

# Coping Styles and Personality Type of Filipino Women with Intact and Broken Marriages

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This study aims to compare the respondents' coping with the decision to either continue striving for marital commitment or to file a civil case brought about by the circumstances in marriage. Respondents' personality type is also considered in this study. Forty women in intact marriages and thirty-five in broken marriages in Quezon City were interviewed.

Coping styles and personality types of women in both marriages were obtained from the ENRICH and MBTI scores. Significant differences revealed that: (1) Conflict resolution and religious orientation were affected by age. (2) Depending on profession, psychological types of judging/perceiving varied. Under coping styles, marital adaptability differed between two type of respondents. (3) As to intact or broken marriages, coping styles differed depending on length of marriage.

In the context of an increasing number of petitioners for nullity of marriage and legal separation, this study responds to the growing need for strengthening the meaningfulness of Filipino marriages.

Every year, marriage continues to be one of the most popular institutions. It is a paradox that large numbers of people marry

despite the probability that it may lead to a broken relationship. Most people assume that their marriages will last a lifetime. However, the number of broken marriages does not validate this assumption.

Many couples have been known to stay together for many years and pass through many stages of marital life. Couples learn to equip themselves for mutual adjustment necessary to marital survival. "*Marital adjustment means achieving a good degree of comfort in the relationship through mutual give-and-take.*" (Lasswell, 1987) Mutual satisfaction, once achieved, may eventually lead to a long-lasting relationship. Moreover, "*meeting individual needs as well as working towards mutual objectives are essential in establishing and maintaining a couple's marital relationship.*" (Atty. Aguilar, April 15, 1998)

In spite of the couple's struggle to maintain harmony in their marriage, stressful situations arise. Many couples differ greatly in how they respond to these challenges. The greater the ability of the couples to modify their habits and roles, the better their chances of avoiding turbulence. Through alliances with professionals or religious organizations for spiritual commitment, they are able to develop the feeling of being important to one another and to redefine the significance of family life.

The couples' initiative in surmounting the challenges in their marital life is a process of awakening. They become deeply aware of their responsibilities to each other and to their children by restructuring their personalities, developing tolerance, enhancing their coping styles, and clarifying their concepts.

Olsen, Fournier and Druckman prepared a test in 1981 on coping styles, called *Evaluation and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness* (ENRICH).

On personality types, Carl Jung initially presented introversion and extraversion at the International Psychoanalytic Congress at Munich in 1913. Three other general orientations were later elaborated on in his book *Psychological Types* in 1921. In the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* or MBTI, this personality type constitutes one of the four separate indices measured (EI).

It is noteworthy that once marriage has finally come to an end, there are increased challenges faced by both partners. It becomes necessary for them to have the courage to cope with the stress of marital discord. Women face more challenges, as Licuanan mentioned in her study. She states that, "*being a separated woman in the Philippines meant that something is wrong with oneself for not being able to keep a husband.*" (Licuanan, 1980)

The researcher noted a growing number of studies that have focused on children with single-parent or broken marriages. However, there is a dearth of studies related to women in intact and broken marriages. It is due to the paucity of scientific investigations on marital discord that the researcher has opted to look into the relevance of two significant variables – personality type and coping styles of Filipino women. The researcher further aims to derive other possible factors that may affect marriage besides the value of mutual love, trust, respect, fidelity and commitment.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of the study can enlighten people about the requisites of a harmonious marital relationship and the value of marital commitment. The efforts exerted to improve human interaction in marriage can result in responsible citizens discovering themselves in cooperation with their spouses. This can be a springboard in preparing people for marriage.

This study can also help improve the lives of married Filipino women, particularly on coping with stresses within marriage.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher used the psychoanalytic (Jungian), socio-cognitive and phenomenological theories. These theories have touched on the individual's personality type (particularly the MBTI), coping with complexes necessary to human interaction and growth.

Talking about personality types, Carl Jung claims that a person has an outward manifestation of his psyche allowed by a person's unique characteristics. When too much psychic energy is expended, it results in an imbalanced psychological growth. (B.R. Hergenhahn, 1994, p. 74). This theory helps the person to differentiate and recognize the components of his or her psyche, a prerequisite to harmonizing and bringing balance to opposite elements of the conscious and the unconscious. The balance of the rival elements of the conscious and unconscious are measured in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI. These opposites that are recognized and expressed appropriately can have a harmonious human interaction that is necessary in an intimate relationship like marriage.

In the development of one's coping styles, Albert Bandura's concept on self-efficacy affirms that people's beliefs about their abilities have profound effects on those abilities. For Bandura, ability is not a fixed property; there is a huge variability in how one can perform. (Goleman, 1995, p. 101). A self-efficacious person has the capacity to handle situations well. This theory states that the person and his environment are in a dynamic, mutually reciprocal, and bi-directional relationship. Bandura further observes that people with more behavioral alternatives and prerogatives have greater chances

of expressing their freedom of action. In any relationship that is to either withstand or fall, the person's perceived self-efficacy is important to survive the challenges encountered in life just like in marital discord.

Carl Rogers believes that the self consists of ideas, perceptions, and values that emphasize "*I or Me*" including the awareness of one's capacity to evaluate every experience according to his or her perceived self-concept. He states further that for marriage to work, it must be egalitarian, enriching, and satisfying for both partners. Marriage should be a dynamic process within which both partners continually grow ... A good marriage is one that is mutually beneficial to the partners involved. (B.R. Hergenhahn, 1994, p. 505) Rogers believed that the relationship only has permanence if the partners are committed to each other, have good communication with each other, accept themselves as separate persons, and live together as persons, not assuming different roles. This new and mature kind of relationship is a reality to many couples striving for this thrust.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study attempts to describe and compare the coping styles of Filipino women in intact and broken marriages.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This research is *descriptive normative*. Comparative analysis was used to determine the statistical difference in collected data — coping styles and personality type of the women.

## Sample and Sampling Technique

The study involved a total of seventy-five (75) respondents, forty (40) were from intact marriages and thirty-five (35) were from broken marriages. The researcher employed the *purposive sampling technique* in this study. Two criteria were used in selecting the respondents: (1) first, they were from 30 to 44 years old, and (2) second, they have been married for at least 1 year to 20 years at most.

The women respondents had a mean age of 36 years. A total of twenty-nine respondents (19 in intact and 10 from broken marriages) were within the age range of 30-34. Thirty-one women were within the age range of 35-39- those from broken marriages was slightly more ( $n=17$ ) than those in intact marriages ( $n=14$ ). Within the age-range of 40-44 years, there are 7 women in intact marriages and 8 women from broken marriages.

There were relatively more young women respondents with intact marriages than those with broken marriages whose ages ranged from 30-39 years. However, slightly larger frequencies were noted among the women respondents with broken marriages who were between the ages of 35-39 years.

In this study, there are more (19 or 47.50%) licensed professionals with intact marriages such as accountants, nurses, doctors/physicians, midwives, medical technologists, dentists, engineers, interior designers, registered librarians, and lawyers, than the women with broken marriages (12 or 34.3%). Among the non-licensed professionals, there are more women with broken marriages (23 or 65.70%) than the women with intact marriages (21 or 52.50%). Forty-four (or 59%) of these women were college teachers or businesswomen.

More than one-half of the women respondents (60%) were Catholics. Forty-percent were Christians, Protestants, Baptists, or members of Iglesia ni Cristo.

There were more women respondents (30.67%) who have been married between 1 to 10 years. Women (25.33%) with broken marriages report that the breakup occurred within the first to the fifth year. More intact marriages were between 1-10 years (23 or 57.5%) broken marriages between 1-5 years (19 or 54.30%). There were slightly fewer women with broken marriages were between 6-10 years (16 or 45.70%) than with intact marriages between 11-20 years (17 or 42.50%).

Forty-four or 59 percent of the women belong to the middle-income group, and slightly fewer (31 or 41%) belong to the upper-income group. Eighteen or 45 percent of the women with intact marriages belong to the upper socio-economic level while 22 or 55 percent are in the middle level. Thirteen or 40 percent of the women with broken marriages were at the upper income level while 22 or 60 percent belong to the middle level.

## **Instruments**

This study utilized two instruments: (1) the *Evaluation and Nurturing Relationship, Issues, Communication, and Happiness* or ENRICH to evaluate the coping styles of the participants in intact and broken marriages. The thirteen categories are explained below:

*Marital Satisfaction* provides a global measure of satisfaction by surveying ten areas of the couple's relationship, namely: personality characteristics, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and marriage, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation.

*Personality Issues* assesses the individual's perception of his/her partner with regard to behavioral issues and the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt. The items focus on traits such as tardiness, temper, moodiness, stubbornness and jealousy.

*Communication* focuses on the level of comfort felt by both partners in various types of communication and self-disclosure in the maintenance of the relationship.

*Conflict Resolution* assesses an individual's attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about the conflict resolution. The items focus on openness of the partners in recognizing and resolving issues, the strategies and processes used to end arguments and the partners' satisfaction with the way problems are resolved.

*Financial Management* assesses the tendencies of individuals to be spenders or savers, their awareness of and concern with issues of credits and debts, the care with which financial decisions are made and the couple's satisfaction with their economic status.

*Leisure Activities* reflects social versus personal activities, active versus passive interests, shared versus individual preferences and the partners' expectations as to whether leisure is to be spent together or separately.

*Sexual Relationship* is related to satisfactions with expressions of affection, level of comfort in discussing sexual issues, attitudes toward sexual behavior and intercourse, birth control decisions and feelings about marital fidelity.

*Children and Marriage* assesses individual attitudes about having and raising children, their satisfaction with roles and responsibilities of parenthood, their philosophy towards discipline of and values desired for the children.

*Family and Friends* is concerned with attitudes towards relatives, in-laws, and friends as either conflicted or satisfactory.



*Equalitarian Roles* assesses the individual's beliefs, feelings, and attitudes about various marital, family, gender and parental roles.

*Religious Orientation* explores the individual's attitudes, feelings, and concerns about religious beliefs and practices. The items focus on the meaning and importance of religion, involvement in church activities, and the expected role that religious beliefs will have in a marriage.

*Marital Adaptability* describes the extent to which the couple is able to change and be flexible when necessary. The items deal with type of leadership, ability to switch chores and roles, and styles of resolving disagreements.

*Marital Cohesion* examines how close partners feel toward each other and how they balance togetherness and being alone.

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* or MBTI is utilized to measure the personality type of the women respondents. The four preferences of MBTI are listed below:

*Extraverts (E)* are oriented primarily toward the outer world; they tend to focus their perception and judgment on people and objects. *Introverts (I)* are oriented primarily toward the inner world; thus tend to focus their perception and judgment on concepts and ideas.

*Sensing perception (S)* reports observable facts or happenings through one or more of the five senses. *Intuitive perception (N)* may rely more upon the less obvious process of intuition which reports meanings, relationships and/or possibilities that have been worked out beyond the reach of the conscious mind.

*Thinking judgment (T)* may rely primarily on thinking to decide impersonally on the basis of logical consequences. *Feeling judgment (F)* may rely primarily on feeling to decide on the basis of personal or social values.

*Judgment* (J) has preference for using a judgment process (either thinking or feeling) for dealing with the outer world. *Perception* (P) prefers using perceptive process (either sensing or intuitive) for dealing with the outer world.

### Data Analysis

The frequency of the responses was tallied and the percentages computed for each category to derive the profile of the respondents. The standard deviation scores were used to determine the variability of scores. The Kruskal-Wallis *H* Test was utilized to determine significant differences of the coping styles and personality type of the women in intact and broken marriages.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a whole, the Filipino women sample in this study were found to be extraverts *with sensing, thinking, and judging* attitudes toward the world. The result implies that they live by a definite set of rules that embody their basic judgments about the world. Any change in their ways requires a deliberate change in their rules. They tend to focus on the task, not on the people behind the task. One positive way is to appreciate other people's merits and ideas. If they make this rule, this will give them worthwhile results both in their work and in their interpersonal relationships.

When falling in love, they are much more likely to be spontaneous. They typically enjoy active pursuits such as going to parties, sporting events, and taking walks together. They give and expect security and loyalty in relationships. When commitments are broken, they become upset because they hold others to the same standards of steadfastness to which they hold themselves. (Keirsey & Bates, 1978, p.188-189) But when scorned, they may not quickly

acknowledge their feelings of hurt. They are supersensitive to being rejected but they may not readily share that hurt with others. They continue to go about their tasks acting as if nothing had happened when, in fact, much has changed.

In particular, the *psychological types* of the participants with *intact marriages* are as follows: *extraversion* (55%), *sensing* (90%), *thinking* (62.50%), and *judging* (90%). While the *psychological types* of the participants in broken marriages are: *introversion* (51.40%), *sensing* (91.40%), *thinking* (65.70%), and *judging* (91.40%).

The MBTI Indices reveal that the majority of the women in intact marriages are of the *sensing thinking type* (60%) followed by the *thinking judging type* (57.50%). The majority of the participants with broken marriages have a similar personality type. They were also *sensing thinking* (60%) and *thinking judging* (57.14%). MBTI results further revealed the following: (1) *extraversion/introversion* ( $h/x^2 = .31, p > .05$ ); (2) *sensing/intuition* ( $h/x^2 = .04, p > .05$ ); (3) *thinking/feeling* ( $h/x^2 = .08, p > .05$ ); and (4) *judging/perceiving* ( $h/x^2 = .04, p > .05$ ). In other words, there is no significant difference between the personality types of women in intact and broken marriages. These findings suggest that success or failure in marriage happens regardless of personality type.

The *ENRICH* profile of the women revealed that forty-nine or 65.33 percent believe in the importance of religion in their marriages. It also revealed that the women differed significantly in *marital satisfaction*. A larger number in intact marriages scored very high (24 or 60%), while those in broken marriages had very low scores (19 or 54.30%).

There is no significant difference between the women in intact and broken marriages on four ENRICH categories: *financial management, equalitarian roles, religious orientation, and marital*

*adaptability*. The results imply that the women respondents with intact and broken marriages had similar coping behaviors on these four categories regardless of marital status.

However, significant differences were found in nine ENRICH categories, those of *marital satisfaction* ( $H/x^2 = 16.83, p < .05$ ), *personality issues* ( $H/x^2 = 13.64, p < .05$ ), *communication* ( $H/x^2 = 12.76, p < .05$ ), *conflict resolution* ( $H/x^2 = 10.02, p < .05$ ), *leisure activities* ( $H/x^2 = 11.56, p < .05$ ), *sexual relationship* ( $H/x^2 = 16.54, p < .05$ ), *children and marriage* ( $H/x^2 = 16.42, p < .05$ ), *family and friends* ( $H/x^2 = 11.66, p < .05$ ), and *marital cohesion* ( $H/x^2 = 13.46, p < .05$ ). This implies that women significantly differ in their acceptance of their spouse's behavior and level of communication. They also differ in the way they want to spend their free time, in the way they physically express their love, and in the way they deal with their children, family, in-laws and friends.

In relation to age, significant differences were found in *conflict resolution* ( $H/x^2 = 7.21, p < .05$ ) and *religious orientation* ( $H/x^2 = 9.52, p < .05$ ). The results revealed that the women's manner of handling conflicts and the importance of religion in their marriages differed with age.

A significant difference was found in *judging/perceiving* ( $H/x^2 = 47.44, p < .01$ ) among the women in relation to their type of profession. This means that licensed women differ in the way women make decisions, seek closure, plan operations, and organize activities. A significant difference was found in *marital adaptability* ( $H/x^2 = 36.31, p < .05$ ). It may be inferred that women vary in their ability to be flexible when necessary.

With regard to religious affiliation, there is no significant difference between personality types of women. The findings also suggest that coping styles do not depend on religious affiliation.

Moreover, there is no significant difference in terms of personality types. However significant differences were found in coping styles; particularly in *marital satisfaction* ( $H/x^2 = 17.37$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *personality issues* ( $H/x^2 = 13.65$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *communication* ( $H/x^2 = 13.63$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *conflict resolution* ( $H/x^2 = 10.06$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *leisure activities* ( $H/x^2 = 15.33$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *sexual relationship* ( $H/x^2 = 16.59$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *children and marriage* ( $H/x^2 = 20.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ), *family and friends* ( $H/x^2 = 12.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and *marital cohesion* ( $H/x^2 = 13.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that there is a divergence of coping mechanisms that the two groups of women.

In particular, the women differ in their levels of satisfaction, acceptance of their spouses and levels of communication. It has been observed that women who are on the verge of separating often spend free time alone. Likewise, the women differ specifically in their beliefs on the impact of children in their marriages, their responsibilities as parents, and the values they desire for their children.

For women in intact marriages, children are their sources of happiness. They will work out any difficulties for the sake of their children. Most of these women say that they spontaneously express positive feelings during intimate moments. However, before a marital breakdown, women report that sex becomes lifeless. Women in intact marriages also report being more cohesive.

Finally, coping styles and personality type are not dependent on economic level. No significant differences were obtained in relation to the economic levels of the women in this study. It is likely that the variation in economic levels was not sufficient for differences to arise.

One factor was consistent in this study; the women in the sample are all working. Their incomes and careers may have given these women a level of security that wouldn't otherwise have been

available. Moreover, women in broken marriages report going back to graduate work and spending more time with their children.

## CONCLUSION

The first five years of marriage are years of greater marital risk. Women in intact marriages report the first decade of marriage as romantic, full of passion, and having a greater willingness to take spouse or parental roles.

The introverted personality type tends to be a greater risk for marital disruption compared to those who are extraverted. But introversion can also be a reaction to their present marital condition.

A balanced personality plays a vital role in the lives of women. Regardless of marital condition, the coping styles of married women in the area of religious belief are important. But the success or failure of marriage cannot be attributed to the couple's religious affiliation.

The coping styles of women in intact marriages were found to be effective in the area of marital satisfaction, sex, children and marital adaptability. Women in broken marriages are ineffective in the area of marital satisfaction. They are also less accepting of their spouse's characteristics and behavior.

Marital satisfaction, levels of communication, attitudes towards sex, acceptance of spouse or parental role, and marital cohesion determines whether marriages will last or fall apart.

Married women who are licensed professionals use logical analysis more and may be better able to maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships. They also empower themselves better.

The longer the period of marital relationship, the greater the possibility of marital harmony, acceptance of personality differences, better communication, sexual satisfaction, and greater acceptance of parental roles. These coping styles seem to enhance marriage.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the findings of this study, two sets of recommendations are derived:

1. Those in authority and in-charge of preparing couples for marriage can create a program or seminar on family and life values to enhance maturity in dealing with marital conflicts and other challenges, focusing on personality differences and strengthening the commitment to marriage. Celebration of these differences is also critically important.
2. Provision of lists of institutions for marital interventions to enhance marital coping and communication and to proactively prevent dysfunctional marriages. It will be of great assistance if the institutions will cater most especially to low and middle income groups for counseling services.
3. Similar activities like that of the Marriage Encounter Program or other religious programs may contain relevant issues in maintaining marital harmony to improve the couple's adjustment to changes in the marriage, children, and in-laws, enhance the level of communication, and encourage sexual fidelity.
4. Filipino women must strive to develop a more balanced personality and healthier attitudes towards sex and family life. Marital adjustment of Filipino women can be improved through proactive approaches to family life.

Based also on the findings, further studies of a similar nature might be done in other settings. A comparative study of Christians

and Muslims; for example, may reflect significant cultural differences to highlight the effect of religious orientation on marriage.

#### AUTHOR NOTE

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