LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUALS IN POLYAMOROUS RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

With the continuous expansion of the internet, people are seeking for different kinds of intimate relationships This includes the relationship form called polyamory, a relationship structure that allows the people involved to have multiple partners, consensual and honest relationship. It is distinguished from other forms of non-monogamous relationships (i.e. cheating or infidelity, swinging, and polygamy). Thus, leading the researchers to provide a study regarding its existence despite conducting it in a highly monogamous culture particularly in the Philippines and combined with the scarcity of local literature. The researchers sought to provide a definition of polyamory in the Philippines through the lived experience of the participants in the study. The researchers have interviewed 5 individuals who are currently engaged in a polyamorous set-up. The analysis resulted to 2 themes relating to how their lived experience can typify polyamory in the Philippines. The participants describe it as being in a relationship formed with consent, honesty, and commitment that could vary in the set-up of the people involved in it. These variations could include having partners who are romantic, sexual, and platonic, polyamorous, monogamous etc.

Keywords: polyamory, multiple relationships, consent, honesty

INTRODUCTION

As different types of intimate relationship emerge in the twenty-first century, multiple-partner relationships remain to be under studied, especially in the local setting. Amato and James (2010), have presented a data that predicted 43 % to 68% of marriage would end because of divorce in the 20th century and is seen as a result of high rates of infidelity. With these problems becoming apparent and due to the use of Internet all round the world, the openness and emerging of a sex positive culture resulted to people claiming to be unsatisfied with the combined limitation of serial monogamy and the rising percentage of divorce rate and infidelity rates, especially in the United States (Johnson, Giuliano, Herselman, & Hutzler, 2015). Some individuals are seeking for some openness and honesty in a relationship that is common in polyamorous relationships (Johnson, 2013).

Different factors such as high divorce and infidelity rates in monogamous couples (Weitzman, Davidson, Phillips, 2012); The growth of the economy and issues such as the social equality of women, resulted to having varied options on how they can arrange their intimate relationships (Sheff, 2005) this resulted to a growing number of individuals seeking different alternatives to the traditional relationship form (heterosexual monogamous relationship).

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, people are conservative and sensitive about different topics such as clothing, language, gender, relationships and sex. In International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) which was conducted in 1991 (Mangahas, Mahar, & Guerrero, 1992), it shows that a lot of Filipino citizen has a more conservative attitude towards sensitive topics such as sexual relations. Based on the survey, one could conclude that this is brought upon by the effect of religious beliefs of Filipino, where it is stated that extramarital relations is forbidden.

Filipinos tend to assume that all relationships should be monogamous. People should have or had a romantic relationship with only one person, and those people who have been involved with more than one person are considered to be cheating. Polyamory is a consensual non-monogamous relationship set-up. This kind of set-up allows multiple partners at the same time (Johnson, 2013).

In this kind of relationship, having multiple partners does not mean that the polyamorist is just looking for other sex partners. Rather, this kind of relationship set-up is an engagement to multiple honest, equal, nurturing, affectionate, and non-exclusive relationships (Klesse, 2014) which includes people with different gender, sexual orientations and sexual identities (Aviram & Leachman, 2014).

Polyamory originates from the combined Greek and Latin root word that roughly translates to "many" and "love" (Boyd, 2017), it is the situation wherein a person may prefer to be involved in an intimate or sexual relationship with other people than his/her partner at the same time. The variations for the term polyamory appeared on 1950s and the definition solidified in the succeeding decades (Alan, 2010). The older generation of polyamorist in the USA, especially in the San Francisco have emerged in the 1960s - 1980s (Mint, 2009; Klesse, 2011) and it is gaining popularity over the last decade (Ritchie and Barker, 2007).

Moreover, this kind of relationship rejects the norm that a single person can satisfy all the needs of his or her partner in a relationship such as their needs for emotional, social, sexual, economic and intellectual aspects.

According to Johnson (2013), both personal and interpersonal growth has been seen to enhanced in a polyamorous set-up, this is due to the fact that there is a closer association formed with people with various personality traits and personal strengths. In addition to this it is also different from other forms of non-monogamous relationships which includes swinging, infidelity, and polygamy.

In order to differentiate polyamory to other forms of non-monogamous relationship, which includes relationships such as swinging, infidelity, and polygamy the researchers discussed it further.

Swinging

Polyamory differs from other kinds of non-monogamous relationships, such as swinging, polygamy and to the concept of infidelity. In swinging, it involves sexual encounters with other couples without emotional involvement. This type of relationship places a higher emphasis on recreational sex (Jiang, 2017). In the study of Rubin (2001), Swinging has been defined as a consent for married couple to exchange sexual partners. It primarily involves sexual encounters with other couples without emotional involvement. In this type of relationship married couples place a higher emphasis on recreational sex (Jiang, 2017) while polyamory on the other hand is primarily a relationship-oriented with an emphasis on emotional intimacy and long-term commitments to non-monogamous set-up rather than a set-up that focuses on recreational sex with other married couples (Deri, 2012; Weitzman, Davidson & Phillips, 2012).

The concept of love must always be present in all the partners involved in polyamory. Polyamory literally means "loving more than one". The kind of love in polyamory can be varied as emotional, spiritual, sexual or even a combination of all three. It will be formed according to what are the agreements and desires of all the parties involved (Klesse, 2011). There has been a little overlap in swinging and polyamory but there is a significant difference between the two types of consensual non-monogamy.

Infidelity

Infidelity or cheating on the other hand is considered as a sexual relationship with people outside the monogamous set-up. It can be distinguished from polyamory due to the presence of an open and honest communication with all of the partners involved (Hymer & Rubin, 1982; Brandon, 2016). Additionally, it can be also defined as the sexual or emotional engagement of a person within a monogamous relationship other than his or her partner which resulted to a violation of the agreed set-up of the relationship. (Blow and Hartnett, 2005).

Infidelity is committed when a person engaged in a relationship (usually sexual) with another individual other than his or her spouse, without their partner's knowledge and consent, thus violating the characteristics of marriage (shared intimacy and trust bounded by religion/law) (Swenson, 2003). Polyamory can be differentiated from infidelity through the presence of honest communications, knowledge, and consent in all the parties involved about the existence of all the other relationships (Johnson, 2013).

Polygamy

Polygamy is a cultural or religious practice that allows a person to be married with more than one partner. It can be further broken down into three main types: polygyny, polyandry, and group marriage. The practice in which a man being married to multiple women is called Polygyny; when a woman can be married to multiple men, it is called Polyandry while the practice of multiple men getting married to multiple women is called group marriage (Walston, 2001; Mulder, 2009).

Polygamy is a practice that is associated to cultural imperative as opposed to it being a consensual choice among individuals (Johnson, 2013; Al-krenawi & Graham, 2006). More than 850 societies in the world practiced polygamy, this includes Africa, Middle East, North america, Oceania and Asia (Al-krenawi & Graham, 2006).

Polygamous relationships are often considered to have patriarchal characteristics. Due to this characteristic there is a high potential for unequal and discriminative treatment of wives by their husbands (Thobejane & Flora, 2014) which may include the following: unfair treatment, commodification, separation from society; and favoritism among the wives and disapproval or neglecting of other wives within their households

In comparison to polyamorous relationship which promotes honesty, integrity, and respect. Polyamorous relationships primarily focuses on building a long-term relationship with all of the individuals included in the relationship set-up, which has their own agreements and set of rules (may be romantic only, sexual only or combination of the two) and that sex is only an aspect of the relationship (Boyd, 2017).

Challenges of polyamorous individuals

Furthermore, polyamorous individuals may also experience discrimination from the mainstream society. For they may be labelled as deviants and they may feel that they need to persuade other people that their chosen lifestyle is possible and effective (Falco, 1995).

Additionally, they may experience social disapproval and legal discrimination similar to the experience of those who are in the LGBT community (Peabody, 1982). Polyamorous individuals may often feel stress and fear of rejection by others. They may feel that their own family members will disapprove their lifestyle. They may fear what would their environment's reaction would be, the reaction of the people they see on a daily basis such as their co-workers or supervisors and the negative effect of it to their careers (Weitzman, Davidson, & Phillips, 2012) since marriage of polyamorous individuals are not recognized by the church and the state (Browning, Reynolds, & Dworkin, 1991). Moreover, polyamorous couples may experience relationship concerns. Like time and resources, to whom they should spend their time with? Additionally, they may also experience concerns with disclosure. How much sexual or emotional disclosure is enough (Weitzman et al., 2012)

The significance of the current study is it can add a new information in the body of knowledge of polyamorous relationship. By exploring polyamory in the Philippines, the researchers aimed to explain the formation, struggles and their solutions, and lived experiences of polyamorous individuals in the Philippines. This study offers an understanding of polyamory through providing a literature from an unbiased academic standpoint that determines the nature and concept of the lived experiences of polyamorous individuals. Furthermore, the research could be a starting point in creating and developing a more powerful tool that could encapsulate the experience of polyamorous individuals that can be used in the clinical, educational, and industrial setting. With such tool other researchers could develop the methods on how to address the challenges these individuals encounter in their daily lives.

Researchers have chosen the topic on polyamory because it is an interesting topic since the phenomenon contradicts the cultural and religious practices in the Philippines. The researchers neither advocate that the practice is a response to other form of relationship styles, nor criticizes polyamorous individuals for their choices. Additionally, the background of the researchers is that they are both heterosexual males, aged 20 and 21 years old, both are undergraduate researchers studying Bachelor of Science in Psychology in the Colegio of San Juan de Letran - Manila. Both of the researchers does not have any experience in polyamorous relationships and that they have only experienced monogamous relationships.

The study is created as a means of understanding the phenomenon through the use of an academic research conducted in the Philippine context. Since the articles gathered indicates that the phenomenon exist in the foreign context. Unfortunately, upon searching the researchers only found a single article that tackles the nature and concept of polyamory in the Philippines (Balisado & Barcelon, 2008). Thus, the researchers would like to provide an additional information on polyamory since there is a scarcity on local literature. Furthermore, researchers from the western countries, pay little attention to the concept of polyamory (Barker & Langdridge, 2010) and only a small amount of study focused on the development of polyamorous relationships. The researchers only determined the nature and concept of polyamory among Filipinos engaged in it and their lived experience and struggles in the Philippines.

Some of the challenges that polyamorous individuals face are that their relationship was considered as deviance (Weitzman., et al 2012) and when their relationship is not being kept a secret, polyamorous individuals may feel that they need to persuade other people that their chosen lifestyle is effective. There are also a misunderstanding that polyamorous individuals are being perceived as emotionally disordered (Brandon, 2016) because they are becoming emotionally and sexually involved in an intimate relationship with other people outside their primary partner.

Several studies from the literature have gathered the demographics of polyamorous individuals (age, sex, gender orientation, socio-economic status, and etc). High divorce rate and infidelity rates is a huge factor for the tendency of an individual to enter into a polyamorous relationship (Johnson, Giuliano, Herselman, & Hutzler, 2015). As separation and infidelity is becoming more apparent, an individual may seek new and different alternatives to the traditional relationship form. Sheff (2005) have also linked the expansion of the internet that gives visibility and accessibility to information and people with sex-positive culture. Middle class individuals and above with higher degree have the resources and capability to access information to sex-positive culture and therefore, can explore different intimate relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Conley, Matsick, Moors, & Ziegler (2017) have examined two theories of interpersonal relationship and one social cognitive theory that could investigate the dynamics of different consensual non-monogamous relationship. One of which is Kelley & Thibaut's Interdependence theory (1978). Interdependence theory suggest that connection between people in a relationship has its own cost and benefits gained from the other people involved in the relationship. In the article of Balzarini, Campbell, Kohut, Holmes, Lehmiller, Harman, and Atkins (2017) surmised that entering and

staying into a polyamorous relationship can be explained through the difference in the ratio of cost and benefits in the relationship, and to the involvement of one person to each of his or her partner's lives. Interdependence theory could also explain the reasons of polyamorous individuals on why they would have invest less time in each partner, since the division of such cost (i.e. time) could gain more benefits from different partners (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Polyamorous individuals can share more of their "love" to all of the partners involved in the relationship set-up while not necessarily falling out of love and neglecting their other partners.

In interdependence theory, there are concepts known as Comparison level (CL) and Comparison level of alternatives (CLalt). Comparison level involves the expectation of a partner (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). It involves what they are expecting to receive in a particular relationship and such expectations are being compared to the person's view of how a relationship would be or by the expectations of the society regarding a relationship. Whereas, comparison level of alternatives tackled the connection between the "give and take" in the relationship to determine one's satisfaction and commitment to their partners.

A person can have a committed relationship but not fully satisfied and a person can also be satisfied in a relationship but cannot fully commit to it. This is where the alternative of the relationship could take place. If CLat would be present in a monogamous relationship, it would mean that the relationship could be terminated because it is not acceptable to be satisfied by other person outside the relationship, it would be forbidden to go on dates with different persons other than their own partner. While in a polyamorous relationship, having a new partner would not automatically mean that the current relationship would be terminated because it is acceptable for a person to go on dates while maintaining their relationship. This kind of consent among the partners in the relationship would mean that polyamorous individuals would be allow them to seek for other partners or go on dates with new people and explore different alternative set-up in their existing relationship.

METHODS

This study made use of the qualitative phenomenological design, drawing on the comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied.

Participants in the study

Two methods are used to recruit the participants of the study. First, the researchers attempted to recruit participants by posting on social media, including groups on Facebook such as Polyamory Philippines, HAPI – Humanist Alliance Philippines, International, HAPI – Lgbt+Straight Alliance, International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organisation, and other LGBT groups because most of the people engaging polyamorous relationship belong to the LGBT community (Klesse, 2014) and on Twitter such as Now Open PH and Ψ Researcher's guide. Unfortunately groups and page we have contacted has polyamorous individuals but none of the members are interested in participating in the study. Second, the researchers asked other researchers to refer anyone in the study if they know individuals engaging in polyamorous relationship.

The researchers' have tested the interview protocols, the unstructured interviewing techniques and open-ended questions by conducting a pilot interview regarding the experience of individuals engaging in polyamorous relationship**.** The participant recruited in the pilot interview was an acquaintance by one of the researcher and the first participant was referred by another researcher outside the study. The participants then referred other willing individuals to participate in the study. The researchers recruited the participants who were in a polyamorous relationship.

Sheff and Hammers (2011) have identified that those who enter polyamorous relationships, are usually well-educated, middle-class, white (89%) individuals. Their (Sheff & Hammers 2011) participants in this study are composed of individuals which 74 percent have professional jobs, 88 percent are in college education and 67 percent have acquired a bachelor's degree and 21 percent have completed graduate schools. Additionally, the participants consists of 28 percent of straight men and 25 percent of straight women. Haupert, Gesselman, Moors, Fisher, & Garcia (2017), have participants

consisted of 73 percent of gay men and 37 percent of lesbian women. Additionally, other articles on polyamory have also included a wide range of participants. Ranging from people that are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and others who also belong to the LGBT community. For instance, in the study conducted by Barker (2005), most of the participants have relationships with both men and women and only two participants have identified to be straight men and two identified as lesbian women, about half of the researcher's participants consists of men identified as gays and the other half consists of individuals identified themselves as bisexuals, two trans men and one heterosexual man (Klesse, 2006), and Mitchell, Cobb and Bartholomew (2014) have made a gender breakdown of their sample. 623 of the participants have identified themselves as females, 412 have identified themselves as males, 32 have identified themselves as genderqueers, there are 6 of the participants who identified themselves as transgenders and the remaining 9 of the participants have identified themselves as "other".

Individuals who have identified themselves as "polyamorous" have been in age starting from adulthood. In one study by Barker (2005) where he explored the conclusion of people in polyamory of their own sense of self, their age of the participants ranged from 20 - 60, with an average age of 33 years old.

In addition to this, another study by Barker and Ritchie (2007) which aimed to explore issues around gender in non-monogamous relationships have participants in focus groups comprised of eight women, ranging from early twenties to mid-forties. Participants' age range from other studies have also been in early twenties to late 50s and 60s (Sheff, 2005; Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2014; Mogilski, Memering, Welling, & Shackerlford, 2017). This is due to the reason that people entering adulthood are undergoing reorganizations of the neural circuitry of prefrontal cortex which is involved in higher level of cognitive activities resulting to having a better grasp of reasoning (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010) . This allows people at this age to analyze their thoughts more efficiently.

Behavioural indicators of people engaging in different kinds of non-monogamous relationship have been explored when Knapp (1976) administered a set of standardized psychological test to a sample of individuals engaging in polyamory. Consistent from the previous literature (Knapp,1976), the behavioral indicators of polyamorous individuals states that they tend to be independent, are ambitious in terms of academic performance, producing outputs that are artistic in their own way or different from the norm or originally, relatively uninterested to what the other people would say, they are more concerned in their own subjective values and are willing to gamble differents ways to explore such possibilities. One of the most intriguing subjects in the dynamics of polyamorous relationship is how does polyamorous individuals handle jealousy provoking situations. These situations include being the witness or having the thought that whenever they leave their home their partners having sexual intercourse with other people.

Deri (2012) have studied the methods and reasons of why women practice polyamory and how is jealousy confronted, showed, and re-imagined in their relationships. Across time, the philosophy in polyamory has developed. Polyamorous individuals have come up with rules on love, the structure of their relationship, and the how to handle their own feelings of jealousy. As a response to it, such feelings has been transformed to attain compersion. According to Wolfe (2003), compersion is described as an emotional experience of pleasure that is felt when their partner/s experience sexual and or emotional connection with other people.

Many studies have provided explanation for the emergence of such relationship. In the study of Jackson & Scott, (2004) they argued that feminist views non-monogamous relationship such as polyamorous relationship as a response to the patriarchal undertones of a monogamous relationship wherein it acts as an ideology for women's "sexual liberation" and allows them to respond to the changing social trends (Robinsons, 1997; Haritaworn, Lin, & Klesse, 2006). In the 1990s, Wilkins (2004) found that feminist continued to challenge the dominant constructs of gender and sexuality by taking a pro-sex stance. Here, they resurrected the connection between women's liberation and their sexual agency, calling it a new model of female sexual subjectivity that redefines the markers of "girly-ness" and a mass re-appropriation of historically woman-negative words (Attwood, 2007)

Additionally, Barker and Richie's (2007) study on polyamorous women, their participants identified themselves as feminist and thus may linked it explicitly to their polyamorous relationship. It is recognized as "women-centered" because it values the feminine application of organization skills and communication. Moreover, Barker and Ritchie concluded that females engaging in polyamorous relationship are less dependent on their male partners, in contrast to heterosexually monogamous females. They are also more free to establish equal value on their friendships and sexual relationships. Furthermore, in the study of Robinson (1997) also indicated that polyamorous relationship adheres to the concepts of feminism since it challenges the concepts of exclusivity, possessiveness, and jealousy.

Polyamorous people reap a lot of benefits from their lifestyle. According to Weitzman and his colleague (2012), many polyamorous individual discover happiness in having close relationship with either or both sexual and emotional relationship with multiple partners.

In addition, there were no significant difference found between polyamorist in the sample and populations norm (monogamous couple) and quoted "Neither group was particularly neurotic, immature, promiscuous, maladjusted, pathological, or sexually inadequate" (Knapp, 1976). However, most of the people expects to have sexual exclusivity in a relationship and convinced that extramarital sex is wrong despite the research findings that there is no significant difference in couples engaged. Moreover, there are rules which are against consensual non-monogamy (Mitchell et al, 2014) and strong resistance to marriage of multiple partners.

Polyamorous relationship often faces issues towards their chosen relationship style. This may include the perception of other people towards their relationship and often refers to it as infidelity, but these two constructs are not the same. In polyamory, the parties involved construct their own rules and boundaries that can be modified over time and if such rules (agreed upon rules by all parties) are broken it can be considered as infidelity (Williams & Prior, 2015).

Screening process

The researchers have contacted 9 prospective participants and 4 of the prospective participants have not been included to the study after not responding to the researchers inquiries. Two prospective participants did not respond to our message via Twitter and email, and two prospective participants' responds at first but stopped responding to our messages eventually. The researchers have contacted 4 of the participants through their Twitter account and 1 referred participant was contacted through their email. To make certain that the participants were in a polyamorous relationship, the researchers asked the participants if they are currently involved in a multiple relationships and then asked if the parties involved have knowledge and consent about the set-up. All of the participants responded affirmatively to this question.

This study involved 5 individuals engaged in polyamorous relationship. The researchers used purposive sampling technique to screen the prospective participants. The following selection criteria were followed: individual believe that they are either polyamorous person in a polyamorous relationship; in a polyamorous-monogamous relationship (the participant has one monogamous partner) (Walston, 2001), individuals ages 18 years old and above, have at least two partners (Weitzman, et al., 2012), where parties involved may had at least a verbal agreement regarding their relationship (Zhu, 2018), but excluding those who are married and engaged in other forms of consensual non-monogamous relationship such as swinging, infidelity and polygamy and involved in this relationship set-up for at least a year (Kessler, 2015), this kind of love in polyamory could vary from being emotional, spiritual, sexual or even a combination of all three. It is formed according to what are the agreements and desires of all the parties involved (Klesse, 2011), participant is committed to any type of sexual orientation relationship Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) (Klesse, 2006), at least have a college degree or higher educational status (Sheff, 2005) and belongs to the middle-class or upper-class socio-economic status (Sheff & Hammers, 2011).

The researchers selected individuals age 18 and older because it is the legal age of consent in the Philippines and the researchers adapted the demographics of the participants involved in other research (Jiang, 2017; Mitchell, Bartholomew, & Cobb, 2014; Ritchie & Barker, 2007; Barker, 2005).

After setting the interview schedule, the researchers opted to let the participants chose the location that is more convenient for them to conduct the interview. Upon meeting the participants, the researchers confirmed the identity of the participants and proceeded to discuss the background of the study. The researchers proceed to discuss the informed consent, approximate duration of the interview, confidentiality such as the storage of the information gathered and the purpose of the study. The interview process lasts on an average of 52.6 minutes (ranges 35-82 minutes), and after the interview, the participants were debriefed. The researchers asked the participants for a feedback regarding the whole interview process. Lastly, a token of appreciation have been given to the participants of the study to show gratitude and consistently inform them regarding the updates of the study and provide the final results. This have benefited the individual to better understand his prior behaviour regarding the engagement to polyamory

Final sample

The first participant, W is a 22-year-old undergraduate student whose gender identity is lesbian and has 1 romantic partner and 2 platonic partner. W is in her last year in college where she is taking an arts related course. The second participant, D is a 28-year old college student whose gender identity is male and has 3 romantic partner and 3 platonic partner. D is taking a course related to communications. The third participant, K is a 23-year-old student working as a graphic designer whose gender identity is female and has 3 romantic partners. The fourth participant, E is a 22-year-old undergraduate student whose gender identity is female and has 2 romantic partner. E is taking a course relating to science. The fifth participant, H is a 23-year-old graduate student whose gender identity is female and has 2 romantic partner. H is planning to take a masteral degree in Japan this year.

Five individuals have been included in the final sample involved in polyamorous relationship. Based on the participants data, their average age was 23.6 (range 22-28), the average length of the polyamorous set-up was 3.2 years (range 1-7 years), the average partner count of the participant is 3.6 (range 2-6 partners), the socio-economic status of the participants ranges from middle to upper class, the educational background of the participants ranges from college undergraduate to college graduate in the field of liberal arts and sciences, and the gender of the participants consists of 1 male and 4 female which 1 of the female participants identify herself as a lesbian.

Instruments

The participants of the study filled a basic demographic profile. For the purpose of having an in-depth collection of data from the participants, the acquisition of data through the use of an in-depth interview have been used to gather the experience of polyamorous individuals. The interview have lasted approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Participant's robotfoto

The participants of the study have filled a basic demographic profile which consists of their preferred alias gender orientation, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, civil status, and ask the subject if they are comfortable in sharing the information about their previous or current polyamorous experience.

Semi-structured interview

The researchers have created a questionnaire that includes the questions that explored the experience of polyamorous individuals and the time period when the subject is involved in a polyamorous relationship, the duration before the gained knowledge and consent about the other partners, and who were the one who initiated the polyamorous set-up, and the duration of their current or past polyamorous experience.

Mode of Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed through the use of an inductive thematic analysis. Inductive thematic analysis is a form of thematic analysis that is data-driven and it is a process of coding the data without attempting to insert it into a pre-existing coding frame or the analytic preconceptions. The researchers have read and re-read the fragments and codes for all of the themes related to identify the characteristics of the participants' relationship without paying attention to the themes that the previous literature of the topic have identified. It is a flexible method that can used gather, examine, and report the recurring themes within the data and it allows the researchers to create codes without the use of pre-existing codes. It is method that can be used to answer a wide range of question about the participants' experience to represent a construction of the phenomenon. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).It allows the researchers to to identify the themes through studying the recorded interviews of the participants. After the transcribing the gathered data, the researchers encoded it through the use of a software called Qualyzer. The software was used to review and find similarities to come up with codes based from the fragments or statements of the participants that could lead the researchers to answer the research questions.

The initial coding was done through the use of open coding and line-by-line coding, wherein the researchers analysed every statement of the participants to generate the initial set of codes. After compiling and examining the codes the researchers found the initial themes in the statements. The themes are the patterns in the statements of the participants that captures something that is significant about the data that could answer the research questions of the current study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After that the themes were reviewed and modified, a report that has been produced and validated by other gender-related studies researchers and the participants of the study.

Table. 1 The coding process of the researchers.

Open code	Axial code	Selective code
Feelings on the start of the relationship	Couples activities	Definition of polyamory
Love	Lived experience	Compersion
Description of the relationship	Past experience in monogamous relationship	Polyamorous agreement
Time for self	Duration of the polyamorous relationship	
Coping strategies	Searching for other polyamorous individuals	
Commitment	Open relationship	
Exploring the idea of the relationship	Definition of paramour and metamour	
Mate selection	Queer platonic definition	
Polyamory defined	Inclination to polyamory	
Start of the romantic relationship	New relationship energy	
Relationship with second partner	Development of the relationship	
Communication	Factors to engage in polyamorous relationship	
Duration		
Couple activities		
Openness	Emotional issues	Contemplating on the kind of relationship
Reaction of the environment	Communication problems	Challenges in the relationship
Reaction to the reaction of the environment	Reaction of the environment	Coping strategies
Platonic relationships	Relational concerns	Plans for the future
Possible challenges	Stigma	
Compersion	Scheduling concerns	
Consent	Time for self	
Existence of other relationships	Openness	
Personal freedom	Consent	
Stigma	Time for self	
Queer platonic		
Compromise		
Plans for the future	Possible events in the future	

Based from these figures, the codes found by the researchers from the statements of the participants were revised and checked properly in order to capture the themes properly. Since most of the first few versions of the codes overlaps with each other.

Ethical Considerations

The research abide to the ethical research codes from the Psychological Association of the Philippines and the American Psychological Association. The researchers have taken the following considerations in keep all information of the participant confidential and protecting it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants', they are placed under a pseudonym. The information gathered from the participants have only been used in this study and no one outside the research study can have access of the information they have given. The participants were reminded that if the questions are too intrusive they have the choice to not provide answers to it. Furthermore, all the audio or video recordings gathered through interview, will be kept by the researcher and will be deleted after the completion of the study. This would mean that all the procedures from the beginning of the research have been a responsibly obedient to the research ethics. The security of the participants have been ensured through the anonymity of the data and the accessibility is limited to the researchers alone. The researchers provided consent forms which contains all disclosure regarding the research and strictly complied the to the confidentiality of the data with respect to the privacy of the participants.

RESULTS

The goal of the study was to provide a literature that captures the characteristics of their relationship set-up through the experiences gathered from polyamorous individuals in the Philippines. The responses of the participants have enlightened the researchers and provided an in-depth personal perspective for this phenomenological study. The participants gathered in the study has exhibited the importance of openness and communication in their polyamorous relationship, especially in giving consent, expressing problems and resolving problems in their relationships.

5 verbatim transcripts were analysed by the researchers to come up with 2 emerged categorical themes. These 1st theme (structure) contains three sub-themes (definition of polyamory and polyamorous agreement) and the 2nd theme (phases of the polyamorous relationship) contains four sub-themes (Contemplating of the kind of relationship, challenges in the relationship, coping strategies, and plans for their future) to describe specifically the conceptualizations.

Theme 1: The structure

In this study, the structure refers to the experience of polyamorous individuals in their relationship whereas they discussed the nature and shape of each polyamorous relationship. The structure covers the flexibility and openness of each relationship based on the agreed upon rules in the relationship. Based from the statement of the participants, polyamory refers to creating multiple commitment and loving relationships, founded on honesty and open communication that allows each parties involved the opportunity to learn and grow during the course of their relationship.

The structure covers the needs and wants of the parties involved in a polyamorous relationship. As stated by the participants of the study, the structure is not only limited to being romantic and sexual thus suggesting the existence of different forms of polyamorous set-ups. These aspects has been discussed thoroughly by all the parties and are continually changing as the relationship progressed and matured. The structure of the polyamorous relationship was coded according to definition, compersion, and paramours and metamours.

"The thing about polyamory is it's not the same for everyone talaga, for every setup, it's not the same. There are different roles for couples, I've heard of polyamorous setup wherein walang sabihan… "Don't tell me about what's happening outside this relationship [and] I won't tell you." There are [also] poly fidelity setups wherein there they do not date outside their [set-up]" (D, 28 M)

Sub-theme 1: Definition of polyamory

In this study, *polyamory* refers to the lived experience of Filipino engaging and creating multiple commitment and loving relationships (E, 22 F). This definition has been based on the descriptions of the participants that are engaged in polyamorous relationship. They describe that polyamorous relationship is almost the same with the monogamous relationship that requires work, honesty and openness.

"Polyamory is creating multiple commitment and loving relationships, founded on honesty and open communication. As for the relationships in polyamory, they're basically just like anyone else's relationships, they require work, they require time. Sometimes your partner gives you a headache. It's just like any normal relationship. Like there's fidelity, there's honesty. (E, 22 F)

Most of the participant agreed that polyamory means having multiple relationship founded on love and commitment, and having multiple relationships does not mean that the participants' aim is to just find potential sexual partners and to "sleep around." Each relationship in the polyamorous set-up are founded on love, honesty, commitment and respect. This supports the claim of Johnson (2013) where he stated that polyamory is a consensual non-monogamous relationship set-up. It is a set-up that allows having multiple partners at the same time.

In this kind of relationship, having multiple partners does not mean that these individuals are just looking for other sexual partners. Rather, this kind of relationship set-up is an engagement to multiple honest, equal, nurturing, affectionate, and non-exclusive relationships (Klesse, 2014) that includes people with different gender, sexual orientations and sexual identities (Aviram & Leachman, 2014).

Sub-theme 2: Polyamorous agreement

Polyamorous agreement refers to the agreement established by all the parties involved in a particular polyamorous relationship. Based on the lived experience of the participants in the study, every polyamorous relationship have different agreements within their relationship. This is based on what they are comfortable and fulfills what they need and wants in a relationship.

"The thing about polyamory is it's not the same for everyone talaga, for every setup, it's not the same. There are different roles for couples, I've heard of polyamorous setup wherein walang sabihan… "Don't tell me about what's happening outside this relationship [and] I won't tell you." There are [also] poly fidelity setups wherein there they do not date outside their [set-up]" (D, 28 M)

Another emotion that is practiced in polyamory is compersion. *Compersion* refers to the happiness experienced by the participants when their partner is being happy because of other person. The compersion is said to be an emotion practiced by polyamorous individuals where they find happiness in their partner's happiness. Polyamorous relationship is distinguished from other relationship structure due to the existence of the feeling called "compersion". In the literature, compersion is described as the feelings of pleasure that is felt whenever their lover or paramour experience sexual and or emotional connection with other people (Wolfe, 2003). Further elaborated by the participants by stating that:

"I see your partner's happy and you feel happy for your partner. So it's finding happiness in your partners' happiness. And it's such a big deal, when it comes to polyamory." (E, 22 F)

Compersive individuals felt contented and happy, when their paramour would enjoy their personal time without trying to possess or control any of them. Individuals in a polyamorous relationship wants to be transparent about their desires towards themselves and their partner.

Practicing compersion has been hard for the participants' of the study and other polyamorous people. Being that the "open couple" is the foundation of some polyamorous relationship, also everyone respects the hierarchy (if there is one) rather than equal love for all partners (Wolfe, 2003)

"We're very supportive of each other and were like what we call "dedicated secondaries" wherein were not looking for more with each other. We're perfectly happy where we are and where we are is both beneficial to each other in that sense or enriching in each other's life as is but I do see her as a person I can be around for indefinitely life." (D, 28 M)

The participants defined compersion as being "happy" that their partner's are happy. Even if the happiness is not brought by themselves. This happiness by their partners may be brought by interaction with their peers and partners (metamour). There has been a little difference with the definition stated by Wolfe (2003) that it is the emotional experience of pleasure that is felt when their lover or paramour experience sexual and or emotional connection with other people whereas the participants specifically stated that compersion is simply feeling happy in their partner's happiness.

With regards to the partnerships involved in a polyamorous relationship, the participants lived experience have described the parties involved in the relationship as paramour and metamour. The *paramour and metamour* has been referred as the partner's involved in a polyamorous relationship. To be more specific, the participants lived experience have describe paramour as all of the partner of a polyamorous person and a metamour is the partner of your partner.

As shown in the figure below, groups (A, B and C) are used to describe the parties involved in a polyamorous relationship.
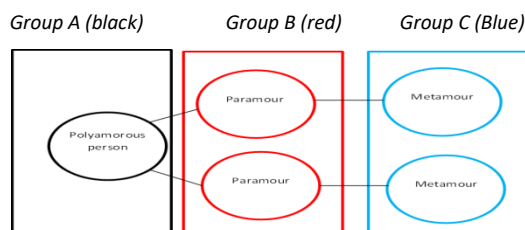
Group A (black)   Group B (red)   Group C (Blue)

Figure 1. Illustration of the paramours and met amours

The in figure 2, the group A would refer to a polyamorous person engaging in a polyamorous relationship which has 2 partners (Group B) also known as the paramour and the Group C would refer to the metamour or the partner's partner of the polyamorous person.

Based on the lived experience of the participants, they have defined metamour as the partners of their partners. In the literature, Ritchie and Barker (2006) define the term paramour as the unmarried partner of a married polyamorous person and a metamour is a non-romantic bond between person x and z, who are both romantic partners of person y (Iwanowska, 2018). Simply put, metamour is what a polyamorous person call their partner's partner.

"In a nutshell, paramour are how you address your partners (primary)... Metamours is your partner's partner, so those are "S" partners of five or six of them. (E, 22 F)

The participants would describe metamour as their partner's partner. This differs from the statement of Ritchie and Barker (2006) that paramour is the term used for a polyamorous individuals unmarried partner. Although the use of term seems limited, this may be due to its attention to the hierarchy of relationships (i.e primary and secondary). *"B" is the only one I called my girlfriend and uh... "K", we refer to each other as partner. "V" and I refer to each other as bou."* (D, 28 M)

Compersion is significant to maintain a harmonious relationship among the paramours (partner) and metamours (partner's partner).To set boundaries or rules wherein all parties involved will respect and have a fulfilling experience in the polyamorous set-up.

"Starting polyamory in the first place was a weird for us. We began with a set of rules. The set of rules reads like a constitution. May definition of terms pa, "here in, hereto for" mga ganoon terms but now were more flexible rules are: not to have sex on the first date, send a selfie when you are out on a date, make time to talk to "B" in a certain point in time during the day, siguro kahit late na kung lalagpas ng 11 PM. And... when I was dating at first everything was predicated upon the fact that we had to be ready for it" (D, 28 M)Wolfe (2003) have concluded that polyamorous individuals who has love for each of their partner is revealed to have a statistically significant level of compersion.

Depending on the structure of their relationship some polyamorous individuals constantly communicate with their paramours and in dealing with situations wherein they are affected by the metamours.

Theme 2: Phases of the polyamorous relationship

The *phases of the polyamorous relationship* consist of the lived experience of the individuals engaging in polyamorous relationship. The researchers used the term "phases of the polyamorous relationship" to define the experience of the participants with regards to the how the polyamorous set-up have begin, the challenges they have encountered, the ways on how the participants coped with the said challenges, and their plans for the future. The phases was coded according to the: contemplating of the kind of relationship, challenges, coping strategies, and the plans for the future.

Sub-theme 3: Contemplating of the kind of relationship

In this study, the *contemplating the kind of relationship* refers to the experience of the individuals engaging in polyamorous relationship where they have started to contemplate about themselves and their relationship. The contemplating the kind of relationship covers the feelings, emotions, actions and decisions they made before and during the start of the relationship.

"She is finding herself attracted to girls and when she told me about that. Instead of being jealous, I want her to pursue it. Me, I have resigned myself to a monogamous lifestyle, but she was like "No, this is beautiful. Let's explore" ... Somewhere around that [time] we were exploring, we were reading about different relationship structures, alternate relationship structures and around that time polyamory almost [felt] like an orientation. Learning about it made me feel like I was not a bad person for wanting to be with other people but not necessarily falling out of love with my girlfriend. So... yeah, here we are 3 or 4 years in our polyamorous relationship. " (D, 28 M)

The participants started their polyamorous relationships in different ways. Most of them have started to be in a monogamous relationship and eventually transitioned into a polyamorous relationship. *"I always like [to] date people and enter in serious monogamous relationship but I always feel this weird feeling that I wanted more but then I never felt that my partner wasn't enough... So I decided to offer my partner to be polyamorous. "Can we be polyamorous? Can we try this?" and as soon as we tried it, our relationship has changed like 180 degree shift, it became a positive. I felt so much lighter, I felt so much enthusiastic, more excited, more open to my long term partner and I feel it's because all of the burden of expectation that I was putting on one person was now divided, right? But also I feel like all of the affection that I have, that I wanted to give was now being like shared properly."* (H, 23 F)

People can be true to themselves when they have freedom of expression of their self and with the emergence of new intimate relationships, individuals will be able to express what they really want without the restriction of feeling any sense of shame. The participants stated that they wanted to be transparent to their partner about wanting more because they want to tell the truth so they will not hide their desire to themselves and their partners. Supporting this act, Schmid in 2001 stated that the outer, relational dimension of it is well characterized by the term transparency which stands for the correspondence of experience and communication towards others.

Sub-theme 4: Challenges in the relationship

Challenges in the relationship refers to the experience of the individuals engaging in a polyamorous relationship that have challenged their relationship. The *challenges in the relationship* includes different problems, feelings, emotions and insight of the participants. As the relationship develops, the participants stated they have encountered challenges. These includes time and money management, communication, setting boundaries in their relationships, and the perception of their environment towards their relationship. People in a non-monogamous relationship particularly based from the statements of the participants have encountered different and uncommon challenges which are related to the structure of the relationship. Some of these are: communication, perceptions of the environment, boundaries, time and money, issues related to differential personal growth, age, demanding partners and problems with metamour.

"Well there is time and money management. [and] of course emotional management… Managing the emotions of more than one person and not to leave them out, that is difficult" (D, 28 M)

Many of the participants said that they value openness between themselves and their partners, thus it becomes a problem whenever their partners would limit such interaction; they would often acknowledge those thoughts and emotional challenges associated with it, thus they exert more effort to acknowledge each interactions with their partners. The participant stated that time and money management are apparent.

Time management was a challenge because the participant's paramour are either working or still studying. It has been a challenge for all of their partners to meet and meet all of the participants in a week. Travel expense, food expense, gifts and money for texting and mobile data are some of the reasons for having a money management problem.

"It wasn't really like he's lying or he was being dishonest but like, he was emotionally repressive. So I could not accurately gauge how bad he was feeling or how good he was feeling. So, regardless of being positive or negative, I could not read him. And then I would always pry the information out by asking [him] over and over. It puts a lot of emotional stress on me because if he's happy I can't tell how much, if he's sad I can't tell how much and I need that information so that I know how much emotional labor he demands. I didn't know, how much emotion to deposit into our interaction." (H, 23 F)

"He lied to me, a lot, he has another partner named "J", and the conflict arise, arose from when, he would tell me something different and he would tell [his other partner] something different... "F" and "J". When they wouldn't be honest, when they would trash talk, when they would compare your other partners with themselves... and they would gaslight you, ganoon. It's really not healthy to compare your partners with each other because for one thing. They offer different things from other partners because they are different people." (K, 23 F)

The participants' have also expressed their concern with setting the boundaries with their relationship.

"Alam mo yung medyo masyado siyang umaasa sayo, more than you can give to, pero hindi, she pretends like it's okay. Like, when I tell her the truth, when I said boundaries over our relationships and I'm actually on the verge of ending this relationship." (D, 28 M)

"Bawal magselos? Well, hindi naman bawal pero dapat ma-manage nang maayos yung pagseselos. Concept of possession, yung mga ganoong klase. That's another challenge, poly-mono relationship are so hard, well not so hard. Since you have different standards set in the relationship." (D, 28 M)

While the participants' have also shared the perceptions on how their immediate environment reacted to their setup.

"That they will probably react like how my ex-partner's mom reacted to the to this. "Haliparot ka!" or something so they'll still shame me about it." (K, 23 F)

"Some of them react with a level of judgement of course. I got asked "Isn't she enough?" At one point in my life, but it was her [my partner's] idea. and a lot some of people think it's all about sex. Threesomes, orgies, well that's a part that not THE part; that is not the reason. (D, 28 M)

"His mom found out and she was so mad, she was like you deserve more, ganon, like, you don't deserve somebody who's like sleeping with other people or who are in relationship with other people. You deserve the wholeness." (K, 23 F)

This affirms that the relationships formed by participants are perceived by their environment as a relationship that is simply an excuse for sexual activities and their partners is not enough to satisfy their needs.

Sub-theme 5: Coping strategies

The *coping strategies* refer to how the individuals engaging in polyamorous relationship have dealt with the challenges they encountered effectively. This strategy is based on the participants' statement that happened after they have demonstrated strength in facing their problems with the emotional, social and relational concerns. Prior to these challenges in the relationship, the participants have stated different coping strategies to resolve the different challenges (relational, social and emotional concerns). These includes openness, honesty, validation of feelings, time management and money management. When a problem arises in a relationship, one participant stated that:

"So, I think that's the most important part about polyamory and how it works is that there is so much open communication involve, so much transparency na everything is discussed beforehand, and during and after. Its like its very conscious consent at all times. And it shouldn't feel tiring, it should feel good to know that your paying careful attention to your partner needs" (H, 22 F)

This support the claim of Johnson (2013) where he stated that some individuals are seeking for some openness and honesty in a relationship that is common in a polyamorous relationships. Hence, the openness in the polyamorous set-up is a coping strategy for the participants' to have a harmonious relationship and prevent conflict by acknowledging everyone's concern.

"Intense time management and emotional management. Sometimes kasi you get cold between partners with not necessarily siding with views or goals, but it's a struggle sometimes. Financially, you do have to manage your shit, you have to maybe not going out with so many people, totoo yan. Making money or at least-which is not to say polyamory is just for the privilege you just have to deal with the manage. Manage your money well, i noticed a lot of polyamory people are KKB people talaga when going out so ayun. Emotionally, i just generally try to reach a comfortness." (D, 28 M)

Based from the statements of the participants, polyamory can be a beneficial set-up. Since the number of their partners can provide forms of emotional, social and spiritual support and this would allow the individual and the partner's ability to cope effectively in times of crisis.

"With my partners, kapag may bagay na we disagree with. We still listen to each other like kunyare kapag ayaw mo nito, so tatahimik ako, papakinggan ko siya. Tapos sasabihin ko na "Ah ayoko nyan, kase ganito ang tingin ko." Tapos sasabihin niya "but I see it this way" tapos ako "but i see it this way" tapos parang "yeah, we have different views" ganun lang. Sa kanilang dalawa na yun. Sa romantic partner ko, usually kasi hinde. Hindi siya nag a-agree saken eh. Like pag may different views kame... one of us is the same den. We listen to each other tapos i-eexplain namen kung anong pagkakaintindi namen tas yung misconception about doon. Lilinawin ng isa. Tapos, yeah we can agree naman. Yun lang naman." (W, 22 F)

"In fairness wala masyadong selos, kase feeling ko magkakaroon ng struggle lalo kapag may magseselos. So far wala naman talaga kase nagtatanong din ako kung any of them "uy platonic two, nagseselos kaba kay platonic one" ayun. I do point that from time to time. Dahil syempre ayokong may mailang sa kanila na may maleft out. So far, wala masyadong struggles and conflict" (W, 22 F)

Based from the study of Deri (2012), jealousy is a result the insecurities formed from oneself or as a result of their society, in contrast to it being gained for the presence of another lover. As such, the polyamorous individual is still responsible for their own emotions and they would always support their partners to handle such negative emotion. For example, the polyamorous individual would ask questions to their paramours and talk to them to reassure them that having another partner would not make them love less.

"Reassurance of course. "Nothing is being taken away, nothing is going to leave." Which is the core idea of polyamory anyway. "Wala namang nawawala sa iyo, hindi naman ako nawawala and hindi naman nawawala ang pagmamahal ko sa iyo dahil may gusto akong iba"... [Also] meeting the other person helps, it helps kasi when I think about jealousy "it often feels like you created a construction of another person in your head" and meeting ba the person often disassociates, it makes them real. It sort of gives you a reassurance na "Oh, they are not here to take, take my partner away." (D, 28 M)

Sub-theme 6: Plans for their future

In this study, *plans for the future* refers to how the participants plans in the future regarding themselves and their relationship set-up. These covers the plans on how they would handle their career and relationship in the future. The researchers gathered different responses ranging from:

One of the participants have stated that he see himself marrying one of his partners and that he sees something long term with his other partners stating that,

"I see myself definitely marrying "B", I see something long term with "V". Funny thing about "V" she is monogamous, so she is only dating me but I also see something long term with her I say it is early for to me say marriage but I all relationships have a track and it think it's on that track." (D, 28 M)

Furthermore, stating that since his partners have a good relationship with one of his primary partner, he sees it as something that could be around forever. Along with his other partners to whom he considers as close friends. Lastly, "D" have stated that unfortunately, not all relationships are worth maintaining.

With "K" I can see [her] being around forever, because we are in such a good relationship. She and "B" have a good relationship so yeah nandoon. "S" and "L" are both very close friends, hindi mawawala yon. "M"... well, not all relationships are worth having." (D, 28 M)

"Kaya from five years from now, di pa ko sigurado... pero sigurado na ko na naka-graduate na ko at kame. Dapat. So ayun. Parang anlabo no? mas okay pa sa platonic [partner]. Pero ayun, hindi rin kasi siya sigurado sa future niya. Sige, no rush naman." (W, 22, F)

"This is my personal outlook because I know other polyamorous couples would want to settle down, get married and still be in a polyamorous setup and that is something that happened. But personally I'm not very keen on getting married, if I were to look at my future I would see myself on multiple long term partnerships but none sealed in matrimony and my primary focus is more on my career it's not really a product of my set-up, it's really a response to my set-up either because marriage and polyamory can work, it happens to some people. It's a part of who I am as a person, I am very career driven and I don't see an appeal in marriage. So even if I were monogamous it would be the kind of the future that I want." (H, 23 F)

This concludes that some of the participants are planning to settle down in matrimony while keeping their polyamorous relationships. While loving multiple partners, some of the participants have a primary partner in their relationships thus, planning to settle down with their primary partner while maintaining a romantic or platonic relationship with their other partners.

This affirms the statement of Johnson (2013) that polyamorous individuals may rather chose marriage with their partner since the legalities surrounding such relationship is discouraged. Some of the concerns surrounding the legal concerns are the laws on marriages, adulteries, bigamy, custody cases, and could often lead to them being discriminated in their place of work.

One participant stated that she would rather focus on her career or studies while maintaining their polyamorous relationships, and while some are still uncertain on what their future holds.

DISCUSSION

Polyamorous relationship have started to emerged in the Philippines. However, little attention has been given to the lived experience of Filipino individuals engaging in polyamorous relationship in the Philippines. In connection to the assumptions of the researchers; the peers, family, and the people in the environment of the people are familiar with the idea of non-monogamous relationships but they tend to associate it with infidelity. The participants stated that people in their environment tend to assume and fail to understand the difference of the different forms on non-monogamous relationship which may lead to an immediate disapproval or discrimination in their relationship set-up. The participants' also belong to the middle-upper class based from their socioeconomic status and the researchers found that the difficulties in the polyamorous set-up includes: time, money and emotional management to all the parties involved.

In the first theme "Structure", the researchers were able to see how the participants have described the nature and structure of polyamory in the Philippines. It showed that polyamorous individual have identified that they are polyamorous and treat polyamory as an orientation. The participants have emphasized that being polyamorous is something they have decided on their own. Moreover, a polyamorous relationship would only function well if all of the parties involved would be completely open and honest to one another. It is distinguished that polyamory has a presence of communication between partners (Hymer & Rubin, 1982; Brandon, 2016).

The second theme "Phase of polyamorous relationship" highlighted the sub-themes which include the beginning of the polyamorous set-up, challenges encountered by polyamorous individuals, the coping strategies, and their plans for the future. The challenges the participants stated is not on the set-up of the relationship itself but on the time management, environments' reaction to the polyamorous relationship and the stigma associated with it. the analysis showed how the participants have cope to the challenges which they encounter in their relationship. It highlighted how the polyamorous individuals have work and solved the problems that they have faced and are currently facing.

Despite the positive characteristics of polyamory, there are many different relationship, emotional and social problems concerns that polyamorous individuals are facing (Weitzman, Davidson, & Phillips, 2012). The participants of the study have identified several relationship concerns such as: Time and resources, sex and integrating new partners with family and friends. Moreover, these matters which require a better planning and processing in a polyamorous relationship (Weitzman, Davidson, & Phillips, 2012). The participants' emotional concerns involves an internal conflict within themselves because most of the participants have been raised and the idea of having only one partner is the ideal relationship that they knew. Therefore, when they felt that they wanted more and they wanted to share the love they have to more people, they became confused and thought that there were something wrong with them but once they challenged the monogamous social norm and become open about their feelings and desire, they felt overwhelmed and free. Different social concerns have been identified by the participants such as discrimination by the mainstream society and family disapproval, fear of disapproval by their families, fear of disapproval and being declined which may lead to make effort to keep their relationship set-up a secret.

Relating the theoretical framework to the results, the theory views the relationships formed in polyamory as a means of maximizing the rewards while minimizing its cost. Furthermore, based from the concept of the comparison levels (CL), as a reference point for the expected outcomes from a global standpoint and the comparison levels of alternatives (CLalt) represents the alternatives that can be done to obtain something. Comparison level involves the expectation of a partner (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). It involves what they are expecting to receive in a particular relationship and such expectations are being compared to the person's view of how a relationship would be or by the expectations of the society regarding a relationship meanwhile comparison level of alternatives tackled the connection between the "give and take" in the relationship to determine one's satisfaction and commitment to their partners. The researchers viewed that interdependence theory can be used to explain the participants' behavior. Since that the comparison level concerns, what they want or what they can get from the relationships. While the comparison levels of alternatives represents the alternative ways on how to achieve such wants. Based from the experience of the participants instead of choosing to leave and exchange their partners to achieve such wants the participants opted to create a set-up wherein they can maintain a harmonious relationship with their partners through communicating their concerns and negotiating what they want to achieve in their relationship. Furthermore, the theory relates to the structure of the participants goals and drives towards the relationship (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2002). Specifically, the theory focuses on understanding the different issues or possibilities in their set-up. It is concerned on how it would both be benefiting them while minimizing the cost that could be gained from it and if their partners are going to become responsive to such benefits and on how the relationship would adapt to such situations (Holmes, 2002; Kelley, 1984; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2002).

Similarly to the statements of the participants, the agreements formed in the structure of relationship would provide rewards towards the authenticity of their feelings and at the same time expressing it openly to their partners. Additionally, they would want to evoke more feelings of compersion towards their partners and by having multiple committed relationships would offer a chance to elicit such emotion.

Implications

The result of the present study provides a better understanding of the concept of polyamory in the Philippines. This research contributes on how the polyamorous individuals have experienced, as well as the description of their relationship, challenges and coping strategies in the relationship. It can also facilitate an increase in the body of knowledge in terms of contextualizing polyamory and fill the gaps in literature especially in local literature. Practically, the research can serve as a foundation for future endeavors in expanding the knowledge pertaining to the experience of polyamorous individuals in the Philippines. The study can be used as information in creating tools that could help other researchers in completely capturing their experiences and in the creation of such tools it could also help in dealing with polyamorous individuals' concerns about their lifestyle, relationships, emotional and social concerns with regards to the educational, clinical, and industrial setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations that need to be taken into consideration. First, this study is limited by an exclusive reliance on self-report measures. The participants may have felt obligated to represent polyamory positively and may thus have inflated their self-reported perceptions on the interview. The second limitation involves the scope of the current study. In this study, the researchers sought to examine the formation, their struggles which can include how they maintain the relationship, and lived experiences of polyamorous individuals in the Philippines. Moreover, the informants for the study which has been involved in a polyamorous relationship had to be together at least a year to assume that only committed couple participated in the study (Kessler, 2015). For future research, it would be recommended to apply different forms of data gathering aside from using interview for the participants. Focused group discussions would also be an effective way to gather data in order to confirm the statements of each participants in one discussion. This way, the researchers can be completely immersed in the experience of each participants in the study. The findings of the current study cannot be used to generalized all polyamorous individuals. Given that the participants in the study was found in the National Capital Region (NCR), participants from other regions of the Philippines may have different experiences in their polyamorous relationship and a large sample of participants should be needed for future study in order to capture the full essence of the polyamorous relationship in the Philippines.

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