



The Facet: Childless marriage

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Abstract

The study focuses on the lived experiences of Married couple who does not have children and the study used the phenomenological design as research method. There were six informants in the study, four males and two females. The researcher was the main research instrument in the study using interview method. Moreover, the analysis was done through detailed reading and interpreting of transcripts to identify the themes of the study. The results revealed the six major themes including “Love”, “Positive outlook in life”, “Coping Strategies”, “Divine Faith”, “Emptiness”, and “Emotional and Psychological Distress”. In addition, the subthemes that emerged in the study suggested that majority of the informants feel contentment, happiness, secured, confident and optimistic to their marriage life in living together without having children. Although, another subtheme revealed that a feeling of incompleteness is felt in childless marriage.

Keywords: Phenomenology, childlessness, marriage, love, optimism, Divine faith, emptiness, emotional and psychological distress, coping strategies

Introduction

It is believed that marriage means readiness for the proliferation of life and marriage is a prospect to give without restrictions through procreation, for the survival of one’s lineage and humanity at large (Obiyo, 2016, & Basten, 2009) ^[15]. It is the perception of our society in general that marriage and the practice of sexuality in marriage is mainly headed for childbearing which means that having children is a natural component of life.

It is believed that children are God’s best gift to the married couple and even to those who are not married because it gives so much meaning to their lives such as the source of joy, fulfilment and satisfaction of life particularly to the married couple. Moreover, children probably could strengthen the bond of the husband and wife that would make them closer to each other. Gupta (2000) said, that motherhood could be considered a source of power for a woman and it could also determine the strength of her marital bonds. Likewise, children are essential ingredients to the couple’s life because it completes the ideal notion of a family that it composes of a father, mother and children. Moreover, they are symbols and fruits of love of the husband to his wife and vice versa. Above and beyond, the feeling or experience of being a mom or dad is priceless. For both sexes, especially for women, the desire to have children is assumed to be instinctive and universal (Veever, 1979) ^[20]. Yet, it is inevitable some couples will remain childless (Peters, Jackson & Rudge, 2011) ^[16]

Thus, what if a couple does not really have a child? Will it really weaken or strengthen their marriage bond or relationship? How will it affect their marriage relationship? Will it shrinkage their joy or happiness in life? Will it lessen their worth as a woman and or as a man? Will it affect their social relationship? How will the couple live and face the challenges of living together without children? Adegbola, (2007) ^[4] and Monga, *et al* (2003) ^[14] explained that Childlessness is defined as having problems to bear a child by a woman or to impregnate a woman by a man, this is

after at least one year of struggling to attain pregnancy. But Monach, James H. (1993) ^[13] defined childless as exposed to the possibility of pregnancy, yet has not given birth to a live child.

In our culture, child bearing and child rearing are the primary ends of marriage, which means it questions the fundamental reason of being at the level of sexuality, the spouse, and the ability to give life, to conceive and contribute to the next generation.

It is along with these views and opinions that the researchers took the challenge to investigate and described the lived-in experiences of marriage couple without children. The researchers believed that this study would have a big contribution to the body of knowledge since this phenomenon which is “childlessness in a marriage” is seldom being studied in the Philippines, maybe because of our religious background who tends to be conservative in nature. Hence there is not enough researches that studies this phenomenon here in our country.

2. Methods and Materials

Research Design

This study is primarily a qualitative phenomenological research design based on individual in-depth interviews to a married male or female person who is still living together with their husband or their wife but have no children yet. The purpose of this study was exploring the lived-experiences of married person without children and to describe their relationship as husband and wife.

Research informants/Sampling Frame

The six informants of this study were composed of four females and two males, with two pairs as husband and wife are purposively selected to be part of the study because the primarily purpose of this study is to described the lived-in experiences of a married couple having no children yet. The study stopped the sampling at six informants because data saturation was reached, Data saturation was reached because

no additional themes and sub-themes emerged from the succeeding interviews. The inclusion criteria were based on the following: (1) Married for not less than six years, (b) Still living together with her/his husband/wife, and (3) Having no children yet.

Ethical Consideration

To preserve and protect the ethical standards in conducting research, the researcher called for an individual conference to each of the six participants. Discuss with them the rationale of the research. Disclosed to them all information regarding the research study this includes presenting research information to the participants such as the content and basis of conducting the study, the reasons why they are chosen as participants of the study, the possible benefits and burdens of participating. Moreover, informed them that withdrawal from participation of the study at any time is possible. Informed them that participation is voluntary in nature. During the interviews if a participant did not feel like responding to any of the particular question, he or she had the right to say so. Guaranteed them that their identities are protected throughout the study by using fictitious/pseudo names and any information they revealed are treated with high respect and confidentially. Moreover, participants are given an assurance that anything they want to know about the results/findings of the study is provided to them. The participants are also given ample time to consider or decide whether to take part/not in the study and lastly, let the participants signed and have a copy of a consent document.

Gathering of Data

Prior to the initiation of each interview, targeted participants received a consent form and after the consent form was signed and approved by the informants, interview schedule was made by the researcher to each participant. All interviews were scheduled by the researcher and occurred in a private quiet area of the informant's house or at the place convenient to the participants. Individual in-depth interviews were made to six married persons in a private setting and confidential in nature.

At this point, the researcher advised the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview process.

The interviews were taped-recorded and each interview lasted for 35–60 mins on average. Informations were collected through tape-recording in one-on-one interviews with married individual having no children. Soon after completion, the interviews were transcribed verbatim into cebuanos and then translated into English. Confidentiality of the subjects was maintained throughout the study by identifying them by using fictitious names so that only the researcher was able to identify the informants.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using phenomenological methodology.

The analysis was conducted through the following steps: detailed reading and interpreting of transcripts to identify initial themes or codes; defining and redefining of codes; modifying of codes through comparing and contrasting and formulating themes as the expression of the latent content of the text.

3. Results

During the data analysis, six major themes emerged

including “Love”, “Positive outlook in life”, “Coping Strategies”, “Divine Faith”, “Emptiness”, and “Emotional & Psychological Distress”. The six themes and subthemes that emerged in the study suggested that majority of the informants are contented, happy, secured, confident and optimistic to their marriage of life living together without having children. Although, one theme that emerged in the study convey that having no children let them experienced a feeling of incompleteness. Thus, most of them are still hoping that someday they will be given children and experience a feeling of being a mother and a father.

On the other hand, the last theme that emerged in the study is expressed from one female informant that suggests that having no children yet let her and her husband feel discontentment and unhappy of their marriage life and eventually let them experience pain, disappointment and frustration that turned their marriage relationship sour and volatile.

Love, care and contentment are shown in theme I. While the optimistic views of their marriage life are evident in theme 2. It reveals how informants show their positive outlook of their marriage. On the other hand, theme 3 illuminates their trust and faith to our Almighty Father. Theme 4 shows bonding activities that help strengthened their marriage. Whereas theme five illustrates the feeling of incompleteness of their marriage life and theme six divulges pain, frustration, disappointment and dissatisfaction to the marriage life of one informant.

Below is the meaning of each term and is presented by using the participants direct quotations.

Theme 1: Love

The first theme of the study is Love and it can be best explained by five distinct subthemes these include respect, understanding, patience, acceptance and joy to the marriage life of a couple. Based on the analysis, it was found out that even if the marriage is not yet with children despite being together for quite a long time, they have shown that care and contentment exist in their marriage relationship. Thus, they became thoughtful, joyful, peaceful, and feeling secured to their marriage.

Subtheme A: Respect

Subthem A which is respect is when a married couple are not blessed yet with children despite living together for more than six years, respect remains in their relationship. They still show honour and consideration to each other especially in making decisions in life. Comments related to respect were heard.

One of the female informants in the study expressed *“I will not force him to undergo laboratory test. I respected his decision not to undergo semen analysis even if that is the advice of the Doctor”*.

While another female informant uttered that: *“I will drag or tie him, just kidding. If ever he won't, then I will respect his decision because I understand that medical need is... but if we will wait then, it's just like waiting”*.

In contrast, one of the male informants said that *“I do not know all the activities of my wife because some of these are personal and I understand that we need to have some privacy for ourselves”*. Moreover, he said *“well my wife influences me much, unlike before that when I make decision, I will not consider any one else because no one is involve except me. But now, that I'm married already, if*

ever I will make a decision, I have to consult her because she is my partner in life. Thus, she influences my decision in life. She is not only my wife but my partner in life as well so, whatever decision I am going to make I have to consult her”.

Subtheme B: Understanding

Subtheme B which is Understanding articulated by our informants in their marriage relationship. Despite having no children, the informants continue to show open-mindedness, support and kindness to each other especially in their undertakings in life. Remarks related to understanding were heard.

As one female informant expressed *“This is it, when he arrived home, he watched T. V. He has outlets in life, many outlets such as watching TV, he likes fightingcocks and he has a lot of it. I have to learn to love his cocks because it’s really hard if not. I helped him feeding and raising his cocks and sometimes I even late in going to school. It’s expensive, very expensive. However, he did not ask me to help shouldering the expenses. He spends his own money and it is his passion. But we have an agreement that once I get pregnant, he has to reduce the number of cocks he is raising. I will not deprive him to have it but he has to minimize”*.

Another female informant revealed *“I initiated but what shall I do? Will I drag my husband to the laboratory? He is busy for now. Okay, let’s ask him. We supports each other’s wish, if he could reach his dream then, it is the two of us will be benefited”*. Moreover, she said: *“It’s okay, my husband understands it because we are but human, human as we are, there are circumstances that beyond it, and even were going to control our emotions if there is one thing that triggers it so that’s it, just explain why it has happened like that”*.

Likewise, a male informant conveyed: *“So far, we have not encountered big challenges in our maariage because everything we experienced, we just talked about it and learned to understand and support each other. That is why I considered that our marriage life has not met yet big challenges”*. Additionally, he believed *“It is just normal for married couple like us to have issues but never escalated to a heated argument because we understand each other”*.

Moreover, it was uttered by another male informant *“Well, we easily reconcile each other, if one is mad or not in good mood the other party listens and won’t react”*. Furthermore, he said: *“We usually agree. I understand her and she also understands me even if I always tease her”*.

Lastly, another female informant explained: *“I never mind it because husband and wife sometimes not... especially if he is drunk it’s different. I just have to understand but after which you have to talk and tell him that it will not contribute good results”*. She further said *“It’s okay if I arrive late at home because I still have to do something especially if I’ll go to Opon I have apostolic activity there. She understands it and she still prepare food for my meal and I’ll just eat”*.

Subtheme C: Patience

Subtheme C which is the virtue of patience is also bestowed by the married couple to their relationship of living together having no children. They show steadiness, endurance, or perseverance to each other especially in their actions and decisions in life. Comments related to patience were heard.

One of the female Informants said: *“I’ve been struggling dealing with him for so many years but I deal him slowly by slowly. Additionally, she said: “You have to do big adjustment. You can say regrets, is this marriage all about? It is really tedious understanding another person. It is not easy to live together, is this it? Difficult, you have to adjust. You might aks: will I regret? Is this marriage life? It’s so tiring to understand the person and it’s not easy to live with the person; but he is like this, I thought I will die, so difficult to be married. Why other people, so easy for them? Good that money is not an issue. What if money is our issue? I can just imagine if money becomes our issue”*.

In addition, a male informant in the study also whispered *“Well, I do not know, maybe it is me or she because she is also patient to me and I am also patient to her. Because when we discussed her reasons, I listens to her and if I give my sides she listens too. It is okay but we cannot tell or we do not know who is more patient”*.

Subtheme D: Acceptance

Majority of the informants described acceptance of their marriage life of having no children. They display recognition, satisfaction and feeling of security to their marriage. Remarks related to patience were heard from the informants.

As one of the female informants expressed *“I accepted him. I explained to him that life is like this. Whatever God has given to us, we need to accept it. Furthermore, she said “I have no regrets because I planned it. I do not want to regret. In others words, I have no regret because I have done everything already. So, whatever happens to our marriage I will and I can accept it”*.

Another female informant stated *“If it is the will of God that He will let me feel and experience of being a mother then, I’ll accept it. If it is His Will that I will not then, it is fine with me”*. Additionally, she said *“For me, it depends upon on how you accept it. Having no children is not an issue for us. It is not really an issue because we never talked about it. Moreover, another female informant uttered “For example I have no child, they will not pressure me to do this and to do that, if ever there is one then, I don’t find it. I don’t feel like I pressure myself. It is just a challenge and I don’t find it a problem”*. She said also *“I see him in the same feelings he just laughed and humorously says that it is difficult to make a child. Sometimes our friends joke us around, anyway we are not alone in this situation because we have friends also, my close friends in college, we are three, who have no children and in fact they got married ahead of me. For me, it is not really a big deal, so that’s it. Once someone will ask me, there is no feeling of pressure. I just jokingly tell them that it is really difficult to make a child”*.

While one of the male informants said *“In short, it depends upon the couple even if they have or they have no child, just give enough care then, they will both live happily”*. He further pointed out that *“there is always an issue in marriage life but having no child is never part of it. It’s not a subject of our discussion”*.

Another male informant said, *“I just convinced myself that it is not for us. I said to myself that it is not meant for us. There sre reasons why it is taken from us. I further said to myself that “God’s will be done”*. He further expressed that *“I never mind the issue because there are a lot of lay ministers also having no children yet they are happy. Thus, it depends to us how we accept it, how to handle it because*

there are many reasons to be happy in this world”.

In contrast, one female informant expressed *“But I accepted it, accept our weaknesses. It is not good to say this and to say that because saying it is just like you are against your partner. It is not good because he is your partner. Thus, face whatever decision you made”.*

Subtheme E: Joy

The informants described joy for their marriage life even without children. They showed harmony and happiness to each other especially in their happenings and dealings in life. Annotations related to joy were heard.

It was articulated by one female informant *“Good, it is still really good, I’m happy, out of ten it’s nine. For now, it is better already. We’ve passed already the period of adjustment. Though, there is still little adjustment but I already understand him and our life is better now we rarely have an argument”.* She further said that *“Even if there is no child, I’m still happy, I accepted it but I will really try to have a check-up”.*

Another female informant expressed *“We enjoy each moment that we are together. We don’t find it that there is lacking/ or missing. We are just enjoying like boyfriend and girlfriend”.*

Moreover, she uttered *“I cannot ask for more I have a supportive husband, a provider, what else can I ask for? Having no child is the only thing that we do not have, if we cannot have it, if we will not be given a child, I cannot ask for more than that I am contented for the two of us, our financial capacity is stable, our family is fine. What can I ask for more materially? Nothing, if it is intangible thing then, probably it is good health for the two of us and for the rest of our family”.*

Likewise, one of the two male informants articulated *“It’s really okay. It is okay, we are still happy. We are growing and really enjoying our life. Okay, meaning life can still be joyful and peaceful even if you do not have a child. If you only know how to manage your life living together”*, he also noted that *“Living together as husband and wife having no children is still enjoyable. As I said, I am very fortunate to my wife because she’s understanding, supportive, beautiful, and intelligent”.*

Another male informant stated *“When it comes to our relationship it’s really okay even if there is no child”*. he also expressed *“After the mass I was really amazed because the priest instructed us to hold our hands and hug for twenty five times. I just laughed and the priest said, it’s a blessing brother. I believed this blessing for twenty-five marriage anniversary is really big blessing”.*

Theme 2. Positive Outlook in Life

Theme 2 can be best illuminated by two distinct subthemes these include optimism and hope. From the analysis, majority of the informants are very confident that their life will be more fruitful and meaningful as they continue their journey of a marriage life even without children.

Subtheme A: Optimism

The informants displayed a feeling or belief that even if they do not have children yet they are still believing that good things will and are still going happen to their marriage. Remarks related to optimism were heard from the four informants. As stated by a female informant *“We underwent a chek-up already. In fact, we have completed it already.*

Then, the finding shows that his sperm count is okay”. Likewise, she said *“Plans! Hmmm, okay let’s make a plan so that he will feel stress and pressure. When he finishes his studies, if we will be given a child it is our plan to give our child a better future. However, if not then we will plan to save money so that we can take a vacation”.*

In contrast, a male informant uttered *“Well, let us not focus to those things that are not around to us. The focus should be of those things that we can have such as studies, work and then, bonding moment that’s it. Let’s give time to ourselves to enjoy”.* Further, he mentioned *“Yeah. As long as there is life there is hope. We should never loss hope because we are still alive”.* And finally, he expressed *“Well, I have tried it but she said it cannot be an issue, if that is the reason to ruin and destroy our married, then we will never mind it. For us, there are still a lot of important things, so many reasons to live a happy life in this world. We have witnessed already that there are a lot of married couple living together without a child yet, they are happy and their relationship lasted long. Furthermore, they live happily in their lives even without a child”.*

Subtheme B: Hope

The two informants showed a feeling or certainty that something they desired for their marriage life may happen someday in their lives. Statements related to hope were heard.

As one of the female informants stated *“None because there were a lot of them who were there who do not have children but they keep on saying that I have to rub someone who is pregnant (pakis-kis) then, they said I have to try to rub someone who is pregnant (pakis-kis)then, I’ll be pregnant too. Its effect has been spread out to some teachers in our school, one after the other.*

But for on me, they just say I’m the next one. Well hopefully”. In addition, she said *“It seems like fulfilling, though not total fulfilment because I am still hoping to have a child. I am still hopeful to have a child”.* And finally, she expressed *“I don’t care! I have to be aggressive to undergo a medical check-up so that I will know the status of my health. It’s not that we keep on wishing and expecting yet, we are expecting for nothing but I am hopeful that I will have a child”.*

It was also expressed by another female informant *“If it will be, if we are going to be blessed with a baby, hopefully I’m praying to have a healthy baby. If ever I’ll be pregnant, I’m praying for a healthy pregnancy. However, if not and it will not be given to us my prayer is that we are going to be strong, to be in love, to love each other more everyday where going to love each other as God calls our life back to his kingdom already”* She further stated *“We still have to talk about it. Let’s say if we wanted to have a child so we need to have an executive check-up for the two of us to the doctor not just me. Because it takes two to tango and then, we have to consider that will we are still capable, I’m still capable of bearing a baby”.*

Theme 3. Divine Faith

Theme 3 can be best explained by word faith. What is particularly noteworthy here are the shared elements of the informant’s ultimate trust in the higher authority that provided and protected them to have strong, stable, joyful, fruitful and meaningful marriage relationship despite having no children.

Subtheme A. Faith

The subtheme faith involved praying, offering and seeking Divine guidance and thanking God for the positive disposition in their marriage life as articulated in the following statements:

One of the female married persons who participated in this study said *"It is accepted. It seems like it is the one given by God and hoping that He has another purpose because most couples that I've known having no children have so many relatives that need their help. It strengthens my faith that I have to stick to this situation even if there is no child. I offered everything to the Lord"*. Moreover, she mentioned *"No matter how heavy or difficult the situation as long as God will provide me the strength nothing is impossible. It's prayer"*.

Another female informant also expressed *"Because I pray to the Lord that He will give me a child. If it is His "Will" that He will make me a mother then, I will accept it"*. Likewise, she uttered *"I just say "It is not yet given by God" God's will and God's time"*.

It was uttered also by the other female informant *"Sometimes, we do not know the purpose why God has not yet given us the gift of life so, it is just we are waiting. I see that my husband is also enjoying our time, just the two of us only. So probably, in God's time, in his perfect time we will be blessed with a child but we don't know yet. We have been together for 4 years and in God's will. Our age already some sort of a risk for me to be pregnant"* as articulated by informant number.

Moreover, she stated *"Prayer, consistent prayer if God's really grant that prayer then, it will going to happen but if not as what I have said earlier that if God will not give it to me then, it's okay because I know he has a better plan. Sometimes our plan is not aligned to His plan"*.

On the other hand, one of the two male informants said *"Well it's prayer, that's the thing we will offer to the Lord whatever comes and about to come to our life. It is important to put God first in to our life. He is our only guide and will lead us in order to be successful"*. Moreover, he said *"Well, she is really okay because for those difficult challenges in life that we have encountered we offered it to the Lord. Wherever life goes, we will accept whatever He gives. Then, if there are challenges to come then, we will face it. Whatever happens and about to happen we will just offer it to the Lord"* as he further stated.

Additionally, the other male informant mentioned *"Maybe serving the Lord makes me strong because we accepted the sacrament of marriage. Once you are married only death can separate the two of you. This is the only thing that makes me strong. It's really useless I read the bible, becomes a lay minister, spreading the words of God and its wasteful if I'm going to break my wife. I'm old already in extending my service to the Lord. I am contented eating three times a day and happy in my daily works and living"* as stated by informant number five.

Likewise, he further articulated *"One way to strengthen the relationship is having faith/trust to the Lord. It's really one way to strengthen. Talking about separation, it is not allowed in the commandment"*.

Another female informant conveyed *"Hmm, it is important that you have faith in God. You can do nothing without Him. Married couple living together without God will be broken and ruined because God will make relationship stronger."*

With Him life is harmonious, it seems like you have not encountered difficulty. The moment I retired from work trusting Him is our weapon today. She said also "We have no more plans in life we are just waiting to the will of God. Death? I'm just thankful that I reached sixty-five years old because others did not reach sixty, isn't it? Let us be thankful for reaching sixty-five".

Theme 4. Coping Strategies

The fourth major theme is strengthening relationship a way of coping towards improvement or betterment of living their marriage life without children. This theme involved two subthemes from the informants: Bonding moment and communication.

Subtheme A: Bonding Moment

The informants described bonding moment as a way of solidifying their marriage relationship. They spent time being together, recognize the value of togetherness, knowing each other more and continuing to develop a close relationship as articulated by the informants in the following statements below:

As a female informant expressed *"It is me who used to have fun and roam around. It is me who used to convince him but he is thrifty (tihak). I like to roam around and have fun so, I convinced him but lately, it was him who convinced me to roam around. He is happy and in fact he wanted to join my reunion with my classmates in high school"*. Moreover, she mentioned that *"If we will not be given a child my plan is to roam and explore the world. Hmm, it's really the world but that happens after Cebu, Philippines, and Asia"*.

It is said also by another female informant *"We go together and we go to see together and have a bonding moment"*. Further, she uttered *"As I said we are a team so I have nothing to do. If I am not busy, helping him is my way of making myself busy and its one way of being together, it serves also as our bonding moment"*.

And lastly, she said *"We used to Buy CD and DVD movies so that we could watch it together in the house during our free time. We have lots of collections already we like to watch DVD movies so that's it"*.

In addition, a male informant mentioned *"Well, we go together and have fun in life. Well, we talked and watched TV. The important thing is we spend time for the two of us, we go together, we exercise together like jogging but it was stopped because both of us are busy to our work"*. He also said *"My wife is busy to her work and she's tired when she arrives at home. Sometimes during Saturday, we go to carbon market and buy used clothing. We enjoy and have fun look for used shorts, blouse etc. That's it"*.

Subtheme B: Communication

The informants described communication for their relationships as they live together as married couple. They spend time together talking, expressing and exchanging their opinions, ideas, thoughts, feelings and views about their plans in life. Remarks connected to communication were heard:

It is articulated by one of the four women who participated in the study *"We discussed a lot of things such as television shows, his family and other things but the issue of having no children is not part of our discussion. Maybe he is afraid that I will ask him for his semen analysis. He never had a semen analysis because he told me that he has to take"*

vitamins first before undergoing a semen analysis. So, I gave him a chance, I gave him vitamins and it is consumed already. Then, I bought him new vitamins and it's also consumed. I told him that after consuming his vitamins he has to undergo semen analysis and then, he replied later and changed the topic".

Another female informant uttered "We discussed about having no child, our plans, and plans for our future that we want to do and we will work it together". Additionally, she mentioned "We just talked about what happened in our day. We just talked about how's our work? How are the people around us? So, it's a sharing of our joy each day, our disappointment in a day, frustration like that and then we just find it comforting, we just find it that work is tedious. So, at the end of the day you have someone to share, to share your laughter, to share your joy, to share your frustration".

On the other hand, a male informant expressed "When he arrives from work, we take our dinner then, after that washing the dishes, we feed our dog, then watching TV, chatting each other. Any topic such about our work, studies, about our colleagues, about our boss, sometimes we talked about movie and television actress & actors, in short gossip. Life is really fun".

Theme 5. Feeling of Emptiness

The fifth major theme is conveyed by the majority of the informants. Having no children yet let them experienced and felt that something is lacking or missing in their marriage life. Remarks related to emptiness were heard.

One female informant uttered "Eight years. Tiresome, discouraging... it is just like that no matter how you work hard and aim high something is really lacking. You are supposed to work hard for your family but it's not, it's for other people because it seems like you do not have for your family.

Another female informant also expressed "Marriage having no children is not complete, not fulfilling, not satisfying but I accepted it". In addition, she said "Although if somebody asked me, don't you have a child? It's really painful. It seems a big deal to others".

In addition, another female informant mentioned "once you are married that primary I think primary, aside from love for each other once you get married everybody expecting the couple to have the fruit of their love, but that's a primary, it seems primary but it doesn't have to be we should have because not all people will be blessed to have another life to take care of".

Latly, a male informant said "Sometimes we can say that marriage having no children is not complete but I would just say that having no children is not a problem for us. It is okay as long as my husband and I are happy.

Theme 6. Emotional and Psychological Distress

The sixth major theme is described from one of the female informants who felt that the only way to move forward in life is to let go and to give up her marriage. When they lived together for more than six years and still do not have children yet their marriage relationship becomes sour and unhappy.

Subtheme A: Doubtful:

The informant expressed distrust (frustration) or uncertain about her husband actions as articulated in the following

statements.

As she expressed "It seems it's okay but I'm not sure. I do not know if he was telling the truth.

Moreover, she said "I don't know about my husband, it seems not. He had done nothing. Imagine before we saved money because we had a planned to have a child".

Subtheme B: Frustration

The informant also expressed a feeling of sadness or displeasure (disappointment) caused by the nonfulfillment of one's hopes or expectations about their relationship as stated by the following statements:

As she uttered "My husband had done nothing, we saved money before because we he had a planned to have a child. Time comes that he has money already yet he spent it to other things. It seems that his fulfilment is to satisfy his self so, nothing happens he losses his plan to have a child".

Additionally, she said "It's unfortunate, I want to move alone or I do not know what to do" and "He is really hard to understand. I am just waiting for his plan. I am open to all possibilities for his plans to our future if we will continue to live together or we will live separately. That's it. I am open to all possible things that will happen to the two of us.

Likewise, she mentioned "I exerted effort I really exerted effort because it is needed. I visited him in Tacloban but when I arrived there, he did not allow me to enter his room. I just really wanted to have a bonding moment with him. So last year I exerted effort then, that's it, (if don't want to cry because I have no blanket) I visited him. I applied for loan so, I went there but he did not allow me to enter his room in the hotel. it was paid by his boss who is from Mandaue. He just allowed me to stay in the other hotel. On that time, considering I was there, he did not allow me to enter his room because according to him he has another male co-worker in his room. Two of them both are engineers who were assigned to supervise there".

She further said "Sometimes you can say that you want to protect and save your marriage because you are married but if this will be the situation after everything you have done yet, its effect is nothing. Why will you keep it?"

"Nothing else, I cut it. What is it? Sometimes, always, and seldom then, it's seldom. I asked, if is this the answer of my prayer? So that I won't be hurt, I should not love him anymore. That's it. Honestly, it seems there is no more love. Honestly there is no more love. I never mind him anymore" as articulated by the informant.

In addition, she said "If he will come home then, I will still talk to him but as I said earlier, I have no more love for him however, I will still entertain him, provide everything he needs, and I will give him attention. But I really prefer that before the end of 2015 we will really have separate paths".

Subtheme C: Annoyance:

The informant expressed irritation and madness to the actions and decisions of her husband as articulated in the following statements:

As she admitted "None, for the two of us, Honestly, I have no plans for the two of us because he is unstable".

Additionally, she uttered "If ever I stay even if he is like an immature person, even his salary is intended only for himself, spent only for the gadgets and even me losses my trust to him. It seems he wanted support for his needs because he knows I have salary".

She also revealed "My husband wants a family" so, if "he

wants a family” yet, the problem is in him, how can we have a family? I said to him I’m willing to adopt a child but he replied “I don’t need an adapted child”. Knowing that our problem of having no child is because of him and I do not even demand anything from him.

Moreover, she mentioned “I’ve spoken to him and he know already what I like and what I do not like. He knows also when I get hurt and when not to hurt. But why is he still doing it? If he loves me, isn’t it? Why is he doing it? Even if he feels that I’m hurt. Then, he said that’s what he is, is he not high? His reasons are not consistent. I do not deserve the life that he has given to me”.

Lastly, she said “There were thirteen miss calls in his cellphone. Then, I answered the call, I answered and talked to a girl and the girl admitted. My husband also admitted that they have a secret affair there. When he arrived home and it’s his first time going home. He went to Davao because he will conduct an interview there. However, his boss went here in Cebu to conduct an interview for their workers. After all, he and his girlfriend met there and he used my money for the fare”.

4. Discussion

Beyond the emergence of six major themes (Love, Positive Outlook, Divine Faith, Coping Strategies, Emptiness and Experiencing Pain and Frustration (Emotional Distress) there are three important findings from this study. The study offered insight about the informants’ desire to keep their marriage fruitful, peaceful and meaningful, how they coped and how their marriage relationship is affected from such phenomenon.

In the first major theme which is love, the informants show the power of warm affection which makes their relationship stronger and joyful. It can be implied that their continual display of deep admiration and sympathetically aware of one’s feeling let them experience and feel contentment and satisfaction of their marriage. Callan (2007) noted that childlessness acts as a test that brings the couple closer together and opens up new lines of communication and problem solving. Moreover Ekert-Jaffé, Joshi, Lynch, Mougin, Rendall and Shapiro (2002) ^[6] noted that childlessness is an unexpected shock for most married couples and that childlessness could be viewed as a crisis, or a turning point that offers the opportunity for regression or for growth.

The second major theme focused on how the informants’ positive views on their marriage relationship make them stronger. They described themselves as being initially troubled and worried, while others described being in state of sadness and depression. Yet, they have an optimistic attitude by looking for the best of their situation and by believing that things will turn out well gives them hope and let them expect that their marriage will be fruitful and meaningful. Johansson & Berg (2005) ^[9] said that women describe a persistent hope of becoming pregnant and to give birth to a child. Hope is experienced as immensely important, being the driving force that enables life to continue. There is hope for a pregnancy, regardless of any known reason for infertility, especially at the time of ovulation. The opportunity is there but is uncertain.

One of the main concerns couples must endure is instantaneously during the initiation of the childlessness process is the stress placed on the marriage (Abbey, Andrews, & Halman 1991) ^[2]. The stress imposed by

childlessness treatment stems from of a number of factors. Perhaps the root of the stress can be attributed to the treatment process and the sense of urgency that the treatments impose. Another component of the stress is the amount of guilt felt by the partner who has been diagnosed as infertile (Abbey, Andrews, & Halman 1991) ^[2]. Moreover, the American Childlessness Association, (2003) explained that childless marriage greatly impacts a couple’s marriage and is a contributor of stress than any other situation in life. Women are left with feeling empty, flawed, lacking, unwanted and worthless (Emmanuel 2008) ^[18].

On the other hand, the third major theme which is Divine Faith, the informants viewed their relationship with God as personal, intimate, essential, and unique, providing comfort, inspiration, and guidance. It can be seen that the continual talk and belief to the Higher Authority can be viewed as one of the coping strategies to fill in the gap or eliminate the feeling of emptiness of the married couple having no children yet. According to Wolfinger & Wilcox (2008) ^[19] religiosity is linked positively with the quality of relationship for married couples. Religion has both direct and indirect associations with marital quality. The direct relations include increased social support of norms and values of marriage and relationship-enhancing behaviors (e.g., partner forgiveness), while indirect effects include fostering increased psychological well-being, temperance, and sexual fidelity

Moreover, the fourth theme discusses on ways of coping, this is about the informants’ ways to protect, preserve and to keep the marriage relationship stronger and meaningful despite having no children. It is also a way to keep the spark and to cope the deficiency of their marriage thru looking and focusing for others things in life. Believing also that there are other reasons to live in this world happily. This result is affirmed by Callan (2007) that infertile couples have above average levels of marital satisfaction hypothesizing that childlessness acts as a challenge that brings the couple closer together and opens up new lines of communication and problem solving. It is also congruent to the study of Peters & Jackson (2011) which shows that regardless of theories that seek to pathologise couples experiencing this type of adversity, they always demonstrated resiliency by maximizing their energies and time into things of their lives where they could achieve positive outcome.

Additionally, the fifth theme which is feeling of emptiness, the informants in this study described them as something is lacking in their lives that make them insecure and uncomfortable in their marriage. The researchers believe that the informants are longing for something in their marriage life and felt incompleteness about their marriage situation. Mehta and Kapadia (2008) ^[12] said that childlessness for couple, especially for women reinforced feelings of insecurity and incompleteness. Moreover, women are left with more empty, defective, incomplete, and undesirable and unworthy based on the result of the study of (Emmanuel, 2008) ^[18]. This is also supported on the study of Tabong & Adongo (2013) ^[17], Imeson and McMurray (1995) ^[8] that Women generally reported more concern and vulnerable about their inability to give birth to a child than were men. Lastly, the sixth theme which is experiencing depression and frustration, this is about the informants’ dismay and sadness of their marriage. The researchers believe that having no children causes disappointment,

failure and unhappiness to some married couple that causes coldness to their marriage and eventually could destroy or ruin the sacredness of marriage. This result supports the study of Emmanuel (2008) ^[18] describes that childlessness has a great impact on a couple's marriage and is a big contributor of stress than any other life problem. In the study conducted by Tabong & Adongo (2013) ^[17] result shows that infertile couples reported feeling depressed, and frustrated by the prescription of remedies by supposedly concerned individuals. In like manner, the result is also supported by the study of Mahadeen, *et al.* (2018) ^[11] that infertile couples had a high level of psychological distress. Freeman, Boxer, Rickels, Tureck, & Mastroianni. (1985) ^[10] expressed also that women considered childlessness the most distressing experience of their lives. In addition. Greil, Gannon, Sherr, and Abel (1988) women think that childlessness is an enormous role failure, while husbands perceived childlessness as a disturbing event, but not a catastrophe. Infertile couples had a high level of psychological distress. Thus, the childlessness marriage affects the relationship of the couple. Though, the degree of its effects varies from one married couple to another and is dependent to the couples' way of accepting and perceiving the situation.

5. Conclusion

A child is important not only in our culture but to other culture as well. Yet, it is not comparable to the significance and essence it gives to the marriage couple. However, it is inevitable that some married couples are not blessed with children thus, they become childless couple. Childlessness changes the faces and sounds of marriage relationship, depending on how the couples view and deal it. For some, it ruins the sacredness of marriage, it causes them so much emotional and psychological pains, it allows them to experience frustration and dissatisfaction in life especially on marriage life but for others, it is an opportunity to look at and enjoy the other purpose of life, it redirects their life to enjoy other things that marriage had brought to them, it gives them more time to love and care each other. It allows the couple to have enough time for themselves and enjoy their companionship. It gives them opportunity to spend more time to their significant others and friends. Moreover, it gives them more time for prayer and makes their faith stronger. Yet, there is one thing in common about childlessness marriage, it let the married couple feel the thirst of parenthood and feel emptiness in marriage.

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