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A New Decade for Social Changes
Lived experiences of matrilocal husbands in Filipino marriage patterns: a phenomenological inquiry

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Abstract. Marriage exists to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife. Hence, determining a community's rules or rules of residence in marriage has long been established as an essential requirement in understanding the social system. Moreover, in-residence practices are the first family pattern to exhibit change and cause subsequent change; thus, they warrant attention. Meanwhile, when couples marry, they usually live in or near the home of the man's parents. However, sometimes, this wasn't practiced because of the preeminence of the bride's family. Hence, unlike the more common patrilocal marriage, the groom resides with the bride's parents. A phenomenological qualitative study was utilized to understand the lived experiences of matrilocal husbands in Filipino marriage patterns. The researcher identified four major themes from the transcripts using Colaizzi's phenomenological data analysis procedure. Reasons for becoming a matrilocal husband are primarily based on the socioeconomic status of the couple. The participants expressed that there were moments of self-adjustment and set-aside decisions. They expressed a need to socialize, particularly with his in-laws. This study can be used for policy-making, specifically for the local government unit, to extend activities to cater to the personal, social, and psychological impacts of being a matrilocal husband. It can also be integrated into gender and society courses in college.

Keywords. Matrilocal husband, marriage residence, lived experience, phenomenology

Introduction

Unknowingly, a father could be labeled by society as a matrilocal husband—a husband living in the wife’s residence after marriage. Based on our culture, marriage is basically to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife, hence, to be a father and mother. In addition, marriage is considered a vital element and connected to other social institutions. However, there are some changes in marriage patterns.

Meanwhile, determining a community's rules or rules of residence in marriage has long been established as an essential requirement in understanding the social system. Likewise, residence practices are vital determinants of the various forms of family and kinship organization (Goode, 1956). In addition, residence practices are the first family pattern to exhibit dramatic change; thus, this structure is crucial to consider (Reynolds, 1962). Moreover, residential marriage patterns reflect the strength of family systems, so changes in residential arrangements must be keenly observed (Mitchell, 1972). In fact, the relationship
between residential patterns and family functioning is of interest to social scientists and those responsible for the formulation of housing and family welfare policies (Marlowe, 2004).

In the Philippine context, the term marriage has two distinct concepts. On one hand, it is bound to the procedure by which a man and a woman become husband and wife. On the other hand, status in society involves duties and responsibilities (De Los Angeles, 1965). Meanwhile, although the Philippine household is not organized strictly along patriarchal ideology, the husband is the publicly acknowledged head and is expected to be the economic provider of the family. In addition, the husband predominated in the Filipino household. Also, the husband has the right to decide on the family’s place of residence. The husband is principally responsible for the support of the wife and the rest of the family, and the husband’s capital is responsible for such support; the husband should logically be the house administrator (Alcantara, 1994).

When couples marry, they usually live in or near the home of the man's parents. However, there are many cases where few practiced this; it could be because of the preeminence of the bride’s family (Reynolds, 1962). On the one hand, there is a residential marriage pattern called matrilocality. It denotes a pattern of marriage in which the groom resides with the bride's parents, as opposed to the more common patrilocal marriage (Skinner, 2016). Filipino society in the past decades has witnessed dramatic changes in many aspects that affect family life. Given these developments, it becomes relevant to periodically assess the state of Filipino marriage to ascertain how well or poorly it is faring in times of stress and change (Vancio, 1980). Sociologists have not considered residence rules, a primary concern for anthropologists studying non-Western peoples. However, these rules are relevant to changes in family functioning because of the behavioral and spatial patterns of family relationships they mandate (Mitchell, 1972).

Furthermore, the traditional ways males and females related to one another within the family were reshaped. Although the male partner often had a close relationship with his female partner's family, his position was relatively powerless. Rather than occupying the head of household, the male was now in the position of guest in the home of his child and subjected to the authority of his partner's parents (Hyde, 1999). Likewise, men go out to marry and become attached and committed to their wives' households to varying degrees, with roles ranging from household head to peripheral member to night visitor (Leonetti et al., 2007). Publicly, most Filipino men are averse to 'losing face.' It is severely damaging to their gender identity and pride because there is a community expectation for men to be in control and dominant. The present study revealed that, even in the privacy of their home, men disliked their authority being challenged to the point that it could lead to familial conflict and violence (Lee, 2004). In the matrilocal system, where the husband moves in with the wife's family after marriage, the relatively high status of women is derived from the fact that the house, land, homestead, and paddy fields belong to her family, and she knows the networks and context (Schenk-Sandbergen, 2014).

Studies have been conducted on residential marriage patterns. Patrilocal marriage is a core aspect of the traditional Chinese kinship system. Also, in China's traditional family system, women are expected to move in with their husband's family after marriage, either sharing a household or living in the immediate vicinity. In recent decades, however, internal migration has challenged this custom as sound changes in family values and preferences (Grujters & Ermisch, 2019). Murphy (1956), concerning the limited amount of historical data available, strongly suggests that the Mundurucu shifted from patrilocality to matrilocality in the first half of the nineteenth century. Chowdhury (2023), the indigenous Garo in the Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group, is a close-knit matrilineal-matrilocal community. Hruschka et al. (2023) state that
ethnic groups in Bangladesh vary in the degree to which marital residence is patrilocal or matrilocal. Most of the women stayed in their husband's village. Hirschman (2016) states that the Malay family structure does not follow the typical patriarchal patterns of patrilineal descent or patrilocal residence of newly married couples. Thus, given all these available studies and changes and developments in Filipino marriage patterns, more literature on the lived experiences of matrilocal husbands in the Philippine context still needs to be provided. This is the research gap that this study would like to fill in.

The research sought to collect descriptive data about the lived experiences of matrilocal husbands in Filipino marriage patterns. Specifically, this study answered these two questions: (1) What are the personal, social, and psychological impacts of being a matrilocal husband? (2) What are the coping mechanisms and challenges of matrilocal husbands?

Methods
Research Design and Procedure
This study used phenomenology to explore and interpret the lived experience of matrilocal husbands. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants. The researcher went to the participants' residences and observed the environment in which the participants lived. This study followed the method employed by (Ballaret & Lañada, 2022). Each interview was unique and exciting in its own way. Also, the researcher did not create a formula or model to follow. The researcher used an interview guide, but it was just a guide. In addition, the research questions were used to identify the major topics the researcher hoped to discuss.

Furthermore, the researcher allowed each interview to follow its natural course and encouraged the participants to elaborate on whatever topic they desired to share. When the researcher contacted the participants about the interviews, the researcher used the term "conversation" rather than "interview to facilitate a more conversational and informal tone to help build rapport with the participants and foster more open, in-depth, honest, and insightful responses. The researcher ensured the participants’ privacy and confidentiality in the overall research process by the Philippine national ethical principles” (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board, 2017).

The researcher followed purposive sampling to identify the participants. The sampling strategy of this research study was homogenous since it was suitable for looking for participants with similar specific characteristics or experiences. The researcher wrote a consent letter that was forwarded to the chosen participants. The information sheet and consent forms were provided more than one week before the interview, allowing the participants time to think. Written informed consent was given to each participant before the interviews were conducted. The aim of the research was verbally explained before starting the interview, although an information sheet was provided beforehand. After explaining the purpose, risks, benefits of the study, and the conversation length, the participants were asked if they had any questions or clarifications. All questions and concerns were addressed before signing the informed consent form. The participants were informed that if they withdrew, none of their data would be used in the analysis. Participants were also allowed to select a pseudonym for the study. The researcher asked for the participants’ consent to record the interview. This would ensure the accuracy and details of the participants' narrative. This would also serve as a reference for verification.

Following the data collection and transcription, the researcher carefully listened to the audio recording and transcribed it meticulously. The researcher read the interviews multiple times to become acquainted with the data. This allowed the researcher to note the digital
recording, such as gestures or facial expressions. Van Manen (1990) phenomenological analysis approach delivered a framework for reflecting and interpreting the phenomenon. In addition, during the analysis, the researcher explored and interpreted the lived experiences of the participants based on their personal, social, and psychological impacts as matrilocal husbands and their coping mechanisms. The phenomenon was then described by writing and rewriting, where essential themes emerged as something thoughtful about matrilocal husbands' experiences. The researcher ensured the interconnectedness of themes to the individual interviews and the whole and determined if the interpretation fits the context of a specific section and the overall data collected.

The researcher identified the data saturation by encountering the same patterns and themes assembled in the interview process. Also, no new information emerges in the interview, and narratives no longer bring new substantial insights. In addition, the researcher bracketed his personal experiences while conducting interviews and set aside his presumptions in analyzing the life narratives of the participants. After transcribing the data, the researcher returned to the participants to check the validity and correctness of the narratives. The researcher allowed the participants to review, confirm, and give feedback on the researcher's interpretation of their responses.

Profile of the Participants

A maximum of five (5) participants were chosen using the purposive sampling method and snowball technique based on the following criteria set by the researcher. (1) Husbands, (2) Married, (3) Not employed/No work, (4) Married for five years and above, (5) Staying in his wife's residence, (6) Staying in the same house with his wife's family. The researcher chose these specific criteria since these would help to untangle and unpack the emic voices of the participants based on their experiences as matrilocal husbands. Being unemployed, staying in the wife's residence, and staying in the same house with in-laws could contribute to the richness of the data. The participants' ages varied from 32 to 45 years old. Of the five participants, four had graduated from high school, and only one had never had the chance to finish high school, mainly because of poverty. The participants' profiles also showed that they were less educated than their wives. The average monthly income of the participants ranges from 1,000 to 5,000 pesos only, with an average of three children per household. Of this little amount, a significant portion is spent on food and their children's education.

Participant 1. Arl* (43 years old) is from Calacha Uno. His wife is originally from Apdo. He only has one child. He is only a high school graduate. He does business in a store where we sell bananas. He and his wife have been together for ten years. Their house was owned by his in-law, his wife's mother; they took over because they had a house at the top. They are staying with his in-laws. They call it here “lumon”. They can sustain with little profit because their child is only in Grade 5. He feels contented with their living condition. He was also into hog farming.

Participant 2. Reco* (37 years old) is from Plaridel, covered by Misamis in Mindanao. He and his wife met in Adpo, Antique, because he used to be a collector. He was passing around there, which is why they became acquainted. He was a collector for two years, but he had already stopped. They have been married for 16 years. They have three children, all boys. He has yet to go home to his province. He went home once but has not returned. He has studied food processing at TESDA for about two years. His wife has ten siblings: 5 boys and five girls. He does not want to go home to his province because, according to him, they are afraid to leave...
their house during the election period because of many riding in tandem. They could be mistaken for someone else even if they are not involved. That is why it is dangerous there.

Participant 3. Will* (32 years old) lived in San Joaquin, Iloilo, in the upland. His wife is from Apdo, and they have been together for almost 11 years. I will have three children, all boys. He lives at Purok 3. They initially stayed with the in-laws, but now he is asking for an area they can use to build their home. They live next to them under an additional roof, with their kitchen and bedroom. They prefer to let them stay on the property as they are getting old; thus, they are all living together under one roof. He is only a high school graduate. He does not have a permanent job. He must show politeness, especially to his in-laws, and provide sufficient funds for their food expenses. He has to drink with them so that he can have a conversation.

Participant 4. Fran* (45 years old) was born in Southern Leyte but grew up in Manila. He only finished high school. He attended school at the seminary but did not pursue it, although he wanted to be a priest at St. Joseph Seminary. They still do not have a child. Life in Manila is so difficult for them. Here, he can work efficiently. His wife is from Brgy. Apdo, and they do not have a child. They have been together for 11 years. He opted to stay since his wife was afraid to leave her family. So, despite his lack of familiarity with the area, he decided to stay here, trusting that nothing wrong would happen to him. Even if he wanted to stay in his hometown, he could sense her concerns over being away from her family. He was accustomed to being separated from his family. As an only child, he was privileged and moved about a lot.

Participant 5. Jo* (43 years old) is just an elementary graduate from Moscoso Rios. He does labor because he does not have a permanent job as long as he can afford rice and vegetables. So that he can bring something home. Their house is just there, at the back of his in-laws' house, but it is just an extension of the main house. They have been together for eight years. They only have one child. They are a family of five boys. His parents are all dead, and his wife only stays at home.

Findings and Discussion
The researcher used Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis procedure. (1) The researcher read the participants' narratives to acquire a feeling for participants' ideas and understand them. (2) The researcher should extract significant phrases and statements from the transcripts that together form the whole meaning of the experience. (3) The researcher formulated more general restatements or meanings for each significant statement distilled from the text. (4) The researcher started to arrange the formulated meanings into clusters of themes. (5) The researcher integrated all the resulting ideas into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. (6) The researcher identified the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. (7) The researcher returned to the participants for a further interview to elicit views on the essential structure of the phenomenon to ensure that it represents their experience.

The researcher identified four major themes that emerged from the transcripts using Colaizzi's phenomenological data analysis procedure: (a) Livelihood is here, (b) Self-Adjustment, (c) Set aside Decision, and (d) Socialization. These themes captured matrilocal husbands' essence and lived experiences in Filipino marriage patterns. The participants freely shared their life narratives and reflectively shared their experiences in an atmosphere of openness and interest in the research. Their narratives described the details of their journeys and lived experiences as matrilocal husbands.

Most conversations began with a discussion of the personal information of participants and how and why they became matrilocal husbands who preferred to stay at their wives' residences. The couple both decided to stay at the wife's residence. Almost all of the participants
described the decision to live in their wives' residences for the reason of "livelihood." Livelihood is a means of support or subsistence (Merriam-Webster, n. d.).

(a) **Livelihood is here**
Participants narrated that lack of resources and inherited land were significant factors in the husband's decision to become matrilocal, forcing him to live in the wife's home. Based on this study, they considered the wife's residence in the hopes of having a steady income and good fortune, considering the challenging family circumstances with limited resources in the husband's place. In addition, aside from considering their livelihood, matrilocal husbands also considered their in-laws in their post-marriage residence. Will* shared:

"My wife said that the kids will grow, and my in-law will be left alone. I don't have a choice. That is why we decided to stay here, and I can work here to support my family."

According to the study, Filipino husbands are not obliged to conform to customary matrilocal residence. This means wives can immediately transfer to their husbands' residences (Novellino, 2009). However, the husbands are experiencing some challenges. They are responding positively as 'imported sons-in-law'; some of these men reorient their goals to become responsible sons-in-law (Charsley, 2005). Additionally, men's willingness to accommodate changing family circumstances triggered by migration and their readiness to cooperate with women to maintain family life despite all the odds and difficulties ushered by migration, as well as their attempt to strike a balance between individual values and the collective well-being of the family (Choi & Peng, 2016). Participants have shown a deep willingness to transfer to ensure the collective well-being of the family. However, most participants mentioned that they decided to live in their wives' residences because their wives had inherited land from their families. Fran* expressed:

"Life in Manila is so difficult. We decided to live here since my wife is from here, and she is the one who has the land inherited from her family."

Furthermore, this theme is supported by this study that in the matrilocal system, where the husband moves in with the wife's family after marriage, the possible reason for this is that the relatively high status of women is derived from the fact that the house, land, homestead, and paddy fields belong to her family. She knows the networks and context (Schenk-Sandbergen, 2014). Moreover, the participants also considered their wives' workplaces when deciding where to live after marriage. Jo* shared:

"We live at my wife's place because we do not have much to build a home; our store is an extension of the house, and my wife has a stable job here."

Thus, household status or power is defined based on the person who has the greater autonomy and, thus, is considered to have the greater power (Alcantara, 1994). Some argue that this is due to the growing independence of women brought about by improvement in their educational attainment and better employment opportunities (Kabamalan, 2004). Rec* expressed:

"Even though it is expected of me to provide for my family, particularly the house since I am the husband, I don't have the choice. My wife has a stable job in their place."

The participants' decisions are out of necessity. The probability that the wife is responsible for decisions increases as the wife's characteristics in terms of age, education, and
income become closer or even higher than those of her husband (Bertocchi et al., 2014). This narrative is supported by the researcher's theory in this study. Gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have of individuals based on their sex and each society's values and beliefs about gender (Blackstone, 2003).

**Q1. Personal, Social, and Psychological impacts of being a matrilocal husband**

**(b) Self-adjustment**

About the results of this study, matrilocal husbands conveyed that living in their spouse's home significantly impacted their personal, social, and psychological well-being. Based on the themes reflected in their narratives, they all coincided that there had been a period of self-adjustment. They have to adjust themselves, particularly how they interact with their in-laws. It entails an ongoing process of introspection and developing one's interpersonal skills. Self-adjustment means adjustment to oneself or one's environment's subsistence (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

In addition, self-adjustment is the process by which a person consciously or unconsciously modifies their behavior, attitudes, or emotions to conform to shifting conditions, surroundings, or personal objectives. It entails having the capacity to control oneself in the face of internal and external stimuli, promoting well-being, personal development, and efficient operation in various circumstances. Participants expressed that the adjustment that they made had something to do with their gender identity, mainly being a husband (Baider, 1988). Arl* recounted:

"You have to adjust to live with the family of your wife at first because you are foreign. I am just helping the family of my wife. My wife’s siblings and I are okay. You have to adjust and get along with them."

Research has shown that husbands experience a range of adjustments in response to various life events (Nasiri et al., 2016). Factors such as residence, help-seeking, social networks, work difficulties, and the nature of the relationship with the spouse and children can impact the adjustment of men (White & Bloom, 1981). Moreover, participants narrated that they have to remain humble in the place of their wives. It is another way of expressing their adjustment. Fran* mentioned:

"I am used to harmonizing with the people around me because I always remain humble. That is what I do, I have to adjust myself with them."

Moreover, men's masculinity is challenged in the work domain and within the family, where their dominant positions may be questioned (Choi, 2019). Most participants experienced this kind of challenge, and their position as the head of the family was to express the intention of building a good relationship with their in-laws. Jo* expressed:

"I need to adjust so that I can build a good relationship with them."

In addition, the participants demonstrated how they keep themselves down to maintain a good relationship. They learned to embrace the optimism of their situation and not to experience frustrations and resentments.

**(c) Set aside decisions**

Matrilocal husbands also highlighted in their narratives that there were moments when they set aside their personal decisions for the sake of other people, particularly their wives’
families. Setting aside a decision means a willingness to prioritize the well-being and happiness of the other person over one's desires or preferences (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This theme can also be considered humility by the matrilocal husbands. Research on the decision-making patterns of husbands in various contexts reveals a complex interplay of factors (Cooper et al., 1978). The study found that higher levels of humility in husbands were linked to more significant dyadic adjustment during the transition to parenthood (Reid et al., 2018). Arl* narrated:

“But there were occasions that I had to set aside my own decision as a father for the sake of my relationship with my in-laws since I didn't want to risk my relationship with them.”

This study finds a strong relationship between husbands' sex role orientation and household decision behavior, suggesting that systemic household relationships play a crucial role (Reid et al., 2018). This study focuses on the influence of husbands and wives. These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of husbands' decision-making, shaped by individual, relational, and contextual factors (Cooper et al., 1978). However, participants expressed that there are times that they forget themselves, particularly their decisions, for the sake of other people. Rec* mentioned:

“There were times that I was just following what they wanted rather than my own decision.”

Furthermore, this attitude helped the participants build a good relationship with their in-laws. It added that the benefits of humility are most pronounced in couples where both partners are humble, leading to better mental health and relationship satisfaction (Van Tongeren et al., 2019). Fran* expressed:

“I am doing fine. I have had no issues with my relatives or with my in-laws. I am used to harmonizing with the people around me because I always remain humble. That is what I do, I have to adjust myself with them.”

For instance, humility can be grounding and empowering for individuals and relationships (Chelladurai et al., 2022). Humility is characterized by an ability to accurately acknowledge one's limitations and abilities and an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented rather than self-focused (Snow, 1995).

Q2. Challenges and Coping Mechanism of being a matrilocal husband.

(d) Socialization

Based on this study, participants indicated significant challenges of being a matrilocal husband. Participants also expressed how they coped with these challenges. The participants narrated that they have to get on with other people, especially the immediate family of their wives. Getting on is defined as being or remaining friendly with someone (Merriam-Webster. n. d). The fruit of socializing with other people is being a friend of all. Research has shown that the quality of a husband's relationship with his in-laws can significantly impact his marital success (Bryant et al., 2001). Fran* expressed:

“That is because you have to consider things since you're foreign. It would be okay if my family was simply from another barangay, but they are too far away. Many things must be avoided since it would be detrimental if your emotions were overflowing.”
According to this study, the social work field has historically focused more on wives' needs, potentially overlooking the challenges husbands face in adjusting to social change (Iglehart, 1982). The participants expressed a need to get along with those people, especially in their neighborhood. Jo narrated:

"When they go drinking, I join them because I need to get along with them, for I have no other relatives here besides them. I don't want to create conflict with them."

Conflicts in extended family relations will erode marital stability, satisfaction, and commitment over time (Bryant et al., 2001). In fact, husbands who evidenced gender role conflict were more likely to engage in hostile behaviors during marital interactions (Breiding, 2004). It is severely damaging to their gender identity and pride because there is a community expectation for men to be in control and dominant. Men 'losing face' are likely to be agitated. The present study revealed that, even in the privacy of their home, men disliked their authority being challenged to the point that it could lead to familial conflict and violence (Lee, 2004).

**Conclusion**

This phenomenological study testified that the term matrilocal husband is not a sociologically highfalutin term but a phenomenon that others carry as their identities in their post-marriage patterns. Hence, it is an existential phenomenon that those husbands who live in their wives' homes encounter. Overall, the transitional period served as a learning opportunity for matrilocal husbands, requiring them to set aside decisions and get along with their in-laws. The public occasionally disregarded these kinds of encounters. Their personal stories will provide insight into how society labels its social arrangements. These are themes derived from matrilocal husbands' experiences. This is the research study's output.

This study exhibited the underlying reasons why husbands live in the residence of their wives. This study gathered data showing that the main reason is their livelihood, which will sustain them daily. This study affirmed that the matrilocal husbands experienced a period of adjustment. They have to be mindful of their actions, learn how to socialize with their in-laws and make an effort to appear favorable to them. In addition, this study highlighted that the matrilocal husbands experienced having to set aside their decisions as the head of their family, considering the favor of their wives and in-laws. It was an experience of disempowerment for them, but they did not have a choice but to comply and please those around them. Moreover, matrilocal husbands narrated that they have to socialize or be with their in-laws to get along with them.

Thus, these themes presented in this research study have something to do with our existing culture as Filipinos. It gears toward the expectations of their gender as husbands, or more so as wives. Also, there are attached roles and expectations for our gender. This research study made us aware of the essence of the experiences of matrilocal husbands in Filipino marriage patterns. Let us acknowledge those experiences and be open-minded about their existence in our society. There is no formal policy or program intended for matrilocal husbands.

This study recognizes limitations in the findings. This study covered only five participants, so it will not generalize its findings to some matrilocal husbands, particularly in the Philippines. In addition, the design was qualitative research, specifically using the phenomenological method. Moreover, the study's findings were limited to only one town in Antique. Hence, further research is encouraged in all Antique towns to encompass the findings' coverage and density. Likewise, future research can be conducted using quantitative or mixed-
method research designs. Also, future research can add to the inclusion criteria to add to the richness of data.

**Implication to Practice**
The results of this phenomenological qualitative study are significant for three critical reasons:

(1) Since matrilocal husbands sometimes overlook their experiences, the study's findings clearly illustrate that family members and wives should extend their much-needed personal, social, and psychological support to matrilocal husbands. Hence, awareness of the experiences of the matrilocal husbands can offer a healthier and more understanding family.

(2) Policymakers, particularly the Local Government Unit, and the family guidance counselor may find responsive, inclusive, and culturally relevant programs and legislation to include matrilocal husbands in group counseling, influential family roles, and interventions to address the mental health of matrilocal husbands.

(3) Family life education initiatives, particularly programs initiated by the local church, and their inclusion in the school curriculum, specifically in gender and society courses, can be facilitated in collaboration with different groups and organizations.

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