

Starting Anew: Lived Experience of Remarriage in Filipino Older Persons

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ABSTRACT

Remarriage among older adults is another transition and life decision that entails personal, familial, social, societal and psychological considerations. Second marriage is an odyssey in which less can traverse; an opportunity in which a few can understand its very essence. The purpose of this study is aimed to explore on the lived experiences of Filipino older persons who remarry. This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological approach. Emerged from the study are 3 major themes that highlighted the journey of older adults who remarried, namely: (1) Misery, Loneliness and Acceptance; (2) Apprehension and Acknowledgment; and, (3) Reconnecting and Moving Forward. Remarriage among older adults in the Philippine context is very unlikely, and different perspectives on this phenomenon arises that are leaning on the unfavorable side of marriage. In the course of the study, it was revealed that more than the unfavorable speculations about older adults who remarry, is a beautiful story in each of the participants that brings another phase of the phenomenon of remarriage among older adults. With the context of remarriage among older adults in the Philippines is of a conservative perspective, it was realized that the phenomenon of remarriage among older adults in the country is occurring and is never to be looked with much negativities. It should be acknowledged and supported as things brings a sense of life satisfaction and fulfillment among these older adults.

Keywords: Remarriage, Filipino older adults, Lived Experience, Persons

INTRODUCTION

There are several issues that encompasses an elderly's life. It is somehow a transition that entails much anticipation for so many life events. Retirement is one of the major issues faced by almost all elderly and with it is also the occurrence of depression among those whose Ego integrity and preparedness for retirement is not that sharpened. Expectedly, the death of a spouse is much likely to occur, and for those elderly individuals who have live their entire life with their spouse, this is a major transition that they have to face head on. For some, they may accept it with much anticipation. However, there are others who, in a few years' time after the death of their spouse may start to be in a new relationship and somehow may decide to remarry.

Old age is a stage in the life-cycle when individuals often must face life's most stressful experiences. It is a time of mental and physical change, leading to increasing introspection, need for meaning, questioning of identity, loneliness, and sense of privacy. It is a time of loss, be it a loss of spouse, friends, jobs, standard of living, and health. Marriage involves a total commitment whether it is the person's first, second, or seventh time walking down the aisle. A positive attitude, an absolute determination to make this one work, is vital. Many, many remarried couples experience blissful and loving marriages, but only a few has been mentioned on elderly going through this situation. However, it is said that the souls of the departed find true peace when their beloved spouses find happiness again. Indescribable grief brought about by the demise of a spouse arises to someone who has not experienced such an ordeal. After an appropriate period of mourning, it's time for the surviving spouse to begin thinking seriously about starting a new chapter in life with another caring individual.

Remarriage is a social issue that has been existing for the longest time and there are different issues relating to this phenomenon. As a social institution, Remarriage is a pattern of established operation which serves society both in the public and in the private interests that is orderly, accepted and enduring. Remarriage is a social institution; that is an established pattern of operating that serves both public and private interests in an orderly, accepted, enduring way (Schlesinger, 2019). It contains a valuable combination: a varying degree of reality of disruption, and an attempt at reorganization, associated with several solutions related to family breakdown that warrants examination per se. The phenomenon of remarriage at later phase of life has been researched, explored and discussed in Western countries, a few is known of this social issue among Asian countries, including the Philippines.

A small-scale study conducted by Graves (2016) on the lived experiences of persons who remarried between the ages of 55 and 75 revealed that the likelihood of an increased rate in remarriage among older adults is influenced by improved life expectancy, high divorce rates, increase odds of being widowed over time, and the need for intimate relationships across the lifespan. Some of these factors (except divorce, which is not legal in the Philippines) emerged in the data related to the experiences of the participants. Furthermore, while demographic trends indicate that re-partnering in the later years will likely become an emerging consideration, there are also other factors that can be looked into that explains the dynamics of remarriage in the country. Notably, the following themes emergent from the study of Graves (2016) is similar to this study which are (1) positive orientation toward marriage; (2) practical/pragmatic view of the union; (3) desire for companionship; (4) recognition of others' feelings; and, (5) willingness to adapt.

Second marriage is an Odyssey in which less can traverse; an opportunity in which a few can understand its very essence. Having to marry the first time is a life transition that demands a certain amount of commitment from both the couples. However, there comes a point in the married life wherein consequences are bound to arise, be it anticipated or unexpected. Remarriage among the elderly is another transition and life decision which entails familial and social considerations. But as the cliché goes, "Love is sweeter the second time around." Listening from the different stories of remarried older adults relates to a life decision in which there is more to what we thought of this somewhat deliberate action for relationships. Thus, the researchers of this study were encouraged to explore on the experiences of the elderly individuals in this life-changing phenomenon and be able to understand this phenomenon of interest from the lived perspectives of these older adults.

This study explored the lived experience of Filipino older persons who remarry. The study paved way for a better understanding of the phenomenon of remarriage among older adults, in that, it will benefit the older adults who decide to remarry after the loss of their partner, more likely including the families of remarried older adults and healthcare providers dealing with this kind of individuals. For the family, this will help the older person's family in appreciating their actions about remarrying revealing their thoughts and perception on the decision of remarriage. Additionally, through this study, the society will be able to understand the experience of older adult's living adjustments among their own and newly found family after the new marriage journey. For the healthcare professionals, the experience of the older adults will help them in understanding understand the phenomenon of remarriage among older adults, as to the benefits and satisfaction it brings to the life of the older adults and how this phenomenon promotes a sense of healthy aging.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of a qualitative research design. Qualitative research has been conducted in the field of nursing in order to identify, describe and explain related concepts, experiences and phenomena to develop the nursing knowledge. Nurses and other healthcare providers develop a deeper sense of sensitivity to the lived experiences of individuals from different nursing care aspects (Pope & Mays, 2008; Grove & Burns, 1993).

Research Design. This study utilized the Phenomenological approach, specifically the descriptive phenomenological approach. Lester (1999) defines the purpose of the phenomenological approach as to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. As such they are powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of

taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom. Qualitative phenomenological research aims to describe a “lived experience” of a phenomenon (Waters, 2013). Being a qualitative analysis of narrative data, methods to analyze its data must be quite different from more traditional or quantitative methods of research. The participant describes their lived phenomenal experience in any way that can be used to gather data in a phenomenological study. One can use an interview to gather the participants’ descriptions of their experiences, or the participants; written or oral self-report, or even their aesthetic expressions (e.g. art, narratives, or poetry).

Selection of Participants. Qualitative sampling may begin with volunteer informants and may be supplemented with new participants through snowballing, but most qualitative studies eventually evolve to a purposive (purposeful) sampling strategy – that is handpicking cases that will most benefit the study. In this study, the purposive sampling was utilized, specifically Homogenous sampling which deliberately reduces variations and permits a more focused inquiry. Researchers use this approach if they wish to understand a particular group of people well. Homogenous sampling is often used to select people for individual or group interviews (Polit and Beck, 2004). The participants were chosen purposively utilizing the following inclusion criteria: 1.) Older person aged 60 years old and above; 2.) is a widow/widower before remarriage; 3.) has been remarried for at least 1 year; 4.) must be natural born Filipino who has lived in Cebu.

Research Locale. The study was conducted within the province of Cebu.

Research Instrument. The researcher serves as the main instrument for this study, with a semi-structured interview guide developed and utilized which facilitated for the data-gathering process. The following questions are asked of the participants to highlight their experience of the phenomenon but is not limited to these: 1. What are your thoughts being a widow / widower? 2. What made you decide to remarry? 3. What are the reactions of your family of your decision to remarry? 4. What are some adjustments that you go through after you remarried? and 5. What is your personal disposition in your new marriage? In the course of the interview, there were several relevant responses from the participants that emerged and was given much consideration in modifying the guide questions.

Procedure of Data Collection. A letter of intent is to be given to the Dean of the College of Nursing as noted by the Research Coordinator of the College, to inform her of our intent to conduct a research study regarding elderly individuals who remarried. The study was sent to an Ethical Review Committee. A researcher-made semi-structure interview guide was made and utilized initially to participants who fit the given inclusion criteria for pilot testing. The participants who participated in the pilot testing were excluded as research samples. Needed revisions were made of the semi-structured interview guide after the conduct of the pilot testing.

A letter of support was given to the Office of the Senior Citizen informing them of the intent of this study, and so that they will be able to assist us in determining the participants who are within the inclusion criteria. In coordination with the health center staff of the identified research locale, participants who fit in the inclusion criteria were identified. The researchers visited the qualified participants in the respective addresses and gave the informed consent to either the parent or guardian of legal age and to the participants. An agreed schedule of the one-on-one interview between the researcher and the participants were made. On the agreed schedule of the interview, the researcher conducted the interview in a venue that is neutrally agreed by the researcher and the participants, where the conversation will not be in any way disturbed or disrupted. The researchers informed and reminded the participants of the nature of the interview and what events that will take place during the interview process, including the use of a tape recorder for the purpose of the transcription of recorded conversations. The tape recorder is placed in an area that will not make the participant conscious or awkward in answering.

The data gathered during the interview were carefully transcribed and analyzed. Significant statements were extracted from the transcribed data. Formulated meanings were made out of the significant statements, and these were organized to form themes. From the themes, the researcher determined data saturation of similar themes arise from five participants. The saturated data is used to obtain theme clusters, and the themes and theme clusters will be integrated to form an exhaustive description. The researchers returned to the interviewed participants individually to verify the thematic clusters, if it was descriptive of their lived experiences by asking them to substantiate the accuracy of the descriptive results (exhaustive description in Cebuano) with their actual

experience.

Data Analysis. Colaizzi's process for phenomenological data analysis, as cited in Sanders (2003; Speziale & Carpenter (2007) was utilized in the extraction, organization, and analysis of the narrative dataset following the seven-step process. Furthermore, pens, papers, and a functional tape recorder are the materials being used in the data gathering process. The main task of researchers in the phenomenological method is transformation of data to live the experience. This entails bringing forth the individual experiences into words in data collection, and then attempts to understand those experiences based on the statements, and to categorize the themes in the next stage. In the last stage, investigators record the essence in writing, which results in a comprehensive description of the phenomena (Speziale & Carpenter, 2011; Smith, 1999).

Ethical Consideration. It is an important undertaking in all research study on the protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles (Arifin, 2018). In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process. To ensure that the potential risks and the likely benefits of the research is in place, the consideration of ethical issues is crucial throughout all stages of qualitative study.

The relationship and intimacy that is established between the researchers and participants in qualitative studies can raise a range of different ethical concerns, and qualitative researchers face dilemmas such as respect for privacy, establishment of honest and open interactions, and avoiding misinterpretations (Warusznsko, 2002). Some important ethical concerns that should be taken into account while carrying out qualitative research are: anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent.

Confidentiality conveys different meanings for health care practitioners and researchers. For health care practitioners, confidentiality means that no personal information is to be revealed except in certain situations. Researchers should understand and ensure that their duty of confidentiality is less clear and involves elaboration of the form of outcome that might be expected from the study (Richards & Schwartz, 2002; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

It is necessary that the researcher clarify in writing which persons can have access to the initial data and how the data might be used (Morrow, 2001; Agar, 2006). The researcher must endeavor to minimize the possibility of intrusion into the autonomy of study participants by all means. When highly sensitive issues are concerned, children and other vulnerable individuals should have access to an advocate who is present during initial phases of the study, and ideally, during data gathering sessions.

Informed consent has been recognized as an integral part of ethics in research carried out in different fields. For qualitative researchers, it is of the utmost importance to specify in advance which data will be collected and how they are to be used (Hoeyer, Dahlager, & Lynoe, 2005). The principle of informed consent stresses the researcher's responsibility to completely inform participants of different aspects of the research in comprehensible language. Clarification need to include the following issues: the nature of the study, the participants' potential role, the identity of the researcher and the financing body, the objective of the research, and how the results will be published and used (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001).

The principle of "no harm" to participants ought to be considered by researchers, who should be aware of the potential harms that might be inflicted upon study subjects. Researchers have the responsibility of protecting all participants in a study from potentially harmful consequences that might affect them as a result of their participation. Researchers can only do their best to protect their respondent's identity and hold the information strictly confidential as there would be no guarantee for it otherwise. Audio recorded oral consent is appropriate in the investigations of sensitive topics where written consent puts the informants at risk. (Brenner, 2006).

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study is a descriptive phenomenology design that used Colaizzi's method in analysing the transcripts of the participants. Discussed below are the emergent themes that describe the lived experience of older adults who got remarried.

Table 1. Participants' Profiles

Participant		Sex	Age	Years Remarried
1	G.S.	Female	65	4 years
2	N.M.	Female	79	8 years
3	J.M.	Male	83	8 years
4	E.C.	Female	64	4 years
5	R.T.	Male	68	7 years
6	C.H.	Female	62	1 year
7	C.D.	Female	64	3 years
8	D.W.	Male	63	1 year
9	V.G.	Female	61	1 year
10	T.M.	Female	62	3 years

In the study, 10 participants were involved and were intently selected based on the set inclusion criteria. Participants were older adults aged 60 years and up, residing in Cebu City, Philippines. The identities of each participant are held confidential by the researchers with the use of initials instead of their actual names.

Thematic Analysis. After the extraction of the significant themes and formulated meanings from the transcripts, emerged are three (3) themes that described the journey of older adults who got remarried. The three (3) emergent themes were: (1) **Misery, Loneliness and Acceptance**, with three (3) subthemes: Living an Unhappy First Marriage, Having the need for a companion and Feeling Lonely with a departed partner; (2) **Apprehension and Acknowledgment**, with three (3) subthemes: Receiving Support from Family Members on Remarrying, Hesitations from Other Family Members and Braving what others will say; and, (3) **Reconnecting and Moving Forward**, with three (3) subthemes: Feeling more love, the second time around, Experiencing a happier married life, and Having a more positive outlook with on new relationship. Each of the emergent themes are defined and discussed in the succeeding sections with excerpts from the transcripts of participants which is to support and highlight each theme.

Theme 1. Misery, Loneliness and Acceptance

Married older adults have experienced so many events in their life as a couple. Having to go through this, they were able to overcome these obstacles and made it part of their journey. However, there comes a point in married life wherein one of the couples will have to depart earlier from the other. Mangarun (2021) noted that the death of a loved one brings changes to the individual, considering different life facets in terms of emotional, physical, financial, social support aspects of life. This is a major event and transition in an older adult's married life. With this occurrence, there is a choice for the one left to either stay a widow/widower or to engage in a new relationship, with the thought of having to remarry. Losing a partner at this stage in life is a mix of emotions as there will be a feeling of misery for the loss of a partner, loneliness for having to move forward alone, and hopefully, acceptance, when the one left behind, adjusts to life without a partner and be able to meet someone that rekindles a sense of belongingness. It's a rollercoaster of emotion, but eventually, the widowed spouse will come to term with the situation.

Subtheme 1. Living an Unhappy First Marriage

Marriage may seem to be a fairy-tale ever after for some couples. However, there are some married couples who are not experiencing a fancy married life. Not all marriages will be happy; some are going through struggles and obstacles and is unhappy about it. This is what some of the participants revealed in the narratives, of how

they experienced an unhappy first marriage.

My first marriage, well, there was really no love in that one. Because you know Filipino way is, whoever, takes your virginity is the one you marry right? So that's what happened with me, and it just so happened that I got pregnant that's why my mom told me I needed to marry him because that was the Filipino way. (P4, SS2)

He was really the typical arrogant Filipino husband. It was really intense because I wasn't really allowed to do anything, every time I'd go out, he'd suspect me of cheating, that I had another man. (P4, SS3)

A study by Carr (2004) revealed that the desire to date at the 6-month follow-up increased as pre-loss marital conflict increased, suggesting that persons with strained late marriages may feel more relaxed and independent to ignore normative constraints and may want to quickly pursue relationships that could be more rewarding than their late marriages were. This shows that with the loss of a spouse, there are some older adults who continually want to be more engaging and to develop more intimate and lasting relationships.

Subtheme 2. Having the need for a companion

How widowed men and women experienced their late marriages and other close relationships may influence the ways that they think about establishing a romantic relationship after loss (Carr, 2004). The likelihood of widowers' desire to remarry may be more likely than widows because marriage provides men with instrumental and health-enhancing support (Cancian & Oliker, 2000).

I mean you don't want to be alone in the world, you know, you want to share it with someone you trust and it's kind of like how they say you should marry your best friend? (P4, SS6)

And I believe in that, you need to marry someone who is your best friend, and that's what I did when I met [my second husband]. (P4, SS7)

But the thing is it really gets lonely when you have no one with you on the daily. It's just really different when you have somebody. (P5, SS3)

The desire for remarriage may be most acute among men who were most dependent on their late spouse, and who feel most compelled to fill the void left by their wife's death. In late life, the bereaved may be most interested in meaningful and supportive companionship (Cartensen, 1992), which at some point may lead to a more trusting and lasting relationship with a consideration for remarriage.

Subtheme 3. Feeling lonely with a departed partner

Marriage is a sacred union of two individuals. Many may see it as a lifetime commitment. However, the possibility of losing a partner is inevitable and it may happen at any point in the marriage. Losing a life partner is a very emotional event in a couple's life, and being life behind alone gives a feeling of loneliness for the bereaved spouse. The participants expressed their experience of being lonely when they the lost their beloved spouses:

Of course, I grieved and went through the stages of grieving, you know about that. It took me a while to feel close to normal again, although not entirely normal even. I think during those times, I really felt like a part of me was lost. It wasn't easy. (P1, SS3)

As a widower, it was really hard. It really felt lonely, that's what I can say. When my first wife lost her battle with breast cancer, that's it, it was really lonely. I really pitied seeing her because she was already balding, getting weaker, you feel sad that she's totally different from before. (P8, SS1)

It feels lonely. Well, [first husband] was really my first love, we were still pretty young when he passed away, and he was really a good husband. He was a good provider for our family. And another thing, I was really spoiled by him. I was already so sickly ever since because I have a heart condition, I have Mitral Valve Prolapse, that's why he really took good care of me. (P9, SS1)

Before that, I used to cry all the time but later on, I've learned to accept that he now really went ahead of me. (P2, SS2)

Moving forward from the loss of a spouse entails a long process of transitioning to a new life arrangement. The loss creates a feeling of loneliness which affects the process of grieving of the bereaved spouse. In this aspect of the loss, time may be of the essence for the bereaved spouse to process the event of loss and to continually move forward with life.

Theme 2. Apprehension and Acknowledgment

James & Shafer (2012; in Mangarun, 2021) pointed out that remarriage in widowhood generally arises at later ages, difficulties of incorporating a new partner into existing familial and kinship networks may outweigh the benefits a new partner bestows. Older person's desire (Carr, 2004) to repartner may reflect positive aspects of the marriage that they hope to recapture (e.g. emotional intimacy), the negative aspects that they hope to avoid (e.g. domestic responsibilities), and alternative sources of social support that may lessen the importance one places on romantic relationships.

Subtheme 1. Receiving Support from Family Members on Remarrying

There are researches that points out that children play a key role in whether remarriage lasts, in some cases making it more challenging (Sutherland, 2014). Moreover, a remarried life among older adults is made successful if there is support and more importantly, approval from both children and relatives. As shared by the participants, receiving support from their family members really means a lot to their remarriage.

I only have one daughter, [redacted], and even though she was very close with her dad, she was really a Daddy's girl, I think we were able to raise her well enough to be understanding. My daughter is now working as an anesthesiologist. She is already mature. Not for one second did she push him away while we started seeing each other. She just really accepted him and she understood that I was really happy with [second husband]. (P1, SS12)

I also have two children and they told me to marry him because my eldest child is already getting married. So, in order for our family to be complete and so that there would really be both a mother and father bringing him to the altar. That was one of the factors why I really married him. (P6, SS6)

Subtheme 2. Hesitations from other Family Members

Considering the family dynamics among Filipino households, the occurrence of remarriage is something that is not usual among older adults. A study by Kim, Xu and Cruz (2020) noted that most older adults in the Philippines reported love and marriage in old age as unacceptable. Different perspectives and reactions about the remarriage in their older adult family member arise which may not be favorable to the situation for both the older adults who are remarried. The participants shared how their family members were hesitant with their remarriage. Most of the family members of some of the participants had a different perspective of the situation. Initially, they had this anxious feeling of the remarriage considering the welfare of their parent(s).

Aw, they surely didn't like it at first. They asked why we really had to get married when we could just move in together or date exclusively. My child told me maybe [second husband] would only make me his caregiver since he was very sickly. But in the long run, they've learned to accept him. (P2, SS9)

Well (laughs) at first my mom was not that supportive, she didn't like the idea of me marrying [second husband]. It's not because I was marrying again, it was more of her not liking him for me since he didn't really suit her at first that's why she said she was against it at that time. But nobody really had a say actually. (P4, SS12)

Hamid (2000) pointed out that a major factor among remarriage among older adults is the reactions of close families in which children and families are often the biggest deterrents to older adults remarrying. If the children are not supportive of this life venture, then the elderly person finds it difficult to go ahead even if they want to.

Subtheme 3. Braving what others will say

Like any other relationship, no matter how much the couple stands strong amidst the challenges, there will always be different perspectives that will arise in relation to the remarriage at a later age. It may be unlikely for an older adult to remarry, considering their age and their conditions. Others may see it differently, being more judgmental of the situation. However, the participants in the study were able to brave out these circumstances and overcome all that others have to say.

There are a lot of widows who remarry but maybe it's not the same with us who remarried when we were already older, because a lot of people really get shocked when they hear about us. (P2, SS4)

Sometimes people would ask if there was still any action in bed (laughs). But we're already old, we don't have energy for that anymore. (P2, SS5)

At first, I found it weird. It felt weird because people might say she's already old but still flirting and getting married again. (P6, SS1). It's weird because I wonder about what other people might say, they might say "Look at CH, she's getting married again, it seems like she wasn't satisfied with her first husband." But I'm not ashamed at all, because it's already been so long since I got widowed, it's been 20 years ever since but yeah that's it. (P6, SS3)

Theme 3. Reconnection and Moving Forward

In a study by Mangarun (2021), a theory was generated on the quality of life after remarriage in older adults which assumes that remarriage can bring about positive effects in the lives of the new couple which gives a sense of security both in the financial and emotional aspects and can enhance the physical health of an individual. Late-life romantic relationships may be sought as a source of emotional support and companionship rather than for instrumental support or economic stability (Carr, 2004).

Subtheme 1. Feeling more love, the second time around

Mangarun (2021) stressed out that one of the biggest rewards of getting remarried is finding a companion, in which this newfound companion brings a sense of happiness. It is evident in the narratives of the participants that they were very thankful and blessed that with the new life partner they have right now, they feel happier and more loved. The participants shared their experiences of how they felt more loved the second time around with their new life partners:

It was really like a "teleserye", he really courted me again. He said he wanted to marry me, and I also wanted to have a companion with me through my olden years. That is why I really find this as a blessing given by God. I took this as a sign from Him that perhaps he is really the one destined to be with me in my life. (P2, SS8)

They say that in your second marriage, it's supposed to be good karma in turn for your past struggle, that's why I'm very happy now even though he's way younger than me, he really adores me. He doesn't treat me like I'm old, it's as if we're the same age. (P6, SS13)

Although there may be some concerns in the beginning, having to remarry in the later years brings them a sense of fulfilment as they continue to move on with their lives from the loss of their previous spouses. Aligned with the philosophy of Eudaimonism, the older adults who sought for remarriage leads to a sense of well-being and personal happiness.

Subtheme 2. Experiencing a happier married life

Being with a companion is gaining not just another person to have, but also is a form of refuge and comfort with whom one is able to lean. This feeling of connection and worth gives them a feeling of being secure that there is someone who is there to understand their concerns, be it physical, psychosocial, spiritual, and all other aspects of their life.

I only decided to remarry when I realized how much I enjoyed the company of someone else, that is my second husband, and how I'm truly happier when I found my husband now. (P1, SS10)

That is why I believe that it's not good to deprive yourself of happiness and I'm sure my happiness would be my late husband's wish for me, he really told me that. And that happiness, I really found in [second husband]. (P1, SS11)

So now I have more freedom per se. I can go anywhere I want, dress any way I want and we also go out and travel all the time. He really treats me like a queen and spoils me a lot. (P4, SS19)

I'm the happiest I've ever been. Well, I think if you really love each other and trust each other, it will work. We've only been married for four years but I feel like I've known him forever. (P4, SS20)

Beyond families and social pressures, for the couple, it's about finding love and affection again (Hamid, 2018). More than the love and the affection are the feeling of happiness that is brought about by the remarriage. It is like being blessed in marriage the second time around.

Subtheme 3. Having a more positive outlook on the new relationship

Losing a life partner the first time entails a lot of struggles and the process of accepting it may take a long time. Eventually, when the one left behind engages in another meaningful relationship with someone else, is another chapter that brings about a sense of hope and happiness. The participants were hopeful of the second marriages that they are having now and is looking forward to more wonderful memories with their new life-partners.

That is why I believe there is really an important reason behind remarrying. Although it's really not a common Filipino-like culture, you rarely see it here because of course we're already old why would we still marry again. (P1, SS6)

I'm happy that we married each other. Even though we're like this, already old, I really do truly love him. But I really know that I love him more than he loves me. (P2, SS11)

Now that we have been married for how many years, I've learned that he married me so that someone would take care of him. But that was fine with me, because if it were just me on my own, it would get really lonely. It's really just for companionship. (P2, SS12)

But the thing is, you know how they say when you find the right one, you won't be scared, you'd be willing to do it again, so that's what happened. Life's too short to just sit down. It doesn't mean if the first one was bad, the second one will be bad either. (P4, SS11)

With the remarriage of these older adults, it gives them a more positive look at life that there is still a more meaningful life after the remarriage.

Exhaustive Description

This study on the lived experience of remarriage in older adults shows us different stories of loneliness, despair, moving forward, acceptance, and hope. Remarriage among older adults in the Philippine context is very unlikely, and different perspectives on this phenomenon arises that is leaning on the unfavourable side of remarriage. In the course of the study, it was revealed that there is more than just the unfavourable speculations about older adults who remarry. There is a beautiful story in each of the participants that brings us to another phase of the phenomenon of remarriage among older adults.

Misery, Loneliness and Acceptance. The first theme tells us about the different phases of loss that the bereaved spouse experienced with the loss of a beloved life partner. Misery because some of the participants were unhappy of their first marriage. Some are compelled to marry their first spouse because of circumstantial reasons (like being pregnant unexpectedly, or influenced by parents, etc.). Loneliness because most of the participants loss their partners. Most have said that there really is a feeling of being lonely with the death of their spouse and the

feel of longing which the bereaved spouse has to endure and to overcome. Acceptance because in the process of grieving over the death of their life partner brings them to a point when they got over the death of their spouse. This led them to be open to the possibility of being in a new relationship, finding new love interest, or the possibility of remarrying.

Apprehension and Acknowledgment. The second theme tells us how the participants in the study starts to go on with life from the loss of a life partner. This is how the older adult initiated to reconnect with other people and be able to look for someone who creates a certain bond with them. In this course of the study, the participants have to experience the different comments from the people around them, e.g. children and relatives and how they live with it and overcome the obstacles. Apprehension because there were participants who said that somehow, they consider what other people are saying about them, that with their old age, they still manage to either flirt around, engage in a new relationship or be remarried. Acknowledgment because there was a mix of reactions from their immediate families and their other relatives. There are some family members who are very much happy and accepting of their remarriage, and there are some family members (basically relatives) who are reluctant with their remarriage.

Reconnection and Moving Forward. The third theme tells us how the participants in the study continue with their life and is able to connect with other people and building meaningful relationship with a certain special person. Reconnection because the participants realized that being in a second marriage makes them appreciate their life to be worth living. Their second marriage is a way of reconnecting with themselves and with life. Moving forward because with the second marriage, the participants are living happier lives and it has brought forth more positive vibes in their remarried lives.

Remarriage among the elderly is an increasingly prevalent phenomenon which has received scant attention from the helping professions. The elderly has distinctive needs and circumstances which make the prospect of remarriage different for them than it is for young or middle-age persons. (DMin & Healy, 2008). As health care providers, we should look into this phenomenon as this is an important issue among older adults. Remarriage in older adults is occurring and should not be taken against the older adults. We need to understand that this phenomenon leads to a certain level of 'happiness' among these individuals and will further lead to the attainment of 'human flourishing' or 'well-being'.

Limitation of the Study

The exploration of the study was limited to those older adults who remarried. Those older adults who were divorced, separated, widow or widower who lived with other older adults as a couple but were not remarried were not included as participants in the study.

CONCLUSION

Remarriage among elderly is a beautiful chapter and a meaningful journey of new life among them. The decision to remarry is not by force nor it did not occur due to pressure of being lonely. Although, the misery and loneliness these widows and widower experience after the passing of their partners were melancholic, the hurtful experience was overcome because they had acknowledged the feelings and taught ways on how to move forward and where to cling on during the difficult times. Encompassing are a mix of emotions and reactions when remarriage decisions were made among these older adults. Despite the odds that arise, happiness and satisfaction is still possible especially when the decision is being approved by their own family. With the context of remarriage among older adults in the Philippines is of a conservative perspective, it is realized that the phenomenon of remarriage among older adults in the country is occurring and is never to be looked with much negativities. Rather, it should be acknowledged and supported as things brings a sense of life satisfaction and fulfillment among these older adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the outcome of the study, the following were recommended:

1. A qualitative study will be conducted for those elderly couples who were either divorced, separated, widow or a widower who lived as a couple will be explored to look into the dynamics of this form of relationship among older adult couples.
2. The conduct of a study that will make explicit the identified and emergent factors that influence the decision to remarry among older adults.
3. Further researches are done to look into other perspectives on the phenomenon of remarriage in older adults.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contribution

All of the authors, JMLGA, LGT and HLC, significantly contributed for the realization and the success of this research study from the conceptualization, to the making of the initial drafts of the paper, to the processing of ethical clearance, the necessary documents such as several transmittals letters, the informed consent that was used, the semi-structured interview guide, and all other documents, the gathering of the data in which the three authors took turns in the conduct of the interview, the transcription, the analysis of the data, and the finalization of the paper.

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Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article. The raw data and additional datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. For access to the data, please contact Jose Mari Louis G. Alforque at alforquej@cnu.edu.ph.

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