



Cultural, Sociological, and Theological Meaning of the Dignity and Indissolubility of Marriage in the Philippines

Joselito G. Gutierrez, Ph.D.*¹, Sarah Gail A. Ortiz, Ed.D.², Jeffrey B. Cercado, Ph.D.³, Patrick Meryll J. Garcia, M.A.⁴

¹Faculty, University of Santo Tomas, *Research Associate*, Research Center for Theology, Religious Studies, and Ethics

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1700-9964>

^{2,3,4}Faculty, University of Santo Tomas

²ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3864-7714>, ³ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3060-4297>,

⁴ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-7720-1577>

ABSTRACT: Marriage is an important cultural, social, and religious event in the Philippines. It is a community festivity that binds the couple and the two families, merging them into one. For Filipinos, marriage is a covenant and is considered a lifetime commitment that no one can bring to an end until death. This research study aims to underscore the dignity and indissolubility of marriage in the Philippines. It primarily focuses on the Christian faith of the Filipino people and the sociological and cultural meaning of the indissolubility of marriage. This research paper employs a qualitative approach and documentary research method in an academic study. The paper articulates the significance of marriage for the Filipino family and why divorce is frowned upon. The paper concludes that marriage cannot be dissolved not only because it is explicitly expressed in the wedding vow that “the two will become one” for better or for worse, ‘til death... but also because, in their culture and society, Filipinos believe that one’s success in marriage is a mark of life’s success. One’s downfall in marriage is considered a failure.

Corresponding Author:

Joselito G. Gutierrez

Published Online:

May 26, 2026

License:

This is an open access article under the CC BY 4.0 license:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

KEYWORDS:

Dignity of marriage, Divorce, indissolubility of marriage, Filipino family

Cite the Article: Gutierrez, J.G., Ortiz, S.G.A., Cercado, J.B., Garcia, P.M.J. (2026). *Cultural, Sociological, and Theological Meaning of the Dignity and Indissolubility of Marriage in the Philippines*. *International Journal of Human Research and Social Science Studies*, 3(5), 440-448. <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijhrsss/14-2026-Vol03I05>

INTRODUCTION

Many traditional Filipinos still subscribe to the view that marriage is a lifetime commitment. Marriage, according to Chapter One (1) Article One (1) of the Family Code of the Philippines (1987), is a “special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman entered into in accordance with law for the establishment of conjugal and family life.” Thus, it is permanent and between a man and a woman whose intention is to form a family. Recently, however, more people have become open to the idea of divorce (Abalos, 2017). Looking into this situation, on the one hand, it is clear to Filipinos that marriage is indissoluble and binds the couple until death. On the other hand, this understanding creates tension against the growing influence of modern society, such as the “throwaway culture”, reducing the idea of human relationships as disposable or replaceable (Gutierrez, 2026).

The Philippine Statistics Authority’s 2020 household census reported an increase in Filipinos opting for cohabitation or live-in arrangements (Chi, 2023). The growing preference for cohabitation among young Filipinos is also revealed in the 2022 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which shows that the proportion of women aged 15-49 in live-in relationships has increased significantly, from 5% in 1993 to 19% in 2022 (PSA, 2023). This is because cohabitation is relatively easier to dissolve in the Philippines, as divorce is not available, and annulment is costly (Abalos, 2017). Other factors for the Filipinos’ diminishing attitude towards marriage are socioeconomic status, the trend of remaining single that is becoming prevalent in the lower class (Williams & Arguillas, 2012), and domestic abuse and infidelity (Gozum, 2020). The most common reasons for challenging the permanence of marriage in the Philippines are diminishing affection, the *querida* system, being forced to get married, and

domestic abuse (CFC 1915-1917).

The growing preference for cohabitation over marriage shows that Filipinos understand marriage as a lifetime bondage. Still, many do not appreciate its efficacious role in sustaining lifetime commitment and responsibility. Marriage becomes a burden rather than an expression of commitment and responsibility. Consequently, this understanding also creates an impression that marriage does not address abusive relationships and the reality of dysfunctional families because it tends to be primarily moralistic and does not provide refuge for victims (Tenedero, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this research paper seeks to present a reappraisal of the integrity of marriage in the Philippines by articulating the dignity of marriage and family values. It focuses primarily on the religious, sociological, and cultural meaning of the unity and indissolubility of marriage following the Filipino Christian context.

Additionally, marriage is often considered the most acceptable way to form a family. Cohabitation, or a live-in relationship, which has become increasingly popular and acceptable today, poses a threat to the stability of marriage and the family. The significance of this research study lies in unraveling the reasons why some Filipinos opt for cohabitation when forming a family, and, consequently, in exposing the risks and challenges associated with forming a family without a valid or legal marriage.

METHODOLOGY

This research paper employs a qualitative approach and a documentary research method. A qualitative research method is an approach that uses interpretive and theoretical frameworks to address social or human problems (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Accordingly, the available data in a natural setting is being analyzed to establish patterns or themes. Documentary research, on the other hand, is a systematic evaluation of the information available in a report prepared specifically to document a particular topic (Tight, 2019). Commonly used in social science research, some of its aims include identifying significant features of events, establishing a plausible interpretation and explanation, constructing an argument based on the interpretation, relating the argument to current trends, providing opportunities for researchers, and constructing alternative arguments, among others (Tight, 2019).

For this research, government reports, credible surveys, and relevant literature are cited, and their messages are applied to the present context, particularly in the Philippines. Researchers highlight why Christian marriage among Filipinos is considered indissoluble, not only because it is part of the Church's doctrinal teaching but also because of its sociological and cultural significance, traditions, and practices.

This research paper uses Social Exchange theory as its theoretical framework. This theory proposes that people evaluate and conduct cost-benefit analysis, consciously or unconsciously, before entering into human relationships (Nickerson, 2023). It assumes that human nature typically seeks rewards and avoids punishments, engages in interactions to maximize profits at minimal cost, and assesses the profit and cost before entering into a relationship (Tulane University, 2025). In marriage, a relationship is viewed as a social exchange aimed at negotiating bond, attraction, and dependence, which, in turn, determine whether the relationship will be continued, discontinued, or renegotiated (Sabatelli et al., 2018). In the absence of divorce in the Philippines, unsatisfied couples are forced to continue and work out their relationships since marriage is indissoluble. Also, the absence of divorce deters couples who are not yet certain of their feelings from getting married.

DISCUSSIONS

Article XV of the Philippine Constitution (1987) acknowledges the Filipino family as the nation's foundation and marriage as an inviolable social institution binding the family. Filipino families value blood and marriage relationships, emphasizing the biological and marital connections among family members, extended family members, and distant relatives.

The family is highly regarded in Philippine society because it is the nation's foundation and basic social institution. The government protects the family by ensuring that all laws, practices, and agreements of the land are not destructive to the Filipino family but are uplifting to its well-being.

The Filipino Family

The family is traditionally defined as “composed of a father, a mother, and their children” (Tarroja, 2010). Defining a family requires a multifaceted approach to reveal the operative structures and meanings that benefit the observable. The changes and challenges brought about by global and urban migration, the changing role of women, political instability, economic challenges, violence, and the impact of media pave the way for a new understanding and definition of family (Tarroja, 2010). These social challenges contributed to the engendering of some issues - divorce, adultery, child abuse, and child labor (Gozum, 2020, 562). A recent Social Weather Station (SWS) survey reveals that some Filipinos support or advocate the legalization of divorce, a consistent trend over the last 20 years (Sanjorjo, 2024). While some sectors in society are calling for the enactment of divorce, the Church and most of the lawmakers in the Philippines remain firm in disallowing the dissolution of marriage. The following are scholarly articulations of why the Philippines upholds the unity and indissolubility of marriage, drawing on the religious, sociological, and cultural perspectives.

Marriage in the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Philippines is the largest predominantly Christian nation in Asia, with a strong Catholic population of 85,645,362 (78.8%) as of 2020 (Mapa, 2020). Filipinos are traditionally subservient to the teachings of the Vatican, especially when it comes to the sacrament of marriage. However, there are growing talks and clamors on sensitive and complex issues that are contrary to its Catholic faith, such as the use of contraception, legalization of abortion, and dissolution of marriage or divorce.

Marriage is the foundation of family and the cornerstone of society. The Catholic Church, in its Code of Canon Law (CIC), teaches that marriage is indissoluble once it is validly contracted, since it is no longer a regular social contract but a special contract and is given the distinction of a sacrament (CIC, 1055), thereby making God the author of marriage (CCC, 1602). Thus, every Catholic marriage is endowed with two essential properties: unity and indissolubility (CIC, 1056). Catholics believe that marriage is indissoluble because it is a sacrament. Accordingly, a sacrament is an “efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC, 1131). Christian marriage is a sacrament wherein couples cooperate, make their marriage fruitful, and partake in the creative work of God in establishing a domestic church, the family (CBCP, 1976). It is within the context of marriage as a sacrament that it possesses the properties of unity and indissolubility. As the Catechism emphasizes, it is holy and indissoluble because it is God, who is holy, the author of this sacrament. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1644) insists that marriage is not merely a contract that can be easily dissolved upon the mutual agreement of the contracting parties. By giving their mutual consent, the bride and groom affirm their commitment to fidelity and total self-giving to one another. The union between husband and wife extends beyond physical intimacy, as the two become one flesh. Husband and wife participate and continue in the work of the Creator in bringing forth life into this world to ensure the continuation of society and the coming generations.

Archbishop Müller (2013) of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith states that indissolubility is the inner bond that God formed and shaped to withstand the test of time, making it unbreakable. Therefore, marriage is a divine covenant made between God and man. It is not merely a man-made institution, as it is inscribed in the very being of man and woman. It is a vocation that draws them together in conjugal love and commitment, leading to the establishment of family life under the law of God (CCC 1602-1605).

Pope Francis’s *Amoris Laetitia* further adds that the indissolubility of marriage is not a burden but a gift. A true expression of lifelong commitment, sacrifice, and unending love in the face of the difficulties of providing the family’s basic needs to help them grow and flourish physically, emotionally, and spiritually (AL 62).

Pope Francis mentioned the threat of a growing throwaway culture in his encyclical *Laudato Si’* (2015), reminding the people of the danger of wasting natural resources and their negative consequences. In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), the Pope reiterated the threat of a throwaway culture manifesting in the people whose mindset is to discard the vulnerable people, such as the “not yet useful,” like the unborn, and the “no longer needed,” like the elderly, persons with disabilities, and the dying. In the context of marriage, throwaway culture is also manifest when a lifetime relationship is viewed as a burden rather than a commitment (*Amoris Laetitia*, 39), and therefore becomes a household commodity, disposable, and subject to being discarded.

The brief theological discussion of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage provides a vivid explanation of the Church’s teachings on marriage. The Christian faith profoundly influences the Filipino people, including their belief in the dignity of marriage as permanent and indissoluble. And, in case of marital separation, one cannot marry or engage in a romantic relationship, for it is considered an act contrary to the will of God (CCC, 2380).

Functions of Marriage and Reasons for Getting Married

The family is considered the basic unit of society, providing primary needs and care for its members. A functioning family is integral to the well-being of every family member. The enduring image of the family unit, a cornerstone of society, has frequently been that of an intact family consisting of two parents and their offspring. Although the contemporary family landscape is becoming more diverse, the beneficial effects of a well-functioning family are undeniable and still favored in the Philippine culture.

Filipinos are getting married to celebrate love. Several justifications exist for marriage, including companionship, economic or psychological stability, social status, prestige, and establishing a household and raising children (Medina, 2015). Although reasons may vary, some individuals marry out of gratitude, sympathy, malice, a desire for adventure, or a sense of moral responsibility, while others marry to escape a toxic domestic environment. Some attribute it to destiny and/or astral projections, while some adhere to societal norms, as marriage is perceived as the conventional status for adults (Medina, 2015).

Filipinos live in a collectivist-oriented society that emphasizes harmonious interpersonal relationships and close-knit family ties. The desire to achieve harmony, maintain smooth interpersonal relations, and respect, among other core values, takes primacy over all other areas of life (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). Filipino marriage is deeply rooted in cultural and familial values within this socio-cultural context. It is often regarded as a sacred union, not only between two individuals but also between two families, thereby forging an alliance. This emphasis on family ties is a cornerstone of Filipino culture, and marriage reinforces these bonds.

Filipinos have a high regard for marriage. In a research study conducted by the Institute of Philippine Culture – Ateneo de Manila University, participants expressed a dominant idea that marriage is the ideal means to establish a family and raise children (Vancio, 2016). According to the Commission on Population and Development report, many Filipinos, especially young women, still dream of getting married at some point (Baclig, 2025). This perception among Filipinos remains dominant despite changes in some indicators, as supported by SWS surveys conducted in 2020. The SWS surveys indicated that married people were generally happier than those who were not. The same surveys revealed that the majority of Filipinos believed that having children was the primary purpose of marriage and that people who want children should get married (Loreto, 2024).

Determinants of a Successful Marriage

In a study, couples who fulfill their responsibilities and live up to their commitments to each other tend to have a successful marriage. On the other hand, those who fail to fulfill their responsibilities and commitments are more likely to experience marital separation (Dagami et al., 2022). Several factors determine a successful and happy marriage. Medina (2015) highlights key factors that significantly contribute to marriage satisfaction and success, including childhood experiences, financial status, age at marriage, communication, and religiosity.

Individuals who had a happy childhood and whose parents were happily married may also be more likely to have marital success. The transmission of family and cultural values defines parental duties in the making of good children, emphasizing obedience to parents, care for the family, and respect for others. A survey reveals that Filipino parents believe that “good” parenting produces “good” children (Alampay & Jocson, 2011), which, in turn, will make them “good” parents someday.

The financial status of the spouses, including their employment, significantly improves the relationship. There may be some issues to consider between the choice of having a higher family income, which involves both spouses working, and the quality of time spent with family members and household management. This situation may cause tension between a husband and wife if not resolved before marriage. A study conducted by Williams and Arguillas (2012) revealed that financial and economic factors may influence marriage or non-marriage among Filipino men and women.

In the book *The Filipino Family*, Medina (2015) notes that the age of marriage is also a factor in a successful marriage. Teenage marriages leading to teenage parenthood often encounter more problems, suggesting that emotional maturity is essential for individuals to effectively embrace new roles and responsibilities in life (Gutierrez et al., 2023). In this case, marital roles require psychological and emotional preparedness.

The dynamism of communication between spouses also significantly influences the success of marriage. Sharing and listening with each other minimizes misunderstandings and increases the rate of problem resolution. The bestselling author of the book *Five Love Languages* wrote that a loving husband communicates well with his wife, and a loving wife communicates well with her husband. Accordingly, positive, open, free, and accepting communication is an indication of a fully functioning marriage (Chapman, 2010, 121). The communication process signifies a “higher rate of self-disclosure, and expression of love, support, and affection tends to experience greater satisfaction” (Medina, 2015, 182).

As a predominantly Christian country, religiosity also contributes to marital satisfaction and success. Couples who are contracting an interfaith marriage are on the brink of marital failure because of their differences in religion, culture, moral values, eating habits, manner of dressing, support system, family pressures, and prayer, among others (Vaz & Pereira, 2005).

While Filipino marriage and family dynamics have evolved over the last few decades to reflect changing societal norms and individual preferences (Alampay & Jocson, 2011), traditional values remain important. Couples are increasingly choosing to personalize their weddings and marriage life, yet the core values of family, respect, and commitment continue to be central to the Filipino concept of marriage. More than the rituals and celebrations, Filipino marriage is characterized by strong familial values. The couple is expected to honor their parents and elders and to maintain close ties with their extended family. This emphasis on family support and unity is crucial in navigating the challenges of married life (Gozum, 2020).

Given the factors above, a successful Filipino marriage means, to a certain extent, a harmonious relationship between the husband and wife, as well as with all their family members. It has been achieved through spousal communication and companionship, having and raising children, financial stability, relations with in-laws and relatives, and the role of religion, which strengthens and solidifies marriage relations (Vancio, 2016). A successful marriage implies a balanced, healthy engagement in these areas, recognizing that even a happy marriage is not without its challenges.

The identified indicators of a successful Filipino marriage point to its rootedness in the sociological structure and cultural values and realities of the Filipino society. Ideally, a financially challenged marriage is still considered a relative success if the couple remains together despite life's difficulties. On the contrary, separated couples, despite being financially capable individually, are culturally perceived as a failure, as this means a single parent raising his/her child alone. A “broken marriage” does not embody unity and, therefore, cannot transmit relevant cultural and family values. This also implies that financial stability and economic success are indicators of starting a family (Williams & Arguillas, 2012), but they cannot be the sole measure of success in marriage and family. Despite its struggles and problems, an intact family is perceived within the Filipino cultural framework as what a family should be. Thus, it follows that a marriage life that epitomizes endurance, harmony, unity, and inclusivity in

interpersonal relations can be a greater measure of family success.

Positive Effects of an Intact Family

In the Philippines, a family's well-being "can be described in terms of eight dimensions: resource adequacy, comfortable lifestyle, financial security and stability, good health of family members, good family relationships, good parenting, virtuous family living, and family satisfaction and contentment" (Chua et al., 2022, 112). A stable, two-parent family has always been important for children, indicating that an intact family is increasingly tied to children's educational, financial, and social well-being, as evidenced by many recent studies (Wilcox & Bass, 2023). A child needing both parents remains the fundamental consideration, more important than social institutions, in maintaining the marriage and the family intact (Morillo et al., 2013).

Providing emotional security and stability is one of the most significant benefits of an intact family (Barnard, 2024). Children reared in such environments are more likely to cultivate a strong sense of self-worth and belonging. A child's emotional well-being can be positively impacted by the consistent presence of both parents, which provides a reliable support system and fosters a sense of security and stability. This emotional stability has the potential to lead to a more resilient and healthier approach to relationships in maturity, as well as to enhanced mental health, thereby increasing the likelihood of academic success and, ultimately, future career success. This observation is consistent with previous scientific studies, which indicate that children reared in an intact two-parent household have a significantly higher chance of graduating from college and avoiding poverty and incarceration (Wilcox et al., 2021). Intact families often serve as beneficial models for healthy relationships and behaviors for children. Offspring can learn valuable lessons about communication, interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and compromise by observing their parents' positive interactions. A study conducted by Alampay and Jocson (2011) on the child-rearing attitudes of Filipino mothers and fathers found that parenting tends to be more authoritarian than progressive, emphasizing parental authority, child obedience, and conformity. These lessons can potentially shape their worldview and future relationships, thereby increasing the likelihood of forming enduring, robust connections. Furthermore, the presence of both parents can provide a child with a broader perspective and a variety of experiences, which can help develop critical thinking skills and interpersonal relationships.

Studies have consistently shown a positive correlation between children reared in intact families and higher levels of educational attainment, as measured by academic achievement (Wilcox & Bass, 2023). The presence of two parents often leads to increased parental involvement in a child's education, including providing academic support, supervising homework, and attending parent-teacher conferences. This involvement can significantly impact a child's academic performance, study habits, and motivation. Intact families are frequently more inclined to prioritize education, fostering a supportive home environment conducive to learning. In another study, researchers claimed that the need for children to be reared with both parents appears to be the most shared value among ethnic groups of Filipinos. Furthermore, the valuation aligns with the importance of both parents being present for a child's positive growth and development, which is more likely in an intact family (Morillo et al., 2013).

Additionally, the economic advantages of maintaining a family structure are significant. This can directly impact a family's standard of living, as two-parent households typically have higher incomes. This enhanced financial stability can offer children more opportunities, including access to quality education, extracurricular activities, and healthcare. A study found that growing up in a non-intact family is generally related to lower educational attainment. Also, many children are put at an extra disadvantage when growing up in an irregular family (Bernardi & Boertien, 2017, 182). In contrast, children from intact families are less likely to experience destitution, which is associated with a variety of adverse consequences, such as a higher likelihood of criminal activity, poorer health, and a lower level of educational achievement.

Although it is crucial to recognize that not all intact families are harmonious or devoid of obstacles, the beneficial effects of this family structure are incontrovertible. Intact families contribute to the general welfare of society and individuals by offering emotional security, academic support, economic stability, and strong role models. It is essential to recognize the enduring value of the traditional family unit and strive to create environments that foster resilience and fortitude as one navigates the complexities of contemporary family life. On the other hand, stigmatization occurs in the context of divorce, annulment, or marital separation. In the Philippines, an annulment can be seen as a public admission of a "failed marriage." It has a negative perception leading to society's discrimination against family members (Aglia et al., 2024).

Impacts of Separation and Living Arrangements of Separated Filipinos

People marry because it is the societal norm for adults. However, when marriage comes to an inevitable end, the challenge for separated Filipino parents is how to address the concerns about economic and psychological security and raising the children. A single parent is often left to raise their child or children without adequate support from their partner.

In a study assessing the living arrangements of separated Filipinos, the results showed that those who experienced marital dissolution at younger ages are more likely to live in an extended household (Abalos, 2011). Further, divorced and separated Filipinos in the middle-aged groups tend to live in a single-parent household. Older, divorced, and separated Filipinos are more likely to live in an extended household or alone (Abalos & Yeung, 2023). The study indicates that the economic and emotional conditions of families living with relatives often improve, as this allows them to reduce financial expenses and receive emotional

support.

As already stated, Filipinos' regard for marriage remains exceedingly high. In the November 2024 Social Weather Station survey, married Filipinos are happier than those who are not (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2026). This can also mean that those who remain single, unmarried, and separated are less happy, if not lonely (Loreto, 2024).

One of the primary reasons for couples resisting marital separation is their children. A study identified significant effects of parental separation on children, particularly on their studies: loss of focus, depressive behavior, not attending classes, studying hard to cover life frustration, taking the situation positively, lack of financial support, late submission of schoolwork, less moral support from parents, and, for some, dropping out of school (Redulfin et al., 2025).

Since divorce is not permitted and the cost of marriage annulment is prohibitively expensive, the rate of marriage dissolution in the Philippines is low. Factors that contribute to the relatively low rate of marital dissolution include the Filipinos' attachment to their relatives, their concern not to ruin their family's reputation, and the prevailing child-centeredness, which suffers the most because of the social stigma brought by parents' separation (Abalos, 2017)

In a recent independent study conducted in Manila, researchers underscore that introducing divorce in the Philippines will require substantial legal, social, and economic changes. Legally, it will require amendments to the Family Code regarding child custody, property division, and spousal support. Socially, it will necessitate a modification of traditional views on marriage and family. Economically, it necessitates reevaluating the impact on spouses' financial arrangements, especially regarding alimony and child support (Agliam et al., 2024). The researchers reported that children of separated parents coped in response to their traumatizing experiences. One positive result is that, for some children, their experience became a motivation and inspiration to excel, developing resilience and becoming more empathetic. However, this kind of experience is not worth romanticizing, for any traumatizing experience, if not properly addressed, will have a negative psychological effect in the future.

Recompense of Legalizing Divorce

To appreciate and fully comprehend the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage in the Philippines, it is also beneficial to present a scholarly analysis of the issues raised by sectors advocating the legalization of divorce. The researchers' goal is to balance the discussion of the topic, the indissolubility of marriage vis-à-vis the proposed legalization of divorce law in the Philippines.

Divorce can be defined as a lawful option to obtain freedom from unhealthy marriages, which is cheaper and faster to resolve (Agliam et al., 2024). In many modern societies, substantial efforts have been made to attain equality, including in the area of gender. In the Philippines, access to divorce remains a considerable challenge for progressive groups in their fight for equality and social justice. Accordingly, an absence of a law allowing for marriage dissolution traps Filipino women in deleterious marriages and potentially exposes them to physical and mental abuse (Alibudbud et al., 2024). Women's rights groups and civil society advocating for divorce believe that the enactment of the law could address social issues like domestic violence, relief from unhappy marriages, and lessen the stigma brought by broken marriages (Agliam et al., 2024).

In a study conducted by Demographic Research, the author reported that in 2012, 39% of Filipinos aged 18 years and over supported the statement "Divorce is usually the best option when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems" (Abalos, 2017). In that same study, the researcher further reported that in 2014, 60% of Filipinos of the same age proposed that "Married couples who have already separated and cannot reconcile anymore should be allowed to divorce so that they can get legally married again." What is explicit in the study is the growing preference among Filipinos for the legalization of divorce in the country.

In a study conducted by the Philippine Commission on Women, 17.5% of Filipino women aged 15-49 years have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from their partners (Alibudbud et al., 2024). These violent incidents, accordingly, have inflicted adverse mental health, such as anxiety and depressive symptoms. Divorce advocates blame these violent incidents on the absence of divorce law in the country. For them, the absence of a divorce law means that an abusive male partner may continue battering their female partner, retain rights to joint child custody, and mutual asset entitlements (Alibudbud et al., 2024).

In the absence of a law allowing the dissolution of marriage and the difficult annulment process in the Philippines, formal justice is hampered and out of reach for women (Zuhdi et al., 2025). Due to social stigma of separation, inequality in legal knowledge, and economic capabilities, women are having a hard time fighting for their rights.

Family as the Primary Consideration in Life

Filipinos' regard for the family is always esteemed and favored. Family is of primary consideration in life's important decisions. The primary considerations are a high regard for the elderly, respect for parents' authority, and the welfare and concerns of children (Morillo et al., 2013). In the case of marital separation, children's welfare is at stake. Filipino parents will do everything for their children. They would rather live in the same household, resolve their differences, or ignore each other, live an unhappy marriage, all for the sake of their children, whom they know will suffer in the case of their marital separation.

INSIGHTS AND CONCLUSION

The Christian understanding of marriage is traditionally rooted in these two ends: unitive and procreative. The former points to the sacramentality of marriage, leading couples to live in unity and commitment, while the latter is the dimension in which such a lifetime commitment is translated. In the Philippines, being predominantly Catholic, marriage is essentially directed at forming a family and its well-being. Considerably, a couple cannot have offspring without legal or Church marriage. It is socially, culturally, and theologically unacceptable. However, what makes Christian marriage significant is that it affirms the couple's indissoluble commitment to each other and their children. Marriage reflects the firm and courageous decision of a man and a woman to bind their unconditional love and commitment as husband and wife, promising each other a lifelong commitment to live together in sickness and in health, until death.

Furthermore, cohabitation has become a social reality among Filipinos that appears to be a threat to the stability of the basic social institution, called the domestic church, the family. This is due to rising live-in cases, which have become popular among the younger generation. However, cohabitation, as a social reality, can also be viewed as an explicit indication of Filipinos' firm recognition that marriage is a permanent bond. In effect, although it is ecclesiastically unacceptable, cohabitation serves as a trial stage, an additional layer before getting married, to ensure the couple's compatibility before committing to a civil or church wedding, which is indissoluble. This interaction between a social reality and the permanence of marriage as a cultural value shows how indissolubility, as a theological truth, is affirmed directly and indirectly.

In the Philippines, this socio-cultural-theological interplay values the integrity of marriage and has a positive impact on children's and society's well-being. Aside from economic advantages, having both parents present has a positive impact on children's emotional stability, which is crucial in building a healthy family. In this sense, keeping the family intact is a fundamental value for Filipinos, and marriage is an avenue to realize this end. For this reason, Filipinos understand marriage as an affirmation of the Christian faith and a marker of social and cultural status, and, if maintained, an indication of life success. Despite struggles and challenges, an intact family is perceived as the epitome of faith, endurance, unity, and harmony, and a greater measure of family success.

Nevertheless, the reality of marital separation must be acknowledged and given serious attention, especially its negative consequences. Accordingly, children are inevitably at the receiving end of marital separation or dissolution. Some of these may be positive, but their negative effects could lead to psychological trauma, potentially affecting the future of children. Moreover, this recognition is not an attempt to normalize or romanticize marital separation but to take into consideration the challenges and stigma it brings about. Especially today, with the move to introduce divorce to Philippine society, it contradicts the very values and core of the family, therefore adding problems rather than solutions to the present social concerns involving Filipino families. One of these concerns is in the context of solo parenting, where challenges take different forms. First, there is a stigma attached to this kind of familial situation, as Filipinos give high regard to an intact family or children having both parents. Secondly, solo parents are forced to sacrifice some parental responsibilities in order to prioritize the family's economic needs. This resulted in the child missing important events and milestones. Thirdly, the stigma family members receive from society, such as being potential targets of gossip, humiliation, and discrimination, among others, because of their irregular family situation.

In the end, amidst these challenges, it is evident that Filipinos' socio-cultural and theological affirmation of the indissolubility of marriage is rooted in their regard for marriage and the family as the primary consideration in life. As stated, marriage is a status worthy of respect in society. This great value given to marriage reflects how much Filipinos value the family. Filipinos will do everything for their family, especially their children. Marital separation was proven detrimental to the children. Hence, parents will do everything to prevent this from happening and ensure their offspring do not experience the trauma brought by a broken marriage.

DISCLOSURES AND DECLARATIONS

The authors declare no ethical violation in the use of human subjects. All literature and documents cited in this work were appropriately cited. The researchers received no external funding for this academic research. The researcher declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Abalos, J. B. (2017). Divorce and separation in the Philippines: Trends and correlates.
2. *Demographic Research*, 36(50), 1515–1548. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26332173?seq=1> Abalos, J. B. (2017, July 10). *Philippines: the rise of divorce, separation, and cohabitation*. N-
3. IUSSP. <https://www.niussp.org/family-and-households/the-rise-of-divorce-separation-and-cohabitation-in-the-philippines/>
4. Abalos, J. B. (2011). Living arrangements of the divorced and separated in the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 39(6), 845–863. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853111X619256>
5. Abalos, J. B., & Yeung, W.J. J. (2023). Demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural factors for the rise in one-person

- households in developing countries: the case of the Philippines. *Journal of Population Research*, 40(4). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12546-023-09312-z> Agliam, D. G., Bongolto, K. G., Pobeda, G. R., Vega, P. J., & Vallespin, M. R. (2024). A comprehensive literature review of marital dissolution in the Philippines: legal, socio-cultural, and feasibility perspectives. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 7(5). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i5-19>
6. Alampay, L.P. & Jocson, M.R.M. (2011). Attributions and attitudes of mothers and fathers in the Philippines. *Parenting* 11:2-3, 163-176. <https://10.1080/15295192.2011.585564> Alibudbud, R., Arnado, J., Smith, A., & Liebreznz, M. (2024). Reframing divorce as a mental health policy issue in the Philippines. *The Lancet* 11(4), 241-242. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2215-0366%2824%2900002-6>
 7. Baclig, C. E. (2025, July). *Fewer weddings, more live-ins: Filipino families are changing and the numbers prove it*. INQUIRER.net. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2077533/fewer-weddings-more-live-ins-filipino-families-are-changing-and-the-numbers-prove-it>
 8. Bain, M. (2020). Exploring the challenges of single mothers in the Philippines: empowerment as diaconal task of Evangelical church in the Philippines. <https://vid.brage.unit.no/vid-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2825396/Bain-MA-VID-2020.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
 9. Barnard, A. J. (2017). Family | kinship. In Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/family-kinship>
 10. Bernardi, F., & Boertien, D. (2017). Non-intact families and diverging educational destinies: A decomposition analysis for Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. *Social Science Research*, 63, 181–191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.09.004> CBCP. (2005). *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*. Manila: Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education.
 11. Chapman, G. (2010). The Family you’ve always wanted. *OMF Literature Incorporated*.
 12. Chi, C. (2023, February 17). *Census: More Filipino couples now in live-in arrangements*. *Philstar.com*. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/02/17/2245649/census-more-filipino-couples-now-live-arrangements>
 13. Chua, C., Gabriel, F., Bantang, J., & Llige, A. (2022). Conceptualization of Filipino family wellbeing. *Journal of Home Economics*, 15(2), 103–114. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379148605_Conceptualization_of_Filipino_family_wellbeing
 14. Code of Canon Law (1983). *Www.vatican.va*. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html
 15. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. Google Books. <https://books.google.com.ph/books?hl=en&lr=&id=DLbBDQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Methodology:+Qualitative+Study:+Creswell>
 16. Dagami, J., Cadano, M. J., Arceno, A. J., Atay, M. J., Dosal, A. T., & Padullo, C. A. (2022). Uncovering the causes of high incidence of parental separation: A case in Barangay Zone II, Santa Fe, Leyte. *Social Sciences & Psychology* 102 (1), 746–759; *International Journal of Research Publications*. doi: 10.47119/IJRP1001031620223447. <https://ijrp.org/paper-detail/3417>
 17. Francis. (2015, May 24). *Laudato Si’: On Care for our Common Home*. The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
 18. Francis. (2016, April 8). *Amoris Laetitia*. https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf
 19. Francis. (2020, October 3). *Fratelli Tutti*. *Www.vatican.va*. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html
 20. Gozum, I. E. (2020). The Filipino Family in the Formation of Values in the light of John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio*. *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 21(Special Issue). <https://doi.org/10.46992/pijp.21.si.a.18>
 21. Gutierrez, J. (2026). The Threat of a “Throwaway Culture” in the Context of Filipinos’ Increasing Preference for Cohabitation. *Pastoral Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-026-01301-2>
 22. Gutierrez, J. G., Isabelle, T., & Batan, C. M. (2023). Selected cases of teenage fatherhood in the Philippines: an analysis of risks and resilience. *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*, 23, 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/s1530-353520230000023005>
 23. John Paul II. (1992). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM
 24. Loreto, R. P. (2024, February 12). More than half of Filipinos “very happy” with love life. INQUIRER.net. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1902718/more-than-half-of-filipinos-very-happy-with-love-life>
 25. Mapa, D. (2020). Authentication challenge pages. *psa.gov.ph*. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>
 26. Morillo, H. M., Capuno, J. J., & Mendoza, A. M. (2013). Views and values on Family among Filipinos: an empirical

- exploration. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 41(1), 5–28. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265844536_Views_and_Values_on_Family_among_Filipinos_An_Empirical_Exploration
27. Muller, G. L. (2013, March 13). On the indissolubility of marriage and the debate concerning the civilly remarried and the sacraments. www.vatican.va. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/muller/rc_con_cfaith_20131023_divorziati-risposati-sacramenti_en.html
 28. Nickerson, C. (2023, October 25). Social Exchange Theory - Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/what-is-social-exchange-theory.html>
 29. Philippine Daily Inquirer. (2026, February). SWS survey: Filipinos “very happy” with love life remain at all-time low. INQUIRER.net. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/2181666/sws-survey-pinoys-very-happy-with-love-life-remain-at-all-time-low>
 30. Philippine Statistics Authority. (2023). Religious affiliation in the Philippines (2020 census of population and housing). *Philippine Statistics Authority*. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/religious-affiliation-philippines-2020-census-population-and-housing>
 31. Redulfin, G., Tenebroso, D., Tagere, Jr., R., Siocon, A. T., Gaspar, R. L., & Adlaon, G. (2025). Resilience in the Classroom: A Qualitative Inquiry on How Parental Separation Affects College Students’ Learning and Their Coping Abilities. *Indonesian Journal of Education Research* 6(1), February 2025, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.37251/ijoer.v6i1.1181>
 32. Sabatelli, R. M., Lee, H., & Ripoll-Núñez, K. (2018). Placing the Social Exchange Framework in an Ecological Context. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(1), 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12254>
 33. Sanjorjo, C. J. (2024, June 2). Survey: half of Filipinos for divorce; 1/3 against. INQUIRER.net. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1947307/survey-half-of-filipinos-for-divorce-1-3-against>
 34. Tarroja, M. C. (2010). Revisiting the definition and concept of Filipino family: a psychological perspective. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, 43(2), 177–193.
 35. Tenedero, E. (2024, July 3). *Catholic Church vs divorce: Can PH clergy continue defending “sanctity” of marriage?* ABS-CBN News. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/2024/7/3/catholic-church-vs-divorce-can-ph-clergy-continue-defending-sanctity-of-marriage-1725>
 36. *The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines*. (1987). Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/>
 37. *The Family Code of the Philippines*. (1987, July 6). Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1987/07/06/executive-order-no-209-s-1987/>
 38. Tight, M. (2018). *Google Books*. [Google.com.ph. https://www.google.com.ph/books/edition/Documentary_Research_in_the_Social_Scienc/vM2NDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Tight](https://www.google.com.ph/books/edition/Documentary_Research_in_the_Social_Scienc/vM2NDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Tight)
 39. Tulane University. (2018, April 20). What Is Social Exchange Theory? Tulane University School of Social Work. <https://socialwork.tulane.edu/blog/social-exchange-theory/>
 40. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (2023). Books of the bible | USCCB. [Bible.usccb.org. https://bible.usccb.org/bible](https://bible.usccb.org/bible)
 41. Vancio, J. A. (2016). The Realities of marriage of urban Filipino women. *Philippine Studies Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.13185/2244-1638.4137>
 42. Vaz, V., & Pereira, Y. (2005). Creating a happy family. *Asian Trading Corporation*.
 43. Wilcox, B., & Bass, D. (2023). Growing up in intact families matters more than ever. *American Enterprise Institute - AEI*. <https://www.aei.org/articles/growing-up-in-intact-families-matters-more-than-ever/>
 44. Wilcox, W. B., Wang, W., & Rowe, I. (2021, June 17). Less poverty, less prison, more college: what two parents mean for black and white children. *Institute for Family Studies*. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/less-poverty-less-prison-more-college-what-two-parents-mean-for-black-and-white-children>
 45. Williams, L., & Arguillas, M. J. (2012). Correlates of non-marriage in the Philippines. *Philippine Population Review*, II (1), 1-25. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Lindy-Williams-2/publication/266892294_Attitudes_toward_Marriage_in_the_Philippines/links/5c758e13299bf1268d2832ea/Attitudes-toward-Marriage-in-the-Philippines.pdf
 46. Zuhdi, S., Alaba, M. D., Kurnianingsih, M., Prakoso, A. L., & Fairuzzaman, F. (2025). View of the comparative study of child and women’s rights protection after marital dissolution in Indonesia and Philippines. *SAKINA: Journal of Family Studies*, 9(2), 146-164. <https://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/jfs/article/view/14981/4172>