

Narratives of Filipino Young Adults Who Have Experienced Cheating in Their Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

This study explored the narratives of young adults who are victims of cheating in romantic relationships. The narratives of ten participants aged 18 to 25 years were examined through in-depth qualitative interviews. It described their experiences, how they cope, and how they form their subsequent relationships. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis, which revealed that participants discovered their partner's infidelity through their social media, friends, or self-discovery. Regardless of gender, this led to traumatic physical, social, and emotional effects. Coping mechanisms varied from unhealthy behaviors, such as engaging in vice and self-harm, to positive ones, such as writing literature. This study is important for Filipino Psychology because it examines the intricacies of healing and relational growth among young adults grappling with infidelity. Understanding cultural contexts provides input for ways of helping focused on resilience and well-being.

Keywords: *cheating, infidelity, romantic relationships, young adults.*

Received 17 December 2023/Accepted 2 June 2024 ©Author all rights reserved

Introduction

In young adulthood, romantic relationships play a crucial role in an individual's development (Gómez-López et al., 2019). A romantic relationship is defined as two people engaging in mutual, consensual interactions marked by special displays of affection and intimacy (Collins et al., 2009). In every romantic relationship, trust is crucial (Matson et al., 2021) and must be widely valued (Laborde, 2014). Unfortunately, some relationships fail due to a lack of trust, such as when a partner commits cheating. Cheating, or infidelity, is the act of participating in an unfaithful behavior with someone outside of the primary or main relationship. This unfaithful behavior can be

performed physically, emotionally, or both (Fish et al., 2012). As a result, people experience undesirable consequences (Kua et al., 2021). Therefore, they resort to different coping mechanisms to help them with the trauma they have experienced. Some individuals cope with infidelity through the help of their social support. Online social support has been found to improve well-being and empower individuals (Heintzelman et al., 2014). Since victims of cheating experience immense distress, having social support provides a sense of belongingness, enhances emotional well-being, and is a protective wall against sadness (Rokach & Philibert-Lignières, 2015). However, it is unavoidable that their experiences can still affect their subsequent relationships.

Establishing intimate romantic relationships is a significant developmental milestone that promotes emotional support and psychological, social, and emotional well-being (Tuval-Mashiach et al., 2014). Being involved in romantic relationships is linked with better well-being. Adolescents who were satisfied with the quality of their relationship expressed greater well-being than those who were not (Viejo et al., 2015; Dietrich, 2016). This is true for young adults who are in a healthy romantic relationship. However, for those who are or were once part of an unhealthy relationship, the aftermath can have a negative impact on their well-being. Cheating is one of the most common reasons for unhealthy relationships. In a qualitative study by Lonergan et al. (2020), people who were betrayed by their partner considered their experience to be a trauma. Between 30% and 60% of them develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), with clinically significant levels of anxiety and depression, which can also be related to adjustment disorders. Young adults who cheat are affected in more ways than one (Shrout & Weigel, 2018; Stavrova et al., 2023). In terms of social effects, victims may develop trust issues (Furr, 2006; Khumas, Indahari & Rachman, 2020). Giving their trust to their partner would be difficult for them. This would affect their future relationships either with a partner or with others.

Most studies related to cheating have focused on the predictors of cheating behavior, attitudes toward cheating in romantic relationships, and family infidelity. However, only a few have explored the narratives of young adults who are victims of cheating in their romantic or dating relationships. Cheating is more common in dating relationships than in marital relationships (Braithwaite et al., 2018). Additionally, in a study by Braithwaite et al. (2010), between 50 and 57% of students in

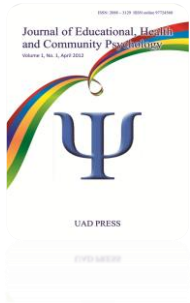
college student samples reported cheating in their current relationship. In this study, the researchers focused on young adults in regard to their experiences of being cheated. Between the ages of 18 and 25, young adulthood is a unique developmental period that marks the transition between adolescence and adulthood (Higley, 2019) and is also a time for self-exploration. This study can provide a better understanding of what they have experienced. This could address the trauma or mental health consequences (e.g., low confidence and self-esteem) brought about by cheating through therapeutic interventions that will ensure health and promote well-being. Integrating strategies to promote mental health in educational institutions, the workplace, and communities could help prevent the onset of depression and anxiety, which are commonly associated with mental health problems among individuals who experience cheating. Thus, this study focused on their experiences to obtain new insights that will contribute to the literature about cheating in the context of young adults. Specifically, we describe the coping strategies employed by young adults who are victims of cheating in romantic relationships and how the experience of being cheated affects their subsequent relationships.

Method

This section discusses the research design used, research site, selection criteria and participants, data collection and analysis, role of the researcher, methods of validation, and ethical considerations.

Design

This study employed a qualitative narrative method in which the participants' stories about their experiences were studied (Riessman, 2008). A narrative approach is widely used by researchers (Jackl & Taylor, 2020; Wilkinson & Dunlop, 2021; Hnatkovičová et al., 2022) in studies related to infidelity. It was deemed most appropriate for exploring young adults' experiences because it allowed them to recount their personal stories. This enabled the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of their narratives and better interpret their cheating experiences.



Research Site

The participants were from Mega Manila (Metro Manila, Bulacan, Rizal, Cavite, and Laguna), which is the most densely populated urban area in the Philippines, with a population of 26.4 million people (APEC, 2017). Furthermore, urban areas in the Philippines have diverse sociocultural backgrounds (Banzon-Bautista, 1998), which could influence young adults' perspectives on cheating. The interviews were conducted using an online video conference platform, Google Meet. The researcher adhered to Republic Act No. 10173 or the Data Privacy Act in collecting the data.

Selection criteria and participants

The participants in this study were ten (10) Filipino young adults (five male and five female), aged 18 to 25 years, who had experienced being cheated on by their romantic partner. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. A recruitment poster was publicly posted on various social media platforms to gather young adults who met the specific criteria and were willing to be interviewed.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected through semistructured interviews, which included 10 closed- and open-ended questions that prompted the discussion. Follow-up questions were also included to further probe and understand the experiences of the participants. Semistructured interviews will give researchers an opportunity to explore relevant information that may come up during the interview process while still focusing on the topic of interest (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). All questions were written in both the Filipino and English languages.

The following sample questions were raised for the interviews:

- (1) How was your romantic relationship before the incident? When, how and how many times did you determine that your romantic partner was cheating on you? What were your initial thoughts and feelings when you determined that your romantic partner was cheating on you? (*Paano ang iyong romantikong relasyon bago ang pangyayari? Kailan, paano, at ilang beses mo natuklasan na niloloko ka ng iyong nobyo/nobyas? Ano ang iyong unang naisip at nadama nang malaman mo na niloloko ka ng iyong nobyo/nobyas?*)

- (2) How was your romantic relationship after the incident? What challenges or struggles have you faced after discovering your romantic partner was cheating on you? How did it affect you? (*Paano ang iyong romantikong relasyon pagkatapos ng pangyayari? Anong mga hamon o pagsubok ang iyong hinarap matapos malaman na niloloko ka ng iyong nobyo/nobyas? Paano ka nito naapektuhan?*)

After the data were collected, all the recordings, interview transcriptions, and observation notes were compiled in Google Drive, which is accessible only to the researchers. The data were interpreted through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a systematic coding of information in which participants' statements from the interview are examined and grouped into themes that capture the study's interest (Creswell, 2014). The narratives of young adults who were cheated on by their romantic partners were contextually analyzed and coded to provide interpretation and understanding of the experiences.

Methods of Validation

The interview guide was validated by the researchers' adviser, who is also an expert in the field of psychology. All of the suggestions and remarks of the validator were considered. This ensured that the interview guide was easy to follow and understand and captured the study's interests. Finally, to ensure the accuracy of the gathered data, a synthesized member check was conducted. The participants were given copies of their own interview transcriptions and asked to review them, providing feedback to confirm their responses (Birt et al., 2016).

Ethical considerations

All of the files containing the collected data are accessible only to the researchers to maintain confidentiality. Informed consent was given before the interview procedure started. To obtain the participants' permission, it is necessary to explain what information will be gathered and how it will be utilized in the study (Sanjari et al., 2014). The consent form included information about the study's nature, potential participant roles, the researcher's identity, the study's purpose, and the use and publication plan for the data collection findings. The participants were given the option to maintain their secrecy and anonymity during the activity. Each participant was given the option to

leave the study at any time. Finally, the participants can contact the researcher if they have any additional queries.

Results

The findings are presented in terms of themes that were identified during the analysis. From the responses of ten participants, seven themes were identified that described their experiences of cheating in a romantic relationship, how they formed their subsequent relationship, and the coping strategies they employed. All the themes that emerged from the data were classified into three initial life events—what were the relationship dynamics before determining the infidelity, when the infidelity was discovered, and how did the participants cope with the situation? Studies (Heintzelman et al., 2014; Rokach & Philibert-Lignièrès, 2015) highlight how individuals were able to recover from infidelity; however, only a dearth of studies mention information prior to finding out and how infidelity was processed to attain self-recovery and personal healing.

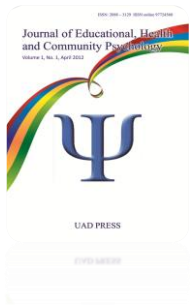
Before the Cheating Incident

Happy and Perfect Relationships. Most of the participants shared that they had a happy and perfect relationship before they discovered that their partner was cheating on them. They described that they had a healthy, reassuring, and mature relationship.

“The relationship itself is okay. He is very reassuring as a partner... almost too perfect... when there is a conflict or issue, he will not get mad, he’s very mature with it. We are very open with communication. He’s a gentleman... I am always the priority. Seems like a princess treatment.”
(F7, 22)

Perceived Cheating in the Relationship. Despite being happy in the relationship, two of the ten participants mentioned that they perceived that their partner would cheat on their relationship. One participant said that her partner was giving hints about another significant person in her life. Another participant said that her partner had a history of cheating from her previous relationships.

“She told me about all her exes, and only one of them was not cheated on by her. The issues were all cheating, sometimes there are four of them [in the relationship]. I do not know why I agreed [to



be in a relationship with her]. Yes, I perceived it, but I still gave her a chance.” (F4, 22)

Discovering the Cheating Incident

Discovered through Social Media. Six participants shared that they discovered that their partner was cheating on them through social media accounts such as Facebook and Messenger. They said that they caught their partner talking to another person intimately or reconnecting with their ex-partner.

“There was a time when her parents asked me to hold her things, including her cellphone. Then, I saw the chat of the guy who said, “I love you.” (M6, 22)

Discovered through Friend/s. Aside from social media, some of the participants discovered that their partner was cheating on them through their friend(s). Their friends were the ones who witnessed that their partner was cheating behind their back.

“I determined through his best friend, he chatted with me and said that my ex told him around December that he is starting to develop feelings for the girl who is his girlfriend right now.” (F5, 22)

Discovered through Confession. Committing that one has committed infidelity is unusual, but two of the participants in the study discovered that their partner was cheating on them by their partner admitting and confessing their acts of infidelity to them.

“I asked him if we had a problem... he suddenly said sorry. I started to panic because I remember last night he drank with his ex. I called him, then he was crying during the call, and then he said something happened between him and his ex.” (F7, 22)

Initial Thoughts and Feeling

Mixed and Overwhelming Emotions. After discovering the cheating incident, different kinds of emotions started to overwhelm some of the participants. When asked about their initial feelings after the incident, some of them could not even explain what they felt that time. All they knew was that it was overwhelming.

“It is a very different kind of feeling. It is a mix of panic, a heavy weight, and then it is just mixed emotions that you cannot explain.” (M2, 24)

Thoughts toward Self. After learning about the cheating incident, five out of ten participants initially began to think the worst about themselves. Some of them blamed themselves for what happened, doubted themselves, and even questioned their own self-worth.

"I feel very little, I feel insecure with his other women... The worst thing I say to myself is I'm so dirty. I feel like a prostitute." (F3, 23)

Thoughts toward the Relationship. Aside from the thoughts about themselves, some of the participants also started to doubt and question the feelings invested in the relationship. They started to think if all was just a lie or if the feelings were even true.

"I became doubtful about the whole relationship. Was everything he showed and made me feel true?" (F7, 22)

Moreover, the majority of the male respondents expressed shock and disbelief when they discovered that their partner was cheating.

"I was surprised that she was capable of such a thing, and I was even more surprised that she continued [to cheat] for more than a year." (M1, 22)

"I checked his phone and saw that he was talking to someone else. There were sexual conversations, and I was surprised." (M2, 24)

Keeping the Relationship Intact despite the Cheating Incident

Because of Love. Although their romantic partner cheated on them, most participants chose to stay and continue the relationship. One of their main reasons is that they still love their partner, and they treasure the memories they shared together.

"No matter what the person does to me, as long as I love him or I have feelings for him, I will stay." (F4, 22)

Because of Shown Efforts. Another reason why the participants continued the relationship despite the cheating incident is that their partner showed efforts to compensate for the mistake they had made in the relationship.

"She is truly showing effort. Her last message to her ex was February 18, 2021. After that, nothing happened anymore. She never communicated again [with her ex]." (F9, 21)

After the Cheating Incident

Physical Effects. The aftermath of the cheating incident, whether on the relationship or on the victim, is inescapable. One recognizable effect is its physical manifestations on the victim. This includes oversleeping, stress, degrading physical health, and affecting one's daily functioning.

"Then, 3 days after I was beaten at home, he immediately beat me. That was the first time he was violent with me... the worst thing that happened to me was that I trembled sometimes, just hearing his name. Then, my insomnia gets worse... I was truly tired and stressed... I was only 36 kilograms at the time... my tumor always hurts because of him before. I was so stressed by him." (F3, 23)

Mental and Emotional Effects. The effects of cheating on the victim or on the relationship are not always physically visible. Some of the participants mentioned that the incident affected them emotionally; after the incident, their relationship started to become toxic. Arguments here and there were present, and the dynamics of the relationship changed. In addition, the victims began to overthink things. One participant also shared that she started to have trust issues even with her friends because of what happened.

"It is like I'm an overthinker. Therefore, every time she leaves... I like that she always has an update. It is like I became toxic about that; it is like she did not have her own space anymore. I feel like I want to tie her up, so I do not have to think too much. It became toxic after a while." (M2, 24)

Coping Strategies

Engaging in unhealthy strategies discovering that one's partner is cheating can be a painful and unbearable experience. Most of the participants engaged in unhealthy strategies or behaviors to cope with or forget that their romantic partner cheated on them. Some of these behaviors include smoking, drinking, doing illegal drugs, and self-harm.

"It's truly all vices; drinking, smoking, billiards, then I also resorted to other substances. However, I did not reach the stage where I became addicted. It's like I was at my lowest, so I might also try those things." (M1, 22)

"Self-harm. I used to always have blades in my pocket... I punched walls, and whenever I saw blood, I felt satisfied, I felt happy. Because that is where all the pain goes, it makes me numb." (F3, 23)

Focusing on others. Another way of coping with the pain brought about by the cheating experience is that most of the participants focused their attention on others. They spend time with their friends, family, school organizations, schoolworks, dating applications to meet other people, and playing online games.

“During those times, I focused too much on schoolwork. My support system was good. When I want to vent, they will listen to me; they will give me good advice.” (F7, 22)

“Dating apps and I tried to make time with my friends.” (M10, 22)

Focusing on self. Some of the participants found distraction by focusing on themselves and what they could do to improve their situation. One participant mentioned that she writes literary blogs to express her feelings and thoughts. Another participant said that he framed his mind to face and accept the situation.

“I have a literary blog where everything is there... My writing has been given a deeper sense... All my stories are on my blog because I have no one to tell my stories.” (F3, 23)

“Mind framing, I tell myself that it has already happened and that it is beyond my control. All I can do is accept it... I also said that in every relationship it is not perfect, there are struggles... At least I'm not wasting time on someone who is not sure of me and at least I am not the one who cheats.” (M8, 23)

Influence on Subsequent Romantic Relationships

Had Not Entered a Romantic Relationship However, After the Cheating Incident. While some of the stories of the participants occurred a few months to a few years ago, most of them had not yet entered a romantic relationship after what happened. The most common reason was that they are still in the coping stage and are still healing from the trauma the cheating incident gave them. Some are ready to enter but are still waiting for the right person to come.

“So my primary reason is my past... Maybe I'm afraid of it happening again. I tried, but I cannot seem to build a connection with other people because of what happened. I'm still in the coping stage.” (M1, 22)

“Actually, it is not because I'm afraid of getting hurt, I'll still go. It is just that those who confess are not my type. I do not like anyone. Just not yet.” (F5, 22)

Had Entered a Romantic Relationship After the Cheating Incident. Few of our participants shared that after the cheating incident, they entered another romantic relationship. Sadly, it was evident how the cheating incident from the past affected the subsequent romantic relationship. One participant admitted that he had committed cheating on his next romantic partner but later regretted it. Meanwhile, another participant emphasized that in her next romantic relationship, she decided not to give her one hundred percent love due to what happened before.

“After that, I entered into a new relationship. Then, it seemed that I became the wrong person. I ended up cheating on my next ex after the cheating incident... I thought I truly needed to fix myself first before entering into a relationship. Because I do not want to hurt someone because of something they did not do. I think there is some connection with my experience, some reasons... because cheating is not truly justifiable, I do not want to make it a reason that I did it because someone cheated on me before.” (M2, 24)

“It is important not to give your 100% to someone. You always have to save at least 50%. When I was first cheated, I was afraid to give my full self, my full capacity to love someone... To the point that everyone can cheat on me. My last relationship was in 2018. Then, my next one is in 2020. So maybe that is why I agreed to be in a relationship at that time because I missed the feeling of having someone take care of you, that you always have someone to talk to.” (F4, 22)

Discussion

In this study, young adults who are victims of cheating in a romantic relationship shared their narratives about their experiences with their partner who cheated on them, their initial thoughts and feelings, their coping strategies, and how they formed their subsequent relationships. Most of the participants described that their relationship with their partner was perfect and happy before the cheating incident. Despite being happy in the relationship, some perceived that their partner was cheating on them. Social media played a major role in the discovery of infidelity in romantic relationships. The majority of the participants caught their partner cheating on them through social media accounts such as Facebook, Messenger, and Twitter. This finding supports the study of Clayton et al. (2013), who found that young adults' prolonged exposure to Facebook and Twitter can cause negative outcomes in romantic relationships such as divorce, break-up, and cheating.

Moreover, according to Cravens et al. (2013), friending an ex-partner, sending private messages, leaving comments on attractive users' photos, and inaccurate relationship status updates on Facebook are the infidelity-related behaviors that are most frequently reported. In addition to social media, the participants' friends also played a large part in the discovery of their partner's infidelity. Although the literature about infidelity or cheating in romantic relationships is limited, some of the participants in this study reported that they only knew that their partner was cheating on them through their mutual friends. Finally, the discovery of infidelity through confession is another theme that emerged in this study. Although only a small percentage of individuals will admit to their cheating, two of the participants in this study stated that their partner admitted their acts of infidelity. In relation to that, discovering a partner's infidelity can trigger many emotions and thoughts. The literature on infidelity mostly focuses on its effects on the victims and not on one's initial reaction after finding out. However, in this study, three themes emerged on the victims' initial thoughts and feelings after discovering the infidelity: mixed and overwhelming emotions, thoughts toward the self, and thoughts toward the relationship. Some of the participants shared that they were overwhelmed with a mixture of emotions they could not even explain. The majority of the male participants expressed shock and disbelief after discovering that their partner cheated on them, a reaction not as prominently expressed among female participants. They did not expect that their partner would engage in unfaithful acts. After the discovery, thoughts about the self, such as self-doubt, self-blame, and questions about self-worth, arise. The participants also shared how they became doubtful of the whole relationship and their partner's feelings toward them.

Regardless of the cheating incident, the participants still try to make the relationship intact with their partner. Two themes emerged from this: because of love and because of shown efforts. This supports the article posted by Sharoni (2021) that one will not stop loving his or her partner even though they betrayed the trust of their significant other and tainted the relationship. They share special life experiences, memories, and moments that are difficult to let go. Additionally, the participants chose to continue the relationship because they believed that their partners were making efforts to make the relationship work. Stritof (2023) mentioned that to fix relationships after infidelity, rebuilding trust and restoring bonds are very important. Showing efforts through communicating with each other, being honest, and keeping promises are some of the ways to show

the willingness to save the relationship. Even though there are participants who tried to keep the relationship intact, the effects of infidelity on the relationship and on the victims are inevitable. In this study, the effects are categorized into two themes: physical effects and mental and emotional effects. People who experienced infidelity by their partner considered the event traumatic (Lonergan et al., 2020). With respect to physical effects, victims experienced persistent somatic symptoms, including insomnia, and changes in physical appearance due to weight gain or loss. In a study by Roos et al. (2019), it was found that extreme nervousness and body trembles can be experienced by victims when they recall the cheating experience. One participant in this study stated that there was a time she trembled just by hearing the partner's name. In terms of mental and emotional effects, victims can experience negative emotions, low confidence, and low self-esteem (Shrout & Weigel, 2018; Stavrova et al., 2023). Some of the participants also mentioned that the incident made them develop trust in their partners (Furr, 2006; Khumas et al., 2020).

In terms of coping strategies, the participants engaged in various ways to heal and move on from the painful experience. Three themes emerged from this: engaging in unhealthy strategies, focusing on others, and focusing on the self. Some of the participants stated that they engaged in acts of drinking, smoking, using illegal drugs, and self-harm to heal from the cheating experience. Murray (2023) asserts that victims of cheating in romantic relationships tend to resort to these unhealthy coping strategies as a way to distract themselves. Discovering that one's significant partner cheats on them can bring about painful emotions, and people choose to cope through drinking and using harmful substances that temporarily increase their feelings of happiness. Feelings of sadness and hopelessness, which can result in mental health problems, can lead to self-harm behaviors among victims of cheating. Some even resort to committing suicide (Cheung, 2020). On the other hand, there are participants who engage in healthy coping strategies such as focusing on others through spending time with their friends. Since victims of cheating experience immense distress, having social support provides a sense of belongingness, enhances emotional well-being, and is a protective wall against sadness (Rokach & Philibert-Lignières, 2015). Finally, the participants also focused on themselves as a means of coping with the betrayal of their partners. They perform activities or hobbies that distract them, such as writing literary blogs. One participant also mentioned that he does mind framing and accepts what happened. Iordanidou (2023) mentioned that it is important to

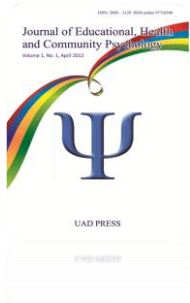
accept feelings as well as processes, increase self-care, and engage in activities that will preoccupy the self to move forward from the trauma of cheating.

The participants were asked for their thoughts regarding new romantic relationships. Eight of them explained that they are not yet ready to enter a new relationship after what happened. One explained that he is afraid for the cheating incident to happen again and that he is still in the coping stage. Meanwhile, some participants said that they are ready even though they have not yet found the right person. In contrast, two participants shared that they had entered a new romantic relationship after the incident. One participant admitted that during that subsequent relationship, she limited the amount of love and effort she invested because she had already learned from her previous experiences. Aside from the effects of infidelity, which involves developing trust issues, this finding supports the findings of Arantes et al. (2020), who stated that people who cheat are more likely to have lower-quality relationships in the future. Furthermore, one unique story shared by another participant was that during his subsequent relationship, he was the one who cheated on his partner. He contemplated whether this has something to do with his past, but he still believes that what he did, regardless of his part, was not justifiable. The literature lacks research on the topic of cheating victims' tendency to cheat in subsequent relationships.

Conclusion

The narratives reveal the unique stories of Filipino young adults who have experienced cheating in their romantic relationship, exploring the cheating incident, their ways of coping with what happened, and the effects of the cheating incident on their subsequent romantic relationships. The romantic relationship always seems to be healthy and perfect in the beginning. However, when one commits an unfaithful act toward the other, problems can arise, affecting not only the relationship but also the victim. Cheating can be considered a traumatic event, and this can cause victims to have negative thoughts and emotions toward themselves and their relationships after their discovery.

One important insight of this study is that cheating is not limited to only marital relationships.



Unlike existing research that predominantly centers on infidelity within married couples, this study highlights the need to provide an understanding of the specific experiences of young adults affected by cheating on romantic relationships. Establishing intimate relationships is a vital developmental task and milestone for young adults, as stated by prominent psychologists in the field. Thus, this study can offer valuable insights into their emotional, psychological, and social well-being and aid in the development of interventions and support systems tailored to their needs. Furthermore, the perception that Filipino women are monogamous (Pizarro, & Gaspay-Fernandez, 2015) is well reflected in the study wherein the majority of the male participants did not expect that their partner is capable of engaging in unfaithful acts. Traumatic as they are, this study embodies Filipino resiliency despite what happened. One participant mentioned that the incident made her stronger and wiser, while the other said she was ready to take risks again. This shows hope knowing that young adults who have experienced cheating will soon heal, find the right person, and experience the love they know they deserve.

Recommendation

The literature on infidelity focuses more on the experiences of married couples and how cheating affects their family. This present study, however, shows that cheating can also have major effects on young adults who are in romantic relationships. More research is needed to understand the experiences of young adults who have been cheated on, their coping strategies, and the long-term effects of cheating on their physical, mental, and emotional health. The length of the relationship must also be considered as one variable for future research because it may reveal differences in experience. Moreover, the present study did not emphasize the type of relationship. It is important to consider the type of relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual, as it might provide different insights for future research.

Finally, in addition to future research, this study can be of help not only to young adults who are victims of cheating but also to people and institutions that may provide them with support. The findings of the present study may serve as a guide for victims themselves, their families and friends, mental health professionals, educators and communities to address the trauma or mental health

consequences of the cheating incident. The people mentioned can all work together to create an environment where the victims can heal and cope despite what happened. This study can also be used to develop effective interventions that can then be implemented in educational institutions, the workplace, and other community settings.

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