

THE POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH OF MALE NON-PARTICIPATING PARTNERS OF INFIDELITY

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ABSTRACT

Infidelity causes damages that may result to tragedies such as breaking of families, divorce, physical violence, and emotional distress to the non-participating partner. This emotional distress may lead to destruction of the non-participating partner's self-esteem, self-worth, and feel overwhelming emotions like guilt and rejection. Hence, this traumatic experience of infidelity may also end up positively for the non-participating partner. The emotional distress may become a source of positive psychological changes or posttraumatic growth (PTG). Thus, this PTG of non-participating partners may change their perspective toward their negative experience from infidelity. With this, the study aims to describe the posttraumatic growth of the male non-participating partners through their lived experiences in the aftermath of the traumatic incident, infidelity. This paper also included the factors that contributed to the growth of the male non-participating partners who experienced infidelity. Using purposive sampling, the data were collected through one-on-one interviews with the eight participants using semi-structured interview questions. The data gathered were analyzed using thematic analysis which is usually used in qualitative researches for identifying, analyzing, and reporting of the themes or patterns of the data.

Keywords: female transgressor, infidelity, male transgressor, non-participating partner, posttraumatic growth, trauma

INTRODUCTION

In our world today, infidelity is one of the main causes of divorce (Drigotas & Barta, 2001; Hall & Fincham, 2007). According to some studies, infidelity is the main reason of 20% to 50% of divorce cases in United States (Mark, Janssen, & Milhausen, 2011; Marin, Christensen, & Atkins, 2014). The data from the General Social Survey sponsored by the National Science Foundation showed that about 10% of married couples have engaged in infidelity wherein percentage showed 12% of men and 7% of women engage in sexual activity outside their marriage. Researchers from University of Washington conducted a detailed analysis from 1991 to 2006 that showed the lifetime infidelity for men and women over the age of 60 increased from 28% to 20% and 15% from 5% respectively (Zare, 2011). Aside from USA, Vietnam also view infidelity as one of the major problem nowadays and studies shown that approximately 70% of married Vietnamese have engaged in infidelity (Linh & Harris, 2009). Because of these findings and records of infidelity incidents, it is then considered as one of the problems that married couples face in their marital life which may lead then to serious consequences such as their break-up or separation.

The predicament of infidelity is also a common concern among marriages in the Philippines (Pizarro & Fernandez, 2015). Infidelity may range from casual dating which is a relationship without emotional commitment to keeping a "querida" or mistress; in cases like these, males are usually the transgressor or the partner who committed the infidelity. As stated in several researches, male infidelity is the most frequent cause of divorce. However, there are no clear figures about

the records of marital break-ups due to the absence of divorce in the Philippines (Gonzales, 2003). On the other hand, female infidelity is not usual before in our society. Back then, the view about Filipino women's sexuality comes with the standards of "marijanismo", wherein they are expected to be a moral mother who promote the virtue of chastity and self-sacrificing. However a recent study estimated that 55% of married women are engage with infidelity Pizzaro and Fernandez's (2015). Thus, there is indeed a need to explore the female infidelity in the local setting.

Despite of gender differences, both men and women suffer greatly from infidelity. However, there are still differences with regards to their responses and impact of infidelity. According to Buss and colleagues' (1992) evolutionary model of jealousy, women tend to be highly distressed imagining that their husband is committing an emotional infidelity to another woman than sexual infidelity. On the other hand, men are most highly to be distressed by wife's sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity (Fisher, 2009). Also, according to Miller and Manner, 2008, males tend to feel anger than sadness while females feel the other way around. The impact of infidelity also lasts long to males compared to females because of the tremendous damaging social consequences.

Infidelity may cause males to feel lower status and perceived mate value because it affected their dominance as well as it may show vulnerability to other males.

Due to the worldwide increase of married individuals engaging on infidelity, it may be reasonable to think of infidelity occurrences as

another crisis of living for couples. The breach in trust by one partner may shatter the couple's shared assumptions, beliefs, and expectations about their relationship. The recovery then from the incident may be uncertain even with the help of professionals (Kazemi & Javid, 2015). According to Peluso and Spina (2008), it is a serious problem with severe consequences for the couple and creates major apprehension for couple counselors. This is because of the different manifestations of infidelity and acute emotions that are experienced by the clients that may lead to high level of reactance and to intense emotional despair due to the negative emotions surrounding infidelity (Duba, Kindsvatter, & Lara, 2008; Fife, Weeks, & Gambescia, 2008). Also, the traumatic effect of infidelity is not only seen as a problem by the couple counselors but also by the clinicians who frequently encounter individuals who are experiencing the turmoil of infidelity.

Due to the increase of infidelity cases in the clinical setting, clinicians reported and affirmed that the revelation or discovery of the infidelity may lead trauma to the non-participating partner (Snyder, Baucom, & Gordon, 2008). However, not all psychological responses to trauma are always negative. Individuals may also experience posttraumatic growth (PTG) after experiencing a traumatic event such as infidelity. The traumatic event itself may lead the individual to experience the posttraumatic growth that will enable the individuals to experience spiritual development, openness to new possibilities, enhance personal strength, improvement of relationship with others, and greater appreciation of life (Barrington & Shakespeare, 2003; Peterson Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008;). In line with this, literature of posttraumatic growth mostly revolved around these five domains in different cases of traumatic experience. However, studies about the positive changes or posttraumatic growth of non-participating partners in the aftermath of their infidelity experience is not studied yet especially in the domain of males as the non-participating partner who experienced the stressful event and due to the lack of local studies about the topic.

The research aims contribute to psychological institutions and counselors in dealing with the well-being of male non-participating partners. Also, this study can raise awareness for people who experienced infidelity that this stressful occurrence can be a possible source of positive changes in their lives.

Research Objectives

This present study aims to describe the posttraumatic growth of the male non-participating partners through their lived experiences in the aftermath of the traumatic incident, infidelity.

Specifically, this study aims to know the positive psychological changes of the male non-participating partners and the factors that contributed to positive psychological changes of the male non-participating partners.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational model is developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) as part of their study about positive psychological changes in the aftermath of stressful or traumatic event. This model shows that the phenomenon of posttraumatic growth is triggered by the occurrence of a traumatic event that may shatters one's perception of the world. At the beginning of the process, the individual must engage in coping responses in order to manage the overwhelming emotions that resulted from the traumatic event. Hence, a high level of cognitive processing of the difficult events or circumstances may also happen. With this, the central element in the process of posttraumatic growth is the degree in which the individual is engaged cognitively by the experienced traumatic event. An individual's social system may serve an important role in the overall process of growth, especially through the provision of the new growth schemas and the acceptance of disclosures about the experienced traumatic circumstances and about the growth-related themes. Also, posttraumatic growth is connected to the progression of general wisdom about life and the development of individual's life narrative. With this, the psychological distress may not only set the process of posttraumatic growth, rather this may also accompany the enhancement or the development of posttraumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

In connection with the transformational model, this study explored the posttraumatic growth of the non-participating partner. This model of posttraumatic growth was used to understand the possible positive psychological changes of the male non-participating partners in the aftermath of struggles from infidelity. As what Heintzelman, Murdock, Krycak, and Seay (2014) and Ramos and Leal (2013) indicated that negative events such as infidelity may cause positive outcomes for the survivors. Also, this model will explain on how the posttraumatic growth occurred to the non-participating partner after experiencing the traumatic event, infidelity.

Literature Review

Infidelity is one of the leading causes of divorce, wherein studies show about 90% of divorce cases involve infidelity (Zare, 2011). It is an act either emotional or sexual in nature by the transgressor where this occurs outside the monogamous, primary relationship and may cause a breach in their affinity and commitment as well as infringement of norms related to the exclusivity of the romantic, emotional, or sexual relationship (Dean, 2011) However, not all psychological responses to trauma are not often negative. Empirical research showed a significant number of people who experienced a traumatic event report a positive change following an extremely traumatic situation. This positive change that occurs to trauma victims is termed as posttraumatic growth. Barrington & Shakespeare (2003), defined posttraumatic growth as a positive psychological change that results from a highly stressful, challenging, and traumatic event. The devastating event itself is the one that motivates the person to rebuild their own lives and make a positive personal change (Barrington & Shakespeare, 2003).

Infidelity

Infidelity is the act of betrayal of the transgressor by being involved in either emotional or sexual affinity with outside the primary relationship without the knowledge or consent of the other partner. It is said to be a violation of agreed-upon norms and a breach of trust in the expected exclusivity of the emotional, romantic, and sexual relationship (Fife, Weeks, & Gambescia, 2008; Madathil & Sandhu, 2008; Hall & Fincham, 2009; Dean, 2011; Previt & Amato, 2004). Studies of infidelity described the one committing an affair as the “involved partner” or the “offending partner” while the other half of the pair who’s not having an affair as the “injured partner”, “noninvolved partner”, or the “victim” (Abrahamson, Hussain, Khan, & Schofield, 2012; Dean, 2011). The experience of infidelity is similar to experiencing any trauma, the event may cause intense and overwhelming feelings such as anger, hurt, shock, horror, betrayal, rejection, sadness, guilt, and denial that may result to withdrawal, yelling, and even silence especially to the victim or the injured partner (Abrahamson, Hussain, Khan, & Schofield, 2012).

Female Infidelity Gender is one of the most explored variables in researches. Some studies about infidelity examined the differences between men and women. Evolutionary psychologists suggest that men and women do not have the same motivations to cheat. One major factor is the marital dissatisfaction which tends to be higher among unfaithful women compared to unfaithful men. Unfaithful men tend to report more sexual motivation compared to emotional for engaging in infidelity whereas unfaithful women tend to be more involved in emotional infidelity (Drigotas and Barta, 2001). Infidelity then might be a result or consequence of unhappy sexual relationship (Duba, Kindsvatter & Lara, 2008). Besides from problems in marital satisfaction, women viewed men’s infidelity as a result of the need to feed their ego and prove sexual desire, whereas they also claim that they tend to seek affection from other males because of emotional problems in their relationship especially when their needs for closeness are not given enough by their spouse or partners. That’s why women are more likely to engage in emotional infidelity and men in sexual infidelity (Eaves & Robertson, 2007). On the other hand, a research by Goetz and Causey (2009) also showed that the ratings of men in the possibility of committing infidelity in the future were higher compared to women’s. Though men are more suspicious than women of their partner’s committing infidelity. In line with this, men also view sexual infidelity as more distressing than emotional infidelity while women find emotional infidelity more tormenting than sexual infidelity (Berman & Frazier, 2005; Eaves & Robertson, 2007; Miller, 2008).

In connection with the current study, female will serve as the transgressor since the researchers will explore the domain of male as the non-participating partner considering that infidelity literatures usually focused on male as the transgressor.

Consequences of Infidelity Infidelity is said to be one of the most difficult issues experienced by couples and a strenuous issue to treat by couple counselors (Abrahamson, Hussain, Khan, & Schofield, 2012;

Hall & Fincham, 2009; Heintzelman, Murdock, Krycak & Seay, 2014; Peluso & Spina, 2008). It may cause serious long-lasting consequences as it is a catastrophic transgression within romantic relationships. Hence, it is important to understand better the causes of extradyadic involvement especially since it can destroy a couple or worse, a family as consequences of infidelity. (Boekhout, Hendrick & Hendrick, 2003).

The consequences of the impact of infidelity may be traumatic and has been referred as an “interpersonal trauma” based on the similarities of the reactions of nonparticipating partners to someone who underwent a traumatic event (Dean, 2011). Eventually, infidelity affects all the people or parties involved, but the traumatic and feeling of betrayal is experienced by the non-participating partner. According to Heintzelman, Murdock, Krycak & Seay (2014), the degree of commitment of an individual in a romantic relationship may also affect the level of trauma experienced because of infidelity. Such consequences of the betrayal and secrecy of infidelity include broken hearts, pessimism, self-doubt or a damaged self-esteem, loss of trust, even physical violence and murder as fidelity is intertwined with trust, intimacy, and respect. Hence, the partner who’s more committed to the relationship may experience higher levels of trauma as compared to the one who’s less committed.

Besides the feelings of betrayal due to secrecy, infidelity is also considered as a traumatic occurrence because of the overwhelming feelings of rage, powerlessness, victimization, abandonment, depressive symptomatology, and other posttrauma-like symptoms in the aftermath of infidelity (Hall & Fincham, 2009). These reactions of the non-participating partner are also similar to the reactions observed in PTSD as their fundamental assumptions to their partners, their selves, and relationship are violated, affecting their core beliefs vital to emotional security (Fife, Weeks, & Gamescia, 2008; Hall & Fincham, 2009; Snyder, Boucom, & Gordon; 2008). In this study, the consequences of infidelity will serve as the source of the positive psychological changes of the non-participating partner who experience the traumatic event infidelity.

Posttraumatic Growth

Growth due to stressful or traumatic occurrence became a magnet for research because of the pioneering works of Tedeschi and Calhoun who gave a large contribution to literatures about growth with the concept of posttraumatic growth (Joseph, 2016). This term coined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) were used by several authors to describe the positive change of individual after experiencing a traumatic event. They used the term posttraumatic growth to describe the positive changes that occur after a traumatic event wherein these traumatic events resulted a positive growth particularly, increased in appreciation in life, positive spiritual change, and setting of new priorities in life are experience by the trauma survivors after experiencing a highly stressful event. (Knaevelsrud, Lidl, & Maercker, 2010; Ramos & Leal, 2013).

Definition of Posttraumatic Growth Posttraumatic growth, as defined by its pioneers, Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996), is a subjective psychological and experience of positive change that results of the psychological and cognitive efforts made to cope with challenging, stressful, and traumatic event that can also open an opportunity for further individual growth. This broad definition was used by several authors to describe the construct of posttraumatic growth (Barrington & Shakespeare, 2013; Berger & Weiss, 2009; Jirek, 2016; Knaevelsrud, Lidl, & Maercker, 2010; Leeman, Dispenza, & Chang, 2015; Ramos & Leal, 2013; Taku & Cann, 2014). Hence, this construct should not be mistaken with resiliency (Barrington & Shakespeare, 2013; Leeman, Dispenza, & Chang, 2015). Because this growth is not just being resilient, thus it requires a great amount of previous level of human functioning (Joseph, 2009).

In connection with the study, definition of posttraumatic growth will differentiate the concept of posttraumatic growth to other constructs particularly, resiliency. Also, this will explain that negative experiences can also result to a posttraumatic growth.

Traumatic Experience Traumatic experience or highly stressful events may lead to negative physical, emotional and psychological problems, like anxiety, depression, and physical illness. Also, this experience of traumatic event may shatter key elements of a person's view to the world, beliefs and goals, and can also be the cause in the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Leeman & Chang, 2015; Ramos & Leal, 2013; Jirek, 2016). However, the effect of traumatic event, particularly the psychological response of a person is not often exclusively negative (Knaevelsrud & Maercker, 2010). Despite the negative effects of trauma, individuals can also experience, posttraumatic growth (PTG), which refers to the positive changes to overcome the traumatic event (Leeman, Dispenza, & Chang, 2015; Tedeschi & Calhoun; Triplett, Cann, Calhoun, & Reeve, 2011; Swickert & Hittner, 2009; Weiss, 2005, 2014). Some people who experienced major life traumas, reported that they later view the trauma as an event that increases the worth of their lives and self-perceptions. The paradoxical nature of PTG is the most fundamental element that can help on understanding and appreciating the emotional and cognitive struggles of trauma survivors (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004).

Despite of the devastating effects of the traumatic event that were experienced by individuals who reported positive growth after adversity, PTG does not require a trauma that would meet the A1 criterion of PTSD symptoms that are prescribed by Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as a triggering event to be experienced by individuals (Taku & Cann, 2014; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

In this research, the traumatic experience of infidelity will be the source of the posttraumatic growth of the male non-participating partner. The distress of the traumatic experience may also cause positive psychological growth and other positive changes in their lives.

Development of Posttraumatic Growth In the aftermath of trauma, an individual's struggle with traumatic event may result to

negative or positive outcomes or more often, it can be a mixture of both outcomes (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004). The feeling of devastation and loss itself that was experienced by the individuals after a highly stressful and traumatic event may serve as a trigger for positive psychological change or posttraumatic growth (Berger & Weiss, 2009; Joseph 2009; Barrington & Finch, 2012; Leeman, Dispenza, & Chang, 2015). Posttraumatic growth is an outcome of an individual's cognitive processes such as responses and changes in his or her cognitive schemas after experiencing a traumatic event (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004; Berger & Weiss, 2009; Leeman, Dispenza, & Chang, 2015). Hence, these cognitive processes of the aftermath of trauma is necessary to growth as the individual makes sense of the traumatic event. As a person discerning growth after coping with the traumatic event, individual may also perceive his or her self as a strong person who overcomes the suffering effects of trauma (Ramos & Leal, 2013).

Since traumatic event may lead to positive psychological changes, Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995), the pioneers of posttraumatic growth, identified positive psychological changes that can occur after a traumatic event. Those positive psychological changes include improvement of relationship with others, openness to new possibilities, greater appreciation of life, enhanced personal strength, and spiritual development (Peterson Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008). This domains of positive psychological changes or growth can open the development of survivors towards their self-perceptions, way of appreciating their own lives, and renegotiating what really matters for them (Joseph, 2009; Swickert & Hittner, 2009). Studies about PTG found some of these positive psychological changes in different traumatic experiences such as the researches of Mehrabi, et. al (2015) and Fallah, et. al (2012) about cancer patients who exhibited improved relationships with other people and God after their cancer experience. Also, a study about unemployed men showed that their traumatic experience led them to have a closer relationship with their families especially their children and strengthen their faith in God (Waters and Strauss, 2016).

In this study, development of posttraumatic growth will show the significance of the individual's cognitive processes with regards to making sense or meaning to the traumatic event infidelity.

This study is based on the assumption that the male non-participating partners perceived the traumatic event, infidelity, as a source of posttraumatic growth.

Conceptual Framework

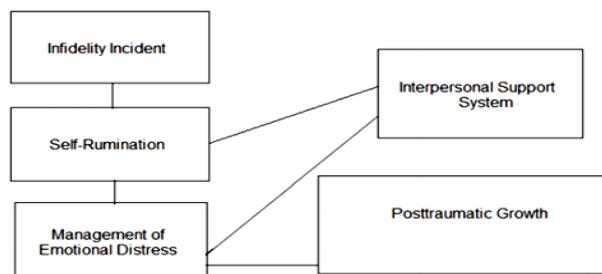


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHOD

This study is a qualitative research to have a richer and deeper understanding of the posttraumatic growth (PTG) phenomena through the participants' experience of infidelity and also because PTG may manifest differently for different traumatic occurrences (Waters & Strauss, 2016). Also, exploratory method was used since the domain of male non-participating partners is not yet been ventured by researchers and phenomenology design as the participants make sense and give meaning to their experiences in the aftermath of the traumatic incident, infidelity as a source of positive changes in their lives. Phenomenology design was also used because PTG usually manifests when an individual process and make meaning to their stressful and traumatic experience (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Data needed for this research were the lived experiences of male non-participating partners who experienced positive changes in the aftermath of the infidelity incident. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The data was gathered through one-on-one interview with male non-participating partners who were at least 30 years old and at least 5 years married but separated and perceived their infidelity experience as stressful or traumatic through the Impact of Event Scale (IES) and exhibited growth or positive changes based on their scores on Posttraumatic Growth Inventory-Short Form (PTGI-SF).

Thematic analysis was used for analyzing the data gathered from the interviews of male non-participating partners. The data was analyzed twice and the data gathered were first read and analyzed for 5 times by the researchers only to identify the recurring themes. Afterwards, the data was read and analyzed again with a third party who has background and knowledge about qualitative research to avoid bias. The transcripts of the interviews were also analyzed for 5 times for the second analysis. The recurring themes from the second analysis were merged with the identified themes from the first analysis.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this study, 8 male non-participating partners who experienced infidelity were interviewed. Their ages ranged from 30 to 46 years old. The findings of the study highlighted the posttraumatic growth that they've experienced after the infidelity incident. 12 themes were extracted from the data gathered that described the positive psychological changes of the male non-participating partners.

Shattered Self-Esteem

When the discovery of the affair occurred, respondents reported that they questioned their self-worth because of the traumatic event that they have experienced. They questioned themselves due to their partner's selection of another partner over oneself. Questions like, "Am I not enough?", "Am I not worth it?", and "What is wrong with me?" are hanging on their minds. Respondent's explained that:

Mark: "*Nawalan ako ng tiwala sa sarili. Parang wala akong kwentang tao. Wala akong kwentang indibidwal. Di ako kayang mahalin... nawala talaga yung self-esteem ko. Talagang wala na akong tiwala sa sarili. Nasira yung sarili ko. Nasira yung timeline ko.*"

Frank: "*Napakababa kong tao, walang silbi. Napakaliit kong tao dahil ako ay niloko ng asawa ko, na bawat tingin sa akin parang tinatawanan ako na pinindeho ng asawa parang ganun... sa laki kong ito naloko ako ng asawa ko, ano pa bang kulang?*"

Most of the respondents reported that they questioned their self-worth after the infidelity incident because of their partners' selection of another partner. The discovery of the affair made them feel low to the point that they cannot even see their worth as a person. The infidelity incident stepped their ego as man that their wife were the ones who committed the infidelity.

This basic theme, shattered self-esteem, is consistent with the findings of Heintzelman, Murdock, Krycak, & Seay (2014). Wherein they stated that one of the consequences of betrayal and secrecy of infidelity include damaged self-esteem. In this present study, findings showed that infidelity caused great effect to the male non-participating partners. It was a highly stressful experience which caused shattered self-esteem, self-doubt, and loss of trust with themselves as well as their partners. This present study is also consistent with the findings of Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick (2003) that the threat in one's romantic relationship can damaged self-esteem. The damaged self-esteem was due to the shattering of the beliefs of the non-participating partner such as beliefs about his self, partner, and their committed relationship as a consequence of the transgressor's betrayal of trust and breaching the exclusivity of their relationship. This paper found that the threat, infidelity of the male non-participating partners' wives committed, shattered their self-esteem. Because of this, they questioned their self-worth and felt that their ego as a man was also shattered.

Acceptance of Infidelity Experience

Maybe one of the hardest part in the process but eventually after some time, some of the respondents stated that they have learned to accept the fact that their partners committed infidelity. They reported that:

Julius: "...hanggang sa parang nakita ko na parang tanggapin ko na lang yun dahil mas importante yung anak ko, yun ang dapat kong isipin."

Robert: "*Ganun pala yun, parang di mo matanggap muna pero yung acceptance, tumagal mga one month, two months. Yung acceptance naramdam ko sa mga bata, nung tinanggap ko na rin, tinanggap na rin nila.*"

Accepting what happened took time but it helped them to focus more on the things that matters, chose to improve themselves in different aspects mostly for their own good and for the sake of their children.

This theme is consistent with the findings of Abrahamson, Hussain, Khan, & Schofield (2012) that acceptance is one part of the healing process from the pain of infidelity and that acceptance in the traumatic incident is not automatically replaced with positive feelings. In line with this, the present study found that the acceptance of infidelity is a process. Male non-participating partners gradually accepted that their wives committed infidelity and thus used this pain to improve themselves.

Motivated by Children

Their child or children played a huge role in their recovery or moving on process, they became their first and foremost inspiration to overcome the negative emotions surrounding infidelity. They became their driving force to get better, to stand up again as a father. Some statements reported by the respondents are:

Donald: "...pag nakikita ko yung mga anak ko, kung sakali nga na gagawin kong hindi ako mag move on, hindi ko aayusin; sino na ang nandiyan para sa kanila? Eh maliliit pa sila noon."

Frank: "Para lang mawala ang kalungkutan ko, dinadala ng aking mga kapatid yung mga anak ko sa aking trabaho para lang masilip ako.... na kapag ikaw pala ay niyayakap na ng anak mo... masarap, dagdag kaluwagan sa kalooban... lalong tumibay ang sarili ko dahil na rin sa kanila."

Having their kids with them in the process of recovery or moving on truly helped them to overcome the stressful event. Their love and care as a father became their springboard to stand up once again and fix themselves for the sake of their children.

In a study of the PTG of unemployed men, the time of vacancy from employment enabled them to spend more time with their families especially their children, which helped them to overcome the stress from being unemployed (Water & Strauss, 2016). Also, according to the studies of Mehrabi, et. al. (2015) and Fallah, et al. (2012), interaction with family members most especially the children of female patients who were fighting breast cancer helped the patients to achieve posttraumatic growth. This supports the current study since it has been found that as parents, their children helped them grow as a person in the aftermath of infidelity. Also, the study shows that their children became their inspiration and driving force to be the better version of themselves. Their children became one of their focus to strive more in life and be the better father that they can be.

Work Diversion

Keeping themselves busy and indulging at work was a great help for the male non-participating partners. It kept their minds off the images and thoughts about their infidelity experience which also lead them to be more vigorous and determined at work. Respondents reported that they focused at work because it served as a distraction as well as a reminder that they have kids they need to provide for.

Joel: "Siguro habang nasa akin lang yung anak ko, nag focus lang ako sa trabaho ko... Ineenjoy ko yung sarili ko sa trabaho..."

Donald: "Ganun lang nung una para ako medyo makalimot minsan sa trabaho, nung una nga gingagawa nko doon ko lang binubuhos sa trabaho."

Focusing on their work was a big help for some of the male non-participating partners to move on instead of indulging in vices and destroying themselves in the process. They chose to be productive and improve themselves at work as well.

Social Support

Aside from family, friends were the ones who supported and gave strength to the male non-participating partners through advices, encouraging words, and bonding moments such as drinking sessions and doing leisure things. They helped them to get their minds off the stressful incident even for a short period of time and bond or do productive things instead of wallowing and moping by themselves. As stated by the respondents:

Mark: "Diyan papasok yung kaibigan na 'okay lang yan tol, madami pa diyan', pero iyang moral support malaking bagay."

Ely: "Tulong pa din ng mga barkada...sa barkada parang payo-payo, siyempre kasama mo sa inom din."

The time spent with their friends served as a distraction to the turmoil they have experienced during those moments of sadness and self-pity which eventually helped them to recover and move on from the infidelity incident. According to Abrahamson, Hussain, Khan, and Schofield (2012) family and friends usually console the non-participating partners after the infidelity incident and usually help the non-participating partners to recover from the stressful event. Social support may also help an individual's physical and mental health as well as buffer psychological stress (Laudet, Morgen, & White, 2006). It is important in maintaining one's mental and physical health and may enhance the resilience to stress of an individual and may help them to prevent having trauma-induced disorders such as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Ozbey, et.al, 2007). The male non-participating partners in this study who experienced the support of their friends reported that they helped them to overcome the stress from infidelity.

Familial Support

Male non-participating partners experienced the role of family support in contributing to the positive psychological changes in their lives after experiencing infidelity. Family was seen to play an essential part in supporting the respondents in dealing with the issue. Their family is one of those who consoled them for their partner's infidelity. They are also the ones who reminded them that it is never too late to become the person they were meant to be. With this respondent stated that:

Ely: "Sigurong tulong is, ano na kasi na may nakukuha akong support from other people around me, family siguro... I think ine-enlight lang nila ako through jokes."

Mark: "...dyan papasok si family. Mga magulang ko, kapatid ko. Hindi nila ako pinabayaan. Inintindi nila ako for 1 year."

A family system helps every one of its members through the good and the bad times. With this, respondents' families became their inspiration to be a better person. For they were ones who guided and motivated them after the discovery of the infidelity. Also, their family prove that even if how big their problems are, just providing a listening ear can make all the difference. As stated in the study of Pollock, Kazman, and Deuster (2014), family relationships are said to be the central component of a social support system. Family may also be a valuable source of support and emotional breakdown of an individual (Alves, Baptista, & Sant, 2012). In this study, the family of the male non-participating partners specifically their parents and siblings provided them support during the stressful occurrence, infidelity.

Spiritual Support

Besides having social support, the comfort and strength of their faith to the Lord helped them to stand up again. Though most of the respondents stated that they also questioned God why it happened to them, at the end of the day, He became their confidante and companion as they fix themselves and recover from their infidelity experience. They stated,

Mark: "Una siempre, uunahin ko na yung Diyos. Although sinisi ko Siya sa nangyari pero Siya yung una. That's the time na nilapitan ko yung Diyos."

Robert: "Prayer, pagdadasal. Unang-una pinakakapitan mo diyan pagdarasal, dasal ka lang. Dasal ka lang ng dasal, sumasama pa ko dun sa Couples for Christ, singles dati tapos nung kinasal."

The role of spiritual support as part of therapy after experiencing infidelity was emphasized in Snyder, Baucom, and Gordon's (2008) study through meditation, prayer and also with the help of spiritual counselors. Likewise, Bonelli, Dew, Koenig, Rosmarin, and Vasegh (2012) stated that religious or spiritual beliefs and practices may also help an individual who experienced a stressful event to cope and

adapt to the situation. Reliance to religious or spiritual beliefs and practices may give an individual strength, hope, and provide meaning to the stressful event (Laudet, Morgen, & White, 2006). In this study, the male non-participating partners' faith in God became their additional source of strength to overcome the stressful and traumatic event. There may be doubts and whys, but they still turned to Him in time of need, asked Him to provide strength, and asked Him for help; to make the right choices and pick themselves up from their infidelity experience.

Perceived Closeness to God

Most of the respondents reported that they've experienced growth in terms of spirituality after experiencing infidelity. Growth in this aspect of life is also one of the domains of posttraumatic growth proposed by Calhoun and Tedeschi (2004) which is the Spiritual Development domain wherein people who experienced changes in spirituality reported being closer to God and having stronger faith to the Higher Being. The men in this study reported experiencing this change after the infidelity incident. Some respondents stated:

Robert: "Nung kami-kami na lang, mas lalong lumapit yung relationship naming kay God. Pero dati kulang talaga kami sa prayer, pero yung ngayon hindi pwedeng pag Sunday hindi."

Frank: "Naging malapit ako sa Kanya... Diba doon sa Quiapo pinapasaran yung lubid, mula noon pinanata ko na sa Kanya na hanggang ako ay buhay papasanin Kita."

Since then, most of the male non-participating partners in this study developed a much stronger faith and relationship with God through prayers and going to Church during Sundays or even in ordinary days to spend quality time with Him. In line with this, other qualitative studies about PTG also reported having growth in spiritual aspect. These studies focused on people who also experienced stressful and traumatic occurrence such as breast cancer patients (Mehrabi, Hajian, Simbar, Houshyari, & Zayeri, 2015) and male individuals who experienced unemployment (Waters & Strauss, 2016). Most of them stated that they have become closer to God after their stressful and traumatic experience. In the study of Fallah and colleagues (2012) of PTG of women who are suffering from breast cancer, this kind of growth was achieved through prayers and reading religious texts which enabled them to find and give meaning to their suffering.

In comparison with the theme Spiritual Support that shows God became the respondents' support to stand up again and be the better version of themselves, this theme Perceived Closeness to God explains that male non-participating partners became closer to God.

Transcending Self

Being a better version of themselves after the stressful incident infidelity is one of the growth experienced by most of the respondents wherein the aftermath of the said incident caused shattered self-esteem, beliefs, and questioning their worth and what they lack as a person, most especially as a partner. Similarly, in Water and Strauss' (2016) study about the PTG of unemployed individuals showed that they realized their potentials more after experiencing unemployment which caused them to question their capabilities as a person. They discovered that they are a lot stronger than they thought and relying more on their selves instead of other people. With this, the findings of this study showed that some of the male non-participating partners discovered their capabilities as a much stronger person and improving their selves after the stressful and traumatic experience of infidelity. Some statements are,

Robert: "...nung nawala siya. Natuklasan ko na mas may kapasidad pa pala ko na iimprove yung sarili ko pag dating sa trabaho, pagmamahal, pakikisalamuha sa tao, cooperation, saka self-discipline nung nawala siya, pagkatapos nung incident na nangyari."

Mark: "I learned to live my life... ngayon natutunan kong mabuhay. To live my life talaga. I learned to live my life at the fullest. Nagagawa ko na yung gusto ko, masaya ako. Kahit walang pera okay lang, ang saya-saya ko."

Additionally, they stated that they saw the importance of other people in their lives. Although they have experienced a tragic relationship with their wives before, they still see relationship as an essential part of one's life. They learn that relationships with other people should be treasured for they will be the one who will support you through thick and thin. The respondents experienced a self-improvement by learning the importance of interpersonal relationship in becoming a better person. An example was stated by a respondent,

Mark: "Ah, na-realized ko na yung relasyon pala, is more on commitment not the feeling/emotion itself... Kung baga now, kapag sinabi mong mahal mo ang isang tao, it should be unconditional. Whether you like it or not, whether you like it or not, whether may nakita kang pangit, pangit na ugali, ma-disappoint ka sa kanya, you accept her."

Similarly, in Water and Strauss' (2016) study of PTG of unemployed men, it showed that most of unemployed person realized their capabilities after experiencing the stress of unemployment. Most of them discovered that they are a lot stronger than they thought and learned to rely more on their selves instead of other people. Similarly, a study about the PTG of male firefighters reported that they experienced a greater personal strength after their experience at the Carmel Fire Disaster as they perceived a greater appreciation in life (Leykin, Lahad, & Bonneh, 2013).

Interpersonal Growth

After the traumatic event infidelity, male non-participating partners have established better relationship with other people. As stated by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995), improvement of relationship with others is one of the positive psychological changes that can occur after a traumatic incident. With this, male non-participating partners of this study stated that after the infidelity incident, they have improved their ties with other people. An example of this was expressed by one of the respondents,

Frank: "Oo naging malapit ako, naging palakaibigan ako. kasi nung time na kami ng misis ko wala, bahay lang talaga ako, sa bahay lang di makaalis. Hindi ako lalabas makikipag -inuman sa barkada... Kasi nung time na kami ng misis ko wala na akong kilala kundi yung misis ko at mg anak ko, hindi ako nakikihalo o usap-usap kung kanino man."

Other respondents experienced interpersonal growth after experiencing the traumatic event infidelity by learning the importance of being close to their children. After the incident, they realized that it is the time where their child or children needed them the most. As stated by the respondents,

Fred: "Mas naging attached pa ako sa kanila, I see to it na kapag-tumatawag sila, minsan pinupuntahan ko syempre makapag-bonding man lang...."

Respondents established a closer relationship with their children after the incident. They realized that they became better fathers and that they value more their relationship with their children. They raise, care, and love their children more after the infidelity incident. Likewise, in the study of unemployed people of their PTG after the stress and trauma of unemployment, also reported better interpersonal relationships. Some stated that they became much closer to others especially to their family members (Water & Strauss, 2016).

Career Growth

After experiencing the adversity of infidelity, respondents reported that they experience an improvement on their own endeavors. The infidelity event became their inspiration in developing their work for a better future. They stated that after the infidelity issue, it is not yet too late to be a better person. They proved that after the infidelity incident, they can become a better version of themselves. For example, a respondent said that,

Fred: "Eto nagfocus pa ako sa work, nag-open pa ako ng isa pa, eto nga yung networking business."

Their respondents stated that they improved their work because of their children. They wanted their children to experience the comforts in this world. For them to grant those things, they need to enhance their work. Respondents expressed their answers by,

Robert "Mas lalo kong pinagbuti yung trabaho ko, mas lalo ko pinag-iigi dahil sa mga bata. Halos nabigyan ka ng magandang opportunity o nakitaan ka ng boss mo na pinag-iigi mo then inaangat ka niya."

Male non-participating partners stated that after they experienced infidelity, they strive to improve their work. This theme may be connected to one of the five domains of PTG which is recognition of new possibilities as it may have enabled them to have new opportunities in life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Respondents of this study focus more on improving their work for this will open doors for them to succeed in their chosen field of endeavors. Also, improving their work will lead to becoming a better person specifically a better father as it enables them to provide the needs of their children.

Sense of Freedom

In the aftermath of trauma, respondents explained that they feel a sense of freedom. They said that they after they have experienced the infidelity incident, they feel that they have the freedom to choose whom to love, freedom to love themselves, and they feel free from the ruminating feelings of infidelity. Respondents described their experience as follows,

Mark: "Pang araw-araw ako naging maluwag ako... but siguro eto lang man yung resulta ng pagbangon ko eh. Naging, kailangan kong punan yun confidence ko eh during the lost."

Frank: "Sa ngayon napakasaya ko, wala na akong kinikimkim na sama ng loob. Maluwag na akong nakakagalaw, kahit sino pwede kong kausapin, nakikipagkilala ako... masaya ako ngayon dahil nakakagalaw ako ng maluwag sa kalooban ko."

Some of the male non-participating partners explained that in the aftermath of trauma from infidelity, they experience freedom from the burden, pain, anger, and guilt. They feel free to know their selves more and see their own worth. Also, they explained that the freedom that they have experience also helped them to fill the confidence that was lost during the discovery of the infidelity.

Openness to Romantic Relationship

Although the first reactions of the respondents to the infidelity issue were shock, depress, anger, shame, and guilt, which lead them to have self-doubt and second thoughts to engage in an intimate relationship, it does not mean they fully close their hearts to love another partner. Despite of their traumatic experience during their previous marriage, they still open the door of their hearts to love again and that suddenly became their inspiration to be a better partner than before. As stated by the respondents,

Joel: "Ngayon syempre masaya na ako dahil may bago na akong kasama ilit. Siguro siya lang yung nagtuwid nung hindi nabigay nung asawa ko nun sa aking na pagmamahal. Kasi yun nga yung kinulang, parang di siya nakuntento."

Julius: "Ang nangyari kasi siguro parang after four years... parang meron akong nakapartner pero walang commitment. So ibig sabihin parang nalibang din ako dun na hindi ko naman niloko kung sino man yun... So isa pa rin yun sa nakatulong sa akin."

Their responses show that after their experience of infidelity, they are still open for a chance to love again that became also their growth in life. They stated that their new partner became part of their new chapter in life.

DISCUSSION

In line with Tedeschi and Calhoun's transformational model (2004), the respondents experienced shattered self-esteem by questioning their worth and destroyed their beliefs towards their relationship and eventually learned to accept the incident. It is also consistent with the findings of Heintzelman, Murdock, Krycak, & Seay (2014). Wherein they stated that one of the consequences of betrayal and secrecy of infidelity include damaged self-esteem. In this present study, findings showed that infidelity caused great damages to the male non-participating partners. It was a highly stressful experience which caused shattered self-esteem, self-doubt, and loss of trust with themselves as well as their partners. However, their infidelity experience also became a source of growth of the male non-participating partners through the data gathered in this study. The themes Perceived Closeness to God, Interpersonal Growth, Openness to Romantic Relationships, Sense of Freedom, and Career Growth showed the posttraumatic growth of the male non-participating partners while Social, Familial, and Spiritual Support as well as their Children and Work were the factors which contributed to the PTG of the male non-participating partners.

Male non-participating partners experienced PTG in different aspects of their lives after the infidelity incident such as growth in spirituality as they became closer to God through prayers and by going to Church to ask for his help and guidance to recover from the stress and trauma caused by infidelity. They also improved themselves in their careers as it this will open doors for them to succeed in their chosen field of endeavors. Also, improving their work will lead to becoming a better person specifically a better father as it enables them to provide the needs of their children. Likewise, they also became closer to the people around them especially to their family and children as well as to their friends. In line with these findings, PTG in the aspects of spirituality and relationships were also seen in other stressful and traumatic occurrences such as experiencing cancer (Mehrabi, Hajian, Simbar, Houshyari, & Zayeri, 2015; Fallah, et. al., 2012) and unemployment (Waters & Strauss, 2016). Besides from growth in these aspects, some of the male non-participating partners

also experienced growth in terms of their openness to romantic relationships and improved their selves as partners or husbands to their new wives as they learned from their mistakes and shortcomings from their previous relationship. They also experienced a sense of freedom after the infidelity incident as this enabled them the freedom to discover their capabilities as a person, partner, and father as well as freedom to mingle with other people.

In the process of growth of the male non-participating partners, the findings of the present study showed that the support of other people particularly family, friends, and God can help in the reduction of emotional distress from the stressful and traumatic event which is infidelity in this study. The time spent with their friends served as a distraction to the turmoil they've experienced during those moments of sadness and self-pity which eventually helped them to recover and move on from the infidelity incident. According to Abrahamson, Hussain, Khan, and Schofield (2012) family and friends usually console the non-participating partners after the infidelity incident and usually help the non-participating partners to recover from the stressful event. Also, God helped and supported them to reduce their emotional distress in the aftermath of infidelity. They shared their feelings and thoughts to God that eventually helped them to lessen the hatred from their infidelity experience and inspired them to improve themselves.

However besides social support, the respondents also found aid in social diversion particularly from their children and their work. In a qualitative study of PTG of Mehrabi, et. al. (2015), interaction with family members most especially the children of female patients who were fighting breast cancer helped the patients to achieve posttraumatic growth. Likewise, this paper found that children of the male non-participating partners helped them to grow as a person in the aftermath of infidelity. They became their inspiration and driving force to be the better version of them and be the better father that they can be. On the other hand, work also helped the male non-participating partners to divert their attention to something productive instead of indulging in vices and destroying themselves in the process which is also similar to Water and Strauss' (2016) study of the PTG of unemployed individuals. These two factors also helped them to manage the distress from infidelity and helped them to focus more on other important things, improve themselves and be productive.

Generally, this study showed that the participants showed perceived self-redemption after their infidelity experience and found out that the growth of male non-participating partners is all towards the better idea of themselves. They worked hard and gave their best to be a better person than before. Thus, in this study, the traumatic event, infidelity triggered the male non-participating partners to experience positive psychological changes and be the better version of them.

RECOMMENDATION

The researchers recommend that future studies about the posttraumatic growth of non-participating partners of infidelity may do a quantitative study using the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) with more participants and wider scope outside Metro Manila as well as wider age range of the respondents. Also, future researchers may explore the posttraumatic growth of female non-participating partners as well as couples who chose to stay together despite of the infidelity incident. They may also consider the social effect of posttraumatic growth by exploring the bystanders' PTG about the traumatic event.

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