors associated with geographical separation and promote the longevity of their relationships.

Distrust

Trust is undeniably a cornerstone of any healthy and intimate relationship, rooted in the sense of security and emotional safety it provides between partners. Unfortunately, the damaging effects of infidelity, deception, and unfulfilled promises can severely undermine this trust. In the experiences shared by participants, the consequences of marital betrayal were unmistakable. Many articulated how infidelity shattered the bedrock of trust in their relationships, highlighting the profound changes that such breaches caused. Participants lamented that once trust is compromised, it becomes incredibly challenging to rebuild, with one individual poignantly noting that her trust in her partner had been irrevocably altered. The enduring impact of infidelity on trust serves as a stark reminder of the fragility of the emotional bonds within a relationship.

The loss of trust due to infidelity resonates as a common theme, underlining the notion that infidelity is detrimental to the health of a relationship. The disruption it causes leaves a lasting scar on the foundation of trust, making it difficult for partners to regain their faith in one another. This observation emphasizes the imperative nature of honesty, communication, and fidelity in maintaining the integrity of a partnership and preserving the trust upon which it relies.

Infidelity in a marriage has profound and far-reaching consequences, with trust being one of the most heavily impacted facets of the relationship. When one partner is unfaithful, it inevitably shatters the trust that has been built over time, leaving the betrayed spouse to question the credibility and reliability of their significant other. The emotional toll of betrayal and deceit inflicted by infidelity cannot be understated, as it engenders deep-seated feelings of hurt and disillusionment within the relationship. Notably, research such as that conducted by Sauerheber et al. (2016) underscores the vital role of trust in the aftermath of infidelity, with the lack of it significantly diminishing marital satisfaction. This loss of trust can become an enduring obstacle to the process of healing and reconciliation within the marriage.

Infidelity is often regarded as one of the most grievous breaches of trust within a marriage, and its discovery can have devastating repercussions. It creates a chasm of distrust between partners, leading to an erosion of the very foundation upon which their relationship is built. As suggested by White (2020), this

pervasive distrust can manifest as a profound challenge for couples trying to navigate the aftermath of infidelity. The scars left by betrayal highlight the paramount importance of safeguarding trust in all marriages, emphasizing the need for open communication, transparency, and commitment to rebuilding trust when it has been compromised.

Forgiving the Husband

In the study, a notable trend emerged among the participants who had experienced infidelity in their relationships – the majority chose to embark on the path of forgiveness. Despite the profound hurt and betrayal they endured, they firmly believed that acceptance and forgiveness were pivotal in the process of moving forward. Their shared sentiment emphasized forgiveness as an indispensable component when couples grapple with the complex issue of infidelity. Participants viewed forgiveness not merely as an act of compassion but as the initial step in the journey of healing and resolving the challenges that had arisen in their relationships. They perceived it as the antidote to the anguish and pain inflicted by infidelity, viewing forgiveness as the linchpin that would offer their relationships an opportunity for survival and rejuvenation.

The participants' collective perspective underscores the significance of forgiveness in the aftermath of infidelity, as they believed it was the means to address the emotional wounds inflicted by betrayal. Their willingness to extend forgiveness speaks to the resilience of human relationships and the hope that even in the face of significant adversity, couples can find a way to rebuild trust and rekindle their connection. It serves as a poignant reminder that, while forgiving may be challenging, it can be a transformative step in the process of healing and allowing a relationship to evolve beyond the scars of infidelity.

Forgiveness is inclusive of a positive psychological alternative towards the offender (Chi et al., 2019). Accurately describe as an action in which a person is set free from guilt by God or humans and is primarily about personal aspects of redemption and the removal of sin (Selman et al., 2002). Forgiveness is necessary for the sustainment of the marriage, which helped those affected by the infidelity to move forward and begin the healing process although it is often a process over time (Abrahamson et al., 2011). In addition, those who choose to work through the traumatic event and begin processing forgiveness often feel more powerful and in control versus dissolving the marriage and severing all ties (Abrahamson et al., 2011). The benefits are powerful in that they have the potential to help the non-involved partner cope with stress and benefit physical and mental health (Chi et al., 2019; Hall & Fincham, 2006).

Mothers Sacrifice

Remarkably, all the participants in the study made the heartfelt choice to remain in their marriages, even in the face of the profound betrayal they had experienced. Their primary motivation for this decision stemmed from their unwavering commitment to their children. These participants firmly believed that a mother's love could withstand any hardship, and their love for their children took precedence in their determination to persevere. They emphasized the critical role of a complete family unit in shaping their children into well-rounded individuals, where strong values and good manners could flourish. While acknowledging the challenges of their decision to stay, they saw their children's well-being and future prospects as the ultimate reward for their resilience and the sacrifices they were willing to make.

The participants' choice to stay highlights the incredible lengths to which parents are willing to go for the sake of their children. Their unwavering dedication to providing a stable and loving family environment underscores the profound impact that children have on the decisions and actions of their parents. It serves as a testament to the enduring power of parental love and the sacrifices parents are willing to make to ensure the happiness and future success of their offspring.

The reasons for in abusive relationship have included financial or economic dependency (Alexander et al., 2009), fear (Kim & Gray, 2008), cultural issues (Bent-Goodley, 2009), emotional attachment to partner (Alexander et al., 2009), a desire to keep families together (Rhodes et al., 2010) and commitment to the relationship (Horwitz & Skiff, 2007).

In addition, it was found that women remain in violent relationship with intimate partners for various reasons (Few & Rosen, 2007). Women may remain in abusive relationships because they believe they are not able to manage independently, they are afraid of loneliness, they fear serious harm or injury, they believe they are not lovable, they hope the relationship will change, or they forgive their abusive partner (Alexander et al., 2009). Some of women remain because they may not want to uproot their children (McDonough, 2010).

Table 3

Major Themes and Thematic Statement on the Coping Mechanisms of the participants on Marital Infidelity.

Major Themes	Thematic Statement
Children is the strength of a mother	I only inspire and motivate myself by seeing my children
	Because of my children (She survived the pain)
	All I do is think about my children, they inspire me to fight and continue my journey as their mother.
	I only watched my children to relieve the pain
Social Support contributes to the coping process	As a mother, when you see your children happy you are happy too, because children are the strength and weakness of mother.
	In their advice, they said I should let my husband do things he want. I should think that I'm the legal wife and the important thing is that I have a child.
	I thanked the people around me who said I would not let my family fall apart.
	That was a big help to me because of them my heart was strong and I was able to fight because of their advice to me.
Effective advice	Advising me not to let my family be destroyed and that my family's life will also improve because infidelity only happens in married life and it will also change.
	The positive advise, during my break down, it's a relief because you have someone to talk to about your problems.
	The advice of the people around me. It is also something that strengthens my spirit and relieves my stress.
	According to their advice, I should let my husband, do what he want, as long as I'm the legal wife and we have children.
	I received advise that, I should not let my family be destroyed and that my family's life will also improve because infidelity only happens in married life and it will also change.

Children is the strength of a mother

A mother's love transcends all boundaries. It has the strength to protect, the power to nourish and the ability to heal. Our participants answered constantly that their source of strength is their children. Upon knowing the truth about the betrayal of their spouses, they have been devastated. All their dreams with their partner are destroyed because of cheating. Their partner caused them emotional and mental damaged in their life. Their whole life and expectation had changed due to the severe damage of marital infidelity. With that too much pain and hardships caused by cheating, as a mother passing through a heartbreaks. Their children became their source of strength to continue their life and ease the pain of having bad memories with your partner.

Being a mom does not come with a playbook. No matter how many or how few preparations you make, you can still be thrown a curve ball come delivery day. For these nine moms, motherhood may not have been exactly how they pictured it, but their extraordinary tales of strength, perseverance, loss and most importantly love, teach us that every journey is different and that's okay (Gonzales, 2021).

There are no words to depict the love between a mother and child. To say there is nothing in this world I wouldn't do for my son does not even begin to bring the statement to life. I would kill, lie, cheat, and steal for my son in any way that I needed to. I am a normal person in everyday life, but make me have to flex my mothering and I, like all moms, become supernatural. We can take on the world and anything that is thrown at us. We are the strongest and most important women in the world. We are mothers to every child. And I firmly believe that there is nothing in this world that can rise above that (Terrerri, 2011).

Becoming a mother makes you the mother of all children. From now on each wounded, abandoned, frightened child is yours. You live in the suffering mothers of every race and creed and weep with them. You long to comfort all who are desolate. (Gray, 2020). We are all going through changes and adjusting to this new normal, but the hard work and strength of a mother does not change and deserves to be honored. During these

uncertain times, we must find new ways to show our appreciation to the strong mothers in our lives (Rush, 2020).

Social Support contributes to the coping process

Experiencing the aftermath of betrayal is not easy. The pain that the person felt is like they are stabbed in their heart. They cannot move on easily from the pain. Being alone for them was the hardest time because it may give them suicidal thought for not able to endure the pain. Having social support is the best thing that relieves the pain they are experiencing. Letting them feel that they are not alone and giving them advice is a big help to survive their sorrow season. Our participants answered in the interview that social support really helps them overcome the pain they felt after the betrayal.

We all have a good basic idea of what it means to have social support in one's life, but when discussing research, it helps to be precise. Social support, when studied by psychologists, is often defined as acts that communicate caring; that validate the other's words, feelings or actions; or that facilitate adaptive coping with problems through the provision of information, assistance, or tangible resources.

It can help to prevent stress by making harmful experiences seem less consequential or provide valuable resources for coping when stress does occur. Social support is an important strategy which helps people to cope with traumatic experiences (Aflakseir, 2010).

Social support has been widely studied as a factor that minimizes the effects on stress, and the results are somewhat striking. Not only does social support help people feel less stressed, but it can also actually improve your health and decrease their mortality risk (Scott, 2020).

Social and emotional support is defined as the process by which an individual feels, receives, or provides aid to another. Often, being integrated into society (family, friends, schools, working relationships) can provide pro-social responses. This network of people supports each other during stressful times caused by simple changes or even traumatic events (Nadeau & Boyd, 2022).

Effective advice

Sometimes we cannot reach a decision without the help of receiving advice. We tend to seek advice because our mind is not functioning well when we are hurt. Receiving heartily advice will help a person who experienced betrayal to come up with a better decision in his life. Our participants uttered that they have followed the advices that they received from their relatives, family, and friends. They said that they come up with their decision of staying in the marriage to save their family.

One of the hardest parts about giving relationship advice, or any advice for that matter, is the fact that good advice alone is not enough. Good advice is all around us and people simply choose to ignore it much of the time. Telling a friend or family member who is overweight to eat better and workout periodically is good advice. But for most people, that good advice will not be effective. They already know what they *should* do. Effective advice takes into account the fact that people don't live their everyday lives in the long-term. Effective advice is helping people do less harm than they would do otherwise by implementing behavioral release valves (Carlson, 2017).

The best advice lies in the eye of the beholder, not yours. People Want You to Listen, Not to Talk. By seeking advice from the right people—and in the right ways—you can develop smarter solutions to problems, deepen your thinking, and sharpen your decision making. And by becoming a better adviser, you'll extend your influence and learn from the people who come to you for guidance (Garvin & Margolis, 2015).

Table 4

Major Themes and Thematic Statement on the Hopes of the participants in Marital Infidelity.

Major Themes	Thematic Statement
Children is the top priority of a mother	• This is all I really look at my children. • We are only together for our children not as married and sweet couple. • Just focus on my children because time will not change what he does.
Hopeless in Marriage	• I do not know, for me as long as I'm with my children everything are fine to me. • I do not mind him anymore, I ignore them. • I no longer except from him. I expect is from my children that no matter what happens they finish their studies. • He cannot fix that because it is over, I cannot expect anything anymore. Just focus on what is there. • What is the set-up now will still be the same because nothing will really change.
Hoping for change	• I hope he will change, we will be okay like before. • I wish he would change. I hope he think about me and our child first before he do something that he know is wrong.

Children is the top priority of a mother

After knowing the truth and realizing that the cheater of the marriage is not taking action to solve the issue of the marriage, a mother will prioritize their children. All the pain of the woman will be set aside and pretend to their children that they are okay, but deeply in pain. A mother will endure everything just to give ain't that their children needs. Our participants, prioritize their children over their personal feelings. They stayed in the marriage because they want their children to grow with the presence of their father.

There is nothing that parents love more in this world than their children. Parents everywhere want our children to grow up safe, healthy, and happy. We want them to have a great education and to be able to chase their dreams. Parents have the duty to protect their children's rights until they are old enough to make their own way in the world. The authority to make decisions concerning and affecting the care, welfare and proper development of the child is known as 'parental responsibility' (Laura ,2015).

One of the most difficult things about being a mother is that there is not much downtime. Once you have children, there's no longer just a you. There's always a you-and-them. When you go to the bathroom, your daughter plays with the toilet paper roll. When you were on the phone, your son wants to tell you a new joke. When you visit the mall, your child sets off the elevator alarm. (Yes, this recently happened to me.) I don't think I will ever get used to the absolute chaos that goes with the job, even though I would not dream of having it any other way (Boland, 2017).

Truth is, almost every aspect of your world changes — becomes more stressful, more complicated, more time-crunched — once you go maternal. But the intensity of motherhood can also give you a new perspective on your routines, your friendships, your housework and even your marriage (Boland ,2017).

Hopeless in marriage

A woman who raised and nurtured a family is a blessing. They dream and hope a lot for the marriage and their family. They cared and loved her husband and children. All the effort of a woman will be wasted once

an affair will be exposed in the marriage. A woman whom cheated on will feel devastated and the dreams and hopes she established will be destroyed. The old version of herself may possibly disappear because of betrayal. Our participants, became hopeless in their marriage after knowing that their spouses were betraying them and it is hard for them. However, for the sake of their family, they stayed on the marriage and not hoping anything to their husband.

Discovering that your partner or spouse has cheated on you will not be easy. You would feel a mix of powerful emotions, and often, you will be inconsolable for days and even weeks. Many couples reach a point in their marriage where one or each of them feels hopeless in their marriage. It may be that one person doesn't feel understood or that they are unhappy with their relationship. Divorces tend to increase. Many couples feeling helpless may turn to divorce (Gottlieb, 2018).

An unhappy marriage feels painful and hopeless. It can cause resentment and profound loneliness. You get caught up in the same vicious cycle with no end in sight. You wrongfully compare your marriage to pictures of seemingly blissful couples on social media and wish you had the same. Often, couples who feel they can't leave an unhappy marriage have terrible fights. It's a battle of who can yell the loudest and who can slam the door the hardest. Sometimes there is the tense, silent treatment. You avoid talking to each other for days or sometimes longer. Confrontation is too risky, and it feels like you were walking on eggshells. Your guard goes way up, and you continue to coexist as roommates. You feel stuck – like you cannot leave an unhappy marriage (Kelloway, 2019).

Hoping for change

There are also woman that still hopes for a change on their husband. Despite all the pain they've felt, they still love their husband and they are still hoping that their husband will make changes on their irresponsible actions. They think that it was just a mistake and they hope that their husband won't do it again. Some of our participants, answered that they are still hoping for the changes and good outcomes on their marriage after all the trials.

If you are the betrayed partner, you will know that there is hope for the marriage when your partner takes full responsibility for their actions without blaming it on anything or anyone. Hope for restoration after infidelity begins when the offender acknowledges their part in destroying the marriage (Larry ,2020).

There is always hope for your marriage after betrayal if both people are willing to give the marriage a chance and do their own part in the healing. That said, many healed marriages began their healing journey with only one partner being willing. The bottom line is you cannot know if there is hope, until you've given your marriage an honest chance and gotten some good help (Berch,2019).

Marriage can survive infidelity. As much as we may like to believe that saving a marriage after infidelity is little more than a listicle, the truth is that it will take hard work — very hard — to get past infidelity. Learning how to save a marriage after infidelity will be tough and take a long time, but if you ask if it would be worth it (Pace ,2022).

4. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

4.1 Summary of findings

The participants experienced a lot of struggles after knowing that their spouses betrayed them in their marriage. Some of the participants were betrayed during their contract in abroad as domestic helper and some are betrayed while they are pregnant. They discovered the infidelity from their relatives and some are in social media. Almost of the participants made their children as their source of strength in fighting the pain they felt.

The participants experienced being hurt in emotion because of infidelity. They also compared that before the infidelity their spouse and their family are fine and happy. There are variety of reasons of infidelity according to the answer of the participants. Some says, because they are in abroad, some are because they are pregnant and some says because for their partner they are not enough. Almost of the participants said that they stayed in the marriage because of their children's future and image.

In addition, the participants also had similar coping mechanisms regarding on what gave them strength when they are feeling so devastated and lonely because of marital infidelity. Their family, friends and specially their children are their source of strength to overcome their struggles. They emphasize that advice that they receive really help them come up with the decision of staying in the marriage.

Moreover, some of the participants are hopeless in their marriage. They don't care anymore what will be the actions of their husband but rather they put their focus on raising their child. Only they want is the presence of their spouse as the father of their children. And also, there are participants that are still hoping to bring back the happy family and responsible fatherhood of their husband despite the betrayal.

4.2 Implication to Social Work Practice

Marital infidelity refers to a situation where one partner in a marriage or committed relationship engages in sexual or emotional relationships with someone outside of the relationship, without the knowledge or consent of their partner. This can lead to a breakdown of trust and can cause emotional pain and distress for the partner who was betrayed. It is a complex issue that can have significant implications for both the individuals involved and their families, as well as for social workers who may provide support and intervention to those affected.

The struggles of spouse in marital infidelity have significant implications for social work practice. Social workers can provide counseling, support, and interventions to help spouse cope with the emotional distress and trauma of infidelity. They can help individuals process their emotions and thoughts, identify their needs and goals, and develop coping strategies to address their issues.

Social workers can also provide education and resources to help spouses prevent infidelity and promote healthy communication and relationships. They can facilitate family therapy sessions to help spouses and their children rebuild trust and strengthen their relationships.

Moreover, social workers can advocate for policies and programs that promote healthy marriages and relationships. They can collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders to raise awareness about the impact of infidelity on families and promote resources for support and healing. Overall, social workers can play a critical role in addressing the struggles of spouse in marital infidelity and promoting healthy relationships and families.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

The research identified a common set of struggles experienced by betrayed spouses when confronted with their partner's affair, regardless of their age. These difficulties led to emotional and mental suffering, but remarkably, all participants chose to remain in their marriages primarily for the sake of providing a complete family environment for their children.

The study found a consistent coping mechanism among the participants. Their children emerged as the main source of strength during the challenging times brought about by marital infidelity. This emotional support from their children played a vital role in helping them navigate through these difficult situations. A significant variation was observed in participants' hopes for the future of their marriages based on age.

Those under 30 tended to hold onto hope for positive changes and the possibility of restoring their relationships, while participants over 30 generally had less hope for their marriages. This variation suggests that age can influence the outlook and expectations individuals have regarding their troubled marriages.

Another noteworthy conclusion was that many of the participants, particularly those who experienced infidelity, were housewives with incomplete education. This finding suggests a correlation between unemployment and marital infidelity among women, with economic dependency potentially playing a role in their decision to remain in these relationships. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the level of education and employment status have a substantial influence on the likelihood of women experiencing infidelity from their spouses. This implies that addressing economic imbalance and promoting financial independence among women could potentially reduce the prevalence of marital infidelity.

In summary, this study highlights the complex interplay of age, coping mechanisms, hopes for marriage, and socio-economic factors in the context of marital infidelity among women. These findings can serve as a foundation for further research and as a basis for developing interventions to support individuals facing similar challenges in their relationships.

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