

A Couple's Journey to Forever: A Case Study of Hm's Kasalan Ng Bayan Project

Raquel A. Saab, Raquel J. Dael, Verla Nena Danuco, Jerome Ubaub

Lourdes College, Inc.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.907000145>

Received: 26 June 2025; Accepted: 03 July 2025; Published: 05 August 2025

ABSTRACT

Kasalan ng Bayan or mass weddings foster social integration and address the barriers that prevent couples from formalizing their unions. This qualitative study explored the experiences of lived-in couples who participated in the HPC 7 - Events Management students' mass wedding project. The initiative offered opportunities among low-income couples to have a church wedding and a legal union without the necessity to prepare for financial costs. Using a case study design, the research explored the real-life phenomenon of couples before, during, and after the mass weddings. Data were collected from multiple sources using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Ethical considerations were observed to protect the participants' rights. From the data, five themes emerged namely: *barriers, commitment, value of the wedding, social transition, and sacramental effects*. The findings suggest that church marriage has a transformative effect. Marriage was found crucial for reinforcing family bond, fostering resilience, and deepening relationship with God. Generally, the findings support the idea that marriage, when facilitated through initiatives like mass weddings, enhances spiritual growth, strengthens families, and improves the lives of couples. Thus, to improve the sustainability and accessibility of such programs, premarital counseling, institutional partnerships, and pre-wedding process streamlining are recommended.

Keywords: Kasalan ng Bayan, Burden, Commitment, Social Transitions, and Value of the Wedding, Sacramental Effects

INTRODUCTION

A key component of the Hospitality Management (HM) Program's curriculum is the implementation of Community Extension Service (CES), which demonstrates the program's commitment to ethical responsibility and societal impact. This program aims to improve resource management, sustainable development, and quality of life while fostering a sense of community and civic responsibility. Through service and education, the program promotes the development of inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. Students and local stakeholders can apply practical knowledge, build community relationships, and cultivate a feeling of shared responsibility by actively participating in CES activities. According to Mthembu (2022), CES uses innovative approaches to improve the knowledge, skills, and values of students and community members.

"Kasalan ng Bayan" is a noteworthy CES project of the HM program that aims to address a significant social issue facing the Philippines on the high expense of common-law marriage permits. In the Philippine context, many couples particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, decide not to formally enter into marriage because traditional weddings are very costly. By establishing the Kasalan ng Bayan, the HM program seeks to provide these couples with the opportunity to formally validate their marriages without the financial strain that comes with organizing a wedding.

The Kasalan ng Bayan provides couples the chance to experience the solemnity of a church wedding while also getting vital support from their community. This initiative, organized by the HPC 7-Events Management class and supported by the THC 7-Banquet and Catering class, aligns with the program's mission to serve

God's people and highlights the program's commitment to providing services that enhance people's quality of life and build a sense of community.

Mass weddings, such as the Kasalan ng Bayan, are an effective means to engage the community and reflect social and cultural significance. These initiatives play an essential role in fostering social integration and strengthening communal ties. In the study of Yoon and Kim (2021), they highlight the importance of mass weddings in offering a reasonable opportunity for couples to legally marry, hence reducing or removing financial barriers and at the same time promoting social inclusion. These events enhance social cohesiveness in the community while also eliminating the associated financial burden of traditional marriages. On a similar note, Kim and Lee (2022) emphasize the importance of mass weddings in improving the community well-being through communal celebration that reinforces social support networks and promotes among participants a sense of belonging.

This research undertaking aims to investigate the experiences of the couples who benefited from the Kasalan ng Bayan based on their perspective. Hence, this study examines how the event impacted the couples' lives, relationships, and status in society. Through an analysis of these experiences, the researchers seek to understand the wider implications of these community-driven endeavors and their impact in catering to the requirements of the underprivileged communities.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design with a single case study approach was utilized in this study. As outlined by Yin (1984), a case study provides a detailed analysis of a current event in its actual setting, particularly when it is difficult to distinguish between the phenomena and its surroundings. This method allowed for a thorough investigation of the "Kasalan ng Bayan" mass wedding event using information sources to provide a detailed knowledge of participant experiences, (Dudovskiy, 2022).

The study is directed on the couples who took part in the "Kasalan ng Bayan" events between 2020 and 2023. They were chosen by purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the event to ensure alignment with the research objectives. This method allows for a thorough analysis of the unique and communal elements of the couples' experiences providing a rich, in-depth insights into their lives prior to, during, and following the mass wedding.

To collect data of the study, in-depth in-person interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire based on Seidman's (2006) methodology. This approach provided emphasis on the use of open-ended questions, allowing couples to provide flexible and thorough answers, giving them the opportunities to completely express their experiences. The conduct of the interviews was in three phases: the first stage investigates why couples chose to live together, the second looks at why they chose to take part in the Kasalan ng Bayan, and the third examined their views on church marriage in light of the Kasalan ng Bayan. To ensure that this study maintain its ethical compliance, consent forms were obtained before the interviews and participants were given comprehensive information about the objectives of the study. Every session was recorded and transcribed to guarantee accuracy and enable a more thorough study.

Ethical issues driven by the concepts of justice, beneficence, and respect for humans as outlined by Amdor and Bankert (2011) were strictly adhered to all throughout the research process. The study underwent approval by the school's research ethics committee (LCREC) before it started. This process ensured that all procedures followed ethical standards, highlighting participant welfare (beneficence), voluntary involvement with informed consent (respect for humans), and fair participant selection (justice).

To ensure unbiased representation in the study's context and to uphold the principle of fairness, couples who actively participated in the "Kasalan ng Bayan" event were objectively chosen as participants. Additionally, the participants' autonomy was maintained by giving them clear and thorough information about the study, allowing them to leave at any time without facing any consequences. These actions showed respect for people. Finally, beneficence was guaranteed by reducing possible hazards and protecting participants' wellbeing through confidential processing and encouraging interview settings.

RESULTS

The "Kasalan ng Bayan" study provide insightful qualitative findings into why couples choose to live together before formalizing their union. As revealed in the data, there were two main themes: burden and commitment. The theme of burden includes two categories: lack of certainty and pre-wedding challenges. Lack of certainty reflects couples' fear of commitment, self-doubt, while pre-wedding challenges include financial struggles, overwhelming requirements, and time management difficulties. The theme of commitment focuses on couples' choice and family welfare. Couples' choice involves familiarity with their partner and acceptance of their situation, while family welfare relates to parenting priorities and pregnancy. Together, these themes explain the emotional, financial, and practical reasons that affect living together and eventual marriage.

Theme 1. Barriers

The theme on barriers indicates the challenges that prevent couples from pursuing marriage and discourages them from deciding to formalize their relationship. There are key factors contributing to this state of emotional uncertainties, such as fear of commitment and self-doubt; and pre-wedding challenges, such as financial and logistical challenges.

One significant emotional barrier is the fear of commitment, which oftentimes prevent couples from formalizing their marital unions. As shared by one couple: *"Oo before sa wedding, nahadlok ko, before sa seminar nag question ko na sakto na ba kaha ni? Nag question ko na are we ready na mo commit despite sa struggle na amo na experience before the wedding"* (Yes, before the wedding, I was scared. Before the seminar, I questioned if this was the right thing. I questioned if we were ready to commit despite the struggles we experienced before the wedding) (C2, T2, LN 105-108). This aligns with studies by Stanley et al. (2020), which found that individuals often hesitate to marry due to concerns about long-term compatibility and uncertainties about the future. These emotional barriers provide complexities in making lifelong commitments amid both personal and relational struggles.

Similarly, self-doubt among couples, which may stem from the lack of one's own capabilities or the readiness to commit to a lifelong partnership. is seen as another barrier to marriage. As mentioned by one couple: *"Dili man mi kasal. Live in partner raman ta. Dili ku feeling legal bah"* (We are not married. We are just live-in partners. I don't feel legal) (C2, T2, LN 103). Such feeling reflects broader social trend where cohabitation is increasingly perceived as a trial phase before marriage (Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). On a similar note, Yoon and Kim (2021) argued that many couples choose to live together to test the stability of their relationship without the legal and financial commitments associated with marriage, allowing them to gradually build trust and familiarity.

Pre-wedding challenges is another category that prevents couples from taking decisive steps to get married. These challenges include financial and logistical difficulties which are perceived to be closely connected considering that time and effort required to go through logistical challenges may lead to either loss of income or additional expense. One couple who experienced financial difficulty stated that, *"Dugay rato namo plano. Ang kuan lang gyud kay way sponsor. Kay galisud pod mi sa budget man gyud Ma'am. Mao tong pag-abot anang higayona so dako gyud among kalipay"* (We have been planning for a long time. The issue was that we didn't have a sponsor. We were struggling financially, Ma'am. So when the time came, we were very happy) (C4, T4, LN 571-573). This exemplifies the economic barriers to marriage, consistent with research by Wilcox and Lerman (2018), highlighting how financial instability delays formal union. However, Kim and Lee (2022) assert that these barriers can be overcome by providing couples affordable and dignified platform such as mass weddings to help low-income couples to address high costs and logistical burdens making formal unions more attainable.

Logistical difficulties also were found to contribute to the delay of formalizing marriage. Another couple shared: *"Kay kato kami sad maam kay katong last nga before pa ato naay nahitabo, naay ni adto estudyante nga kinsa lagi tong gusto mag pakasal...mao to (ingon) akong paris layo pa lagi trabaho baya pud, mao pirmamenti namo awayan kay inana"* (As for us, Ma'am, before that happened, there was a student who came asking who wanted to get married. At that time, a priest had already informed us that there was a free wedding

in December. My partner worked far away, and we often argued about it. That's why we didn't proceed) (C4, T4, LN 898-904). This exemplar suggests the difficulties that couple went through in coordinating schedules and handling logistics, especially when dealing with conflicting commitments or responsibilities, which may prolong the decision to cohabitate. As highlighted by Hearts and Minds (n.d.), logistical difficulties, encompassing balancing commitments at work and daily responsibilities, can complicate the process of aligning priorities for major decisions like marriage, which may result to prolonged cohabitation among couples.

In summary, these challenges that prevent couples from pursuing marriage can effectively be addressed through communal celebrations like Kasalan ng Bayan as it helps remove or reduce economic and logistical problems while promoting social inclusion and support system. According to Yoon and Kim (2021), such initiatives enhance the sense of belonging and stability among the couples, thereby empowering them to legalize their unions. Another theme that emerged is Commitment.

Theme 2. Commitment

The theme on commitment, rather than solely encouraging couples to marry, also highlights reasons why couples choose to continue living together without formalizing their union. This theme encompasses the category on couples' choice, which include familiarity with a partner and acceptance of their relationship, often leading couples to feel comfortable in their existing arrangement.

Familiarity with a partner, that is built through constant communication, mutual understanding and shared experiences, can influence couples' choice of committing themselves to staying in their current arrangement. One couple reflected, "*Soo far wala man kay actually nag uyab mi 2005 pa...wala man mga insecurities*" (*So far, we have been in a relationship since 2005... there are no insecurities*) (C1, T1, LN 27-30). This suggests that prolonged cohabitation may stem from mutual understanding and a sense of stability, aligning with Karney and Bradbury's (2020) research on relationship satisfaction over time. Similarly, another couple shared, "*Kadtong time living together pami before sa kasalan, wala me gibati sa kahadlok tungod kay open man mi kung unsa amo mga problema*" (*When we were still living together before the wedding, we didn't feel scared because we were open about our problems*) (C1, T1, LN 42-44). This supports the notion that couples who communicate openly may see less urgency in formalizing their relationship (Holman & Jarvis, 2017).

Parental priorities are another factor that have impact on the couples' choice of committing themselves to delaying formal marriage. Couples with a deep sense of responsibility, may prioritize children's needs and well-being in terms of education, health and future over their desire for marriage. One couple shared that, "*Gusto unta mi magpakasal, pero giuna namo ang edukasyon sa among mga bata. Ang among savings para gyud sa ilang kaugmaon.*" (*We wanted to get married, but we prioritized our children's education. Our savings are really for their future.*) (C2, T2, LN 60-61). This finding aligns with McLanahan and Beck (2021), suggesting that couples' decision to delay marital unions are due to prioritizing the basic needs, education, healthcare of children over the cost of formalizing their marriage.

Family welfare, including parenting and pregnancy, can also reinforce couples' commitment to cohabitate as a practical and stable arrangement. One couple noted, "*Pero usahay man gud maka feel ta murag bitaw ma feed up ta...pero tungod sa mga bata sa kadugay ninyu kana pa lugar na time na give up namo*" (*Sometimes, you feel like you are fed up... but because of the children and the length of time you have been together, you just can't give up*) (C2, T2, LN 61-63). Furthermore, pregnancy can further delay marriage, as reflected in a couple's experience, "*Soo adtong pregnant ku sa ako youngest karon mag pakasal na unta mi, then murag pregnant paman ku unya sensitive kaayu ba...mao to na postpone*" (*When I was pregnant with my youngest, we planned to get married. But since I was pregnant and very sensitive, we decided to postpone*) (C2, T2, LN 86-87). This mirrors findings by McLanahan and Beck (2021), indicating that practical considerations during pregnancy often lead couples to prioritize cohabitation over immediate formal marriage.

Theme 3. Value of Wedding

On the factors influencing couples' decisions to marry, the qualitative findings of the "Kasalan ng Bayan" revealed two overarching themes: the value of the wedding and social transition. These themes summarize the emotional, practical, and social reasons that encourages couples to decide on formalizing their relationships through marriage. The value of wedding theme comprises two categories: personal satisfaction, where couples express their readiness for commitment and love as major motivators; and privileges, which emphasize the practical benefits of legality, opportunity, and blessings that come with marriage.

An important category on the value of wedding that encourages couples to get married is personal satisfaction, with one couple expressing readiness for commitment as a crucial component: *"Yes for 13 years na baya mi gawas pa sa marriage. 4 years me Then nag uban mi as couple mga kuan na siguro mga 9 or 10 years. naka ingon ku i guess its a bout time"* (Yes, we've been together for 13 years outside of marriage. We lived together for about 9 or 10 years as a couple. I thought, I guess it's about time) (C2, T2, LN 64-65). This statement demonstrates how long-term living together gradually makes couples ready for official marriage. Another motivator for the couples' decision to marry was love. According to one couple: *"Kato sya, nisugot lang kog apil ato kay gusto gyud ko magpakasal. Aron pod nga naa gyud blessing nga muabot, dugang man sad to. Ug usa pa makahigugma pasad ko sa iya, maoy importante"* (I agreed to join because I really wanted to get married. I wanted to receive blessings, and most importantly, I love her) (C4, T4, LN 556-558). This supports the findings of research that indicates love and emotional ties continue to be significant factors in marriage (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

Another value of wedding that motivated couples to marry is on the privileges associated with marriage as it affords practical benefits that simplify legal process especially in accessing healthcare services. As one couple puts it: *"Okay pud nang kasal maam ba kay para inkaso wa ta kabalo sa mga bata nato... Number 1 requirements pud na labi na gyud sa kasal marriage contract, madali imong mga importante na iprocess dali ra kayo basta kasal"* (Marriage is good because if something happens, the children need married parents. It also speeds up important processes when you have a marriage contract) (C3, T3, LN 242-245). This statement simply demonstrates how legal recognition to marriage can facilitate bureaucratic processes which contribute to offering access to claims or benefits such as health care.

Moreover, couples also viewed mass weddings as the most practical means to reduce the economic burden of wedding ceremonies. One couple shared that: *"Syempre practical naman ta karon... kung gusto namu mag settle down, dili mana mag matter kung mass wedding or special wedding ang importante is na bless mo sa pari, na bless simbahan"* (Of course, we are practical now. If we want to settle down, it doesn't matter if it's a mass wedding or a special wedding. What's important is that we are blessed by the priest and the church) (C2, T2, LN 169-172). This is consistent with studies by Wilcox and Wolfinger (2016) that shows the time of marriage is influenced by economic practicality.

Looking at mass weddings as a privilege, provides couples with the opportunity to get legally married. Another significant factor in the decision of couples to legalize their marital unions was seeing the opportunity provided by such initiative, as one couple revealed, *"Of course given us the opportunity na makaapil sa kasalan from a school lourdes college... kami aside sa dili mi maka gasto na daku kaayu"* (Of course, we were given the opportunity to join the wedding from Lourdes College. We couldn't afford to spend a lot) (C2, T3, LN 112-114). This demonstrates how external factors, including free or reasonably priced wedding programs, reduce obstacles to marriage (Stanley et al., 2020).

The value of wedding is further highlighted by the legal benefits. One couple observed, *"Okay pud nang kasal maam ba kay para inkaso wa ta kabalo sa mga bata nato... Number 1 requirements pud sa labi na gyud sa kanang sa kuan sa kasal marriage contract, madali imong mga importante na iprocess dali ra kayo basta kasal"* (Marriage is good because if something happens, the children need married parents. It also speeds up important processes when you have a marriage contract) (C3, T3, LN 242-245). This supports the findings of Lundberg et al. (2016), who found that legal recognition facilitates bureaucratic procedures and offers security.

The significance of blessings in marriage was a constant theme throughout, which underscores its importance to strengthening the couples' relationship and commitment and their family life. For most of them, the formal union is deeply spiritual that connects them to a higher purpose. As one couple made clear, "...sige lang puhon kaluy-an ra lagi ta, maapil rata anang kasalan ng bayan atleast mapakasal lang ma blessingan lang kay mas chada man gyud ng naay blessing inyong pag-uban, pangamuyo sa inyong balay mao man gyud na sya murag naay something nga malipayon permi " (We just hoped that we would eventually join the mass wedding to be blessed because it feels better to have God's blessing in your relationship and home. It brings a different kind of happiness) (C4, T4, LN 877-880). Similarly, one couple stated, "Kailangan man mi naay bendesyon sa kaminyuon. Mao tong pursigido gyud ko mu apil para ang amo ng pamilya naa bitaw blessing sa Ginoo" (We needed the blessing of marriage. That's why I was determined to join so our family could have God's blessing) (C3, T3, LN 221-222). This is consistent with research showing how marriage decisions are influenced by religious values (Mahoney et al., 2015).

Theme 4. Social Transition

The second theme on the factors influencing couples' decisions to marry is social transition, which explores the social stigma that couples encounter when they go from living together to being married. This theme highlights the first category on social stigma, emphasizing the influence of marriage on alleviating couples feeling of insecurity and fostering children's wellbeing; and community support that are needed in helping couples transition to marriage, including school support, support from community, and family support.

A significant aspect of social transition is the alleviation of insecurity related to informal cohabitation. One participant expressed, "Sa ako ma'am, naa gyud insecurities labi na gyud kanang (kuan gyud) lisud oy nga uban uban lang mo, unya ang uban ipon ipon lang bitaw nga wala gyud bitaw blessing sa Ginoo, walay kasal" (For me, Ma'am, I felt insecurities because it's hard to live together without the blessing of God or marriage) (C3, T3, LN 278-279). This emphasizes the idea that living together without getting married is not socially or spiritually acceptable, which causes stress and criticism from others. According to Cherlin (2020), marriage is regarded as a significant event that enhances a couple's reputation in the community and offers social validation.

Marriage also serves as a mechanism to protect children from the stigma associated with being born into non-marital unions. One participant noted that, "Mao gyapon para ang mga anak sab dili sad sila makuan nga uy kuan ra kanang live-in ra... Aron pod makita nia nga uy kasal na ako mama" (It's also for the children so they won't feel like their parents are just living together. They can see that their parents are married) (C4, T4, LN 557-558). This illustrates the broader social implications for children, who may experience embarrassment or insecurity if their parents are not married. McLanahan and Beck (2021) highlight how formal marriage provides children with a sense of stability and legal security which are critical for their development and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, the institutional support offered by mass weddings reduces economic barriers, allowing couples who may lack financial resources to formalize their relationships. One couple highlighted the significance of external assistance, "Lipay kaayo mi ma'am, kay may nalang baya pud, bisan sa among kalisdanan walay gasto sa pag kasal, libre bitaw nay nag hatag ug kahigayon nga makasal mi sa katong programa sa Lourdes college" (We were so happy, Ma'am. Despite our struggles, we had the chance to get married for free through the program at Lourdes College) (C3, T3, LN 400-402). This exemplifies how community-driven initiatives can bridge gaps for disadvantaged couples, reinforcing findings by Stanley et al. (2020) that access to free or subsidized weddings encourages marriage, thereby promoting social equity.

Additionally, couples view community support such as the encouragement from local leaders also provide motivation in formalizing their marital union. As noted by one couple, "Ang naka aghat namo Ma'am mao ang mga estudyante, apil amoang Kapitan. Para me ma bless sa simbahan." ("What encouraged us, Ma'am, were the students and even our Barangay Captain. It was so we could be blessed by the church.") (C3, T3, LN 220-221). This finding suggests that securing church blessing largely depends on the social, religious and cultural significance attach to marriage in their respective community. To strengthen the couples' determination to

formalize their marriage, Dasgupta and Mukherjee (2023), emphasize that need to foster community engagement and support systems.

Lastly, family support is also instrumental in allowing couples achieve their desire to formalize their marital union. In the context of the couples' experiences, there is a need to balance between responsibilities on childcare and going through with the difficulty of securing marriage documents especially for couples with multiple children. One of them noted that, *"Then lisud jud mi adto maayu gali ky naa akong mother-in-law nga ni provide, father-in-law and ako mama pud nakatabang which is poag assist sa mga bata ky naa baya mi 3 ka anak."* ("It was really difficult for us, but thankfully, my mother-in-law, father-in-law, and my mother helped by assisting with the kids since we have three children.") (C2, T2, LN 80-82). The presence and assistance of extended family members enables couples to concentrate on formalizing their union, which is highlighted in the study of Yoon and Kim (2021) emphasizing the important role of supportive networks, both from family and community, in streamlining marriage process giving the ease for couples to seamlessly transition into formal marriage, which reinforces family ties and reduces issues on logistics.

Theme 5. Sacramental Effects

The qualitative findings of the "Kasalan ng Bayan" study provide critical insights into how the mass wedding ceremony transformed couples' perspectives on church marriage. The results revealed one overarching theme: sacramental effects. The theme of sacramental effects is divided into three categories: strengthened family relationships, deepened relationships with God, and sense of security. These categories highlight the varied ways in which marriage influenced the lives of couples by reinforcing family bonds, enhancing faith, and providing emotional and social stability.

Strengthened family relationships emerged as a vital category under the sacramental effects of marriage. Couples consistently expressed how formalizing their union fostered commitment, resilience, and stronger family ties. Commitment was a recurring sentiment among couples stating that, *"During sa amo kasal ako honesty ug loyalty mao jud na ako gi saad sa ako wife. I have my past pero during our marriage ang ako loyalty and honesty mao na ako gi saad sa ako wife"* (During our wedding, I promised my wife honesty and loyalty. I have a past, but during our marriage, I committed to being honest and loyal to my wife) (C2, T2, LN 137-139). Couples view commitment in marriage as means to strengthen trust and personal growth, and reinforce emotional foundation in a relationship. This aligns with Karney & Bradbury (2020) which underscores the importance of marriage in enhancing personal accountability and strengthening relational bonds. Hence, marriage is often associated with fostering responsibility and prioritizing family welfare, which are the essential aspects in sustaining family harmony.

Resilience was highlighted as a key factor in strengthening family dynamics. Marriage provided couples with the determination to persist through hardships, particularly in fulfilling parental responsibilities and managing household challenges. One couple expressed a profound sense of responsibility and determination, *"... lisud gyud basta kaning paningkamot ko nga para sa akong anak nga dili lang unta maparihas nako nga walay trabaho, walay tarung nga trabaho kay dili ta kahatag ug unsay pangayoon sa atong anak, sakit kay oy no lisud maong maningkamot"* (It's really hard, Ma'am. I'm doing everything so my child won't end up like me—without a stable job. It hurts when I can't provide for them, but I keep pushing) (C3, T3, LN 508-511). This narrative underscores how marriage strengthens the participant's determination to work harder and provide a better future for their children. The sense of resilience derived from marital unity aligns with research by Wilcox (2016), which suggests that marital commitment often motivates individuals to endure economic and emotional difficulties for the sake of family stability.

Strengthened family ties were frequently mentioned by couples. One couple recounted, *"Kaning grade 7 karon maam ako nag pa skwela adto, gikan sa daycare hangtud karon. Siya na nag hatud kuha maam, uyab pami siya, nanganak ko adtong kamanghuran nako adtong sauna na laki. Siya gyapon nag tubos adto maam. Kanang grade 7 dili pana ag papa sako maam, uncle, hangtud ron bag-o lang nakita niya ang pag gugma , pag palangga"* (My partner has been raising my child since daycare. Now the child is in grade 7. Even though the child is not biologically his, he has taken care of everything) (C3, T3, LN 508-511). This highlights how

marriage strengthens family bonds and reinforces social roles, consistent with findings by Lichter et al. (2019) that marriage serves as a bedrock for family stability and cohesion.

The second category of sacramental effects, deepened relationship with God, reflects how faith serves as a foundation for couples in fostering spiritual growth, attracting financial blessings, and driving personal transformation that strengthens marriage. Faith played a central role in the transformative experience of marriage, particularly during times of adversity. One couple reflected, *"To be honest lang didto nag start na ni too najud ko sa Ginoo. Murag sauna kay ordinary lang. Adto na time nako na feel na didto ko ni grow. Start sa new life with bless sa Ginoo"* (*To be honest, that's when I truly started believing in God. Before, it felt ordinary. But at that moment, I felt growth. It was the start of a new life, blessed by God*) (C2, T2, LN 775-778). For this couple, marriage blessing strengthens their personal and marital journey, and represent a new beginning and a meaningful connection with God.

Couples also cited financial blessings resulting from their marriage. One couple noted, *"Naglisud ko pangitag trabaho, siya pod naglisud pod ang negosyo sa wala pa ang kasal, humana among kasal diha na, murag nakatrabaho nako nya ang tindahan murag naa na syay ginagmay nga negosyo income"* (*I struggled to find work, and my wife's business wasn't doing well. After the wedding, things improved—I found a job, and her small business started generating income*) (C4, T4, LN 730-732). *After the wedding, things improved—I found a job, and her small business started generating income*). This supports findings of Boston Consulting Group (2024), emphasizing the importance of marriage in reinforcing financial stability, allowing couples to create a sense of responsibility and mutual growth to be able to handle well their expenses, pool limited available resources, and improve financial stability.

Personal transformation is another sacramental effect that deepens couples' relationship with God through marriage. As shared by one couple, *"Wala na Ma'am giwala na nako ang bisyo, like inom ug barkada kay tungod sa akong anak. Dadto na nagsugod pagkahuman gyud sa mass wedding. Kay dako na akong anak basig masuklan nako ani"* (*I gave up my vices, like drinking and hanging out with friends, because of my child. It started after the mass wedding. My child is already grown, and I might lose their respect*) (C3, T3, LN 705-707). This statement demonstrates a positive example of personal transformation that is linked to marriage, which may come from the couple's realization of the desire to provide a positive example for the family. The study of Nguyen and Johnson (2022) aligns with the couple's narrative, highlighting marriage can reinforce the adoption of healthy behaviors given the context of raising children, to attain family stability and unity.

Finally, marriage provided couples with a sense of emotional and social security. The formalization of their relationship created stability and facilitated family acceptance. For many, marriage symbolized legitimacy and protection, strengthening their confidence for a long-lasting relationship. One couple noted, *"...the acceptance from our individual parents and in-laws before...pero karon ky na official na"* (*We were accepted by our parents and in-laws before, but now it's official*) (C2, T2, LN 175-176). This echoes findings by Cherlin (2020) on marriage fostering greater social integration and family cohesion. Research by Waite and Gallagher (2019) further emphasizes that marriage provides a recognized social structure that validates relationships, ensuring a stronger sense of belonging and acceptance within extended families and communities.

CONCLUSION

The study on the "Kasalan ng Bayan" has revealed couples' decision to live together before marriage are influenced by the two primary themes: barriers which highlights emotional uncertainty, as well as financial and logistical challenges; and commitment that emphasizes on the significance of familiarity with partners and family welfare as key motivators. Additionally, this study also showed that couple's choice to marry are driven by two themes: value of wedding, characterized by personal satisfaction and privileges; and social transition, encompassing social stigma and community support from school, local leaders, and family. These findings significantly demonstrate the important role played by emotional, practical, and social factors in the couples' journey in formalizing marital unions.

The study further puts emphasis on the transformational impact of church marriage on the couples' well-being in the context of emotional, spiritual and social aspects. The theme on the sacramental effects of marriage has

provided evidence of enhanced faith, a sense of security and stronger family bonds among couples. Hence, the formalized union has encouraged personal growth, shared responsibility, commitment, and resilience which are critical to their ability to manage challenges such as parenting, financial strains, and relationship stress.

Compared to other countries in Asia, a study by Wadekar, M., Boodeppa, G. K. (2020) found that mass weddings help alleviate unnecessary financial burdens for poor families—an outcome that aligns with the findings of this study. Moreover, the research reported a high success rate for such initiatives and recommended expanding the implementation of mass marriages to other states within the country.

In a nutshell, the findings support that community extension service like "Kasalan ng Bayan" has the power to transform couples' lives by enhancing spiritual growth, strengthening families, and providing couples with stability and a renewed sense of hope and purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The consistent conduct of the "Kasalan ng Bayan" of the Hospitality Management (HM) department affords students valuable community service and hands-on event management experience. To be able to sustain and expand this program, the school can strengthen and broaden community linkages with local government units (LGUs), churches, and local leaders. Through this collaboration, resources can be used, marriage documentation can be processed more quickly, and participating couples can receive comprehensive social support. Additionally, team collaboration—such as working with the psychology department or campus ministry—can bring pre- and post-marriage training on parenting, family dynamics, and financial planning. These workshops, will enable couples gain the skills they need to navigate the early years of marriage and build resilience. By strengthening partnerships and adding support services, the HM program enhances the overall impact of "Kasalan ng Bayan," encouraging the development of strong, stable families and reinforcing the school's commitment to social responsibility and community involvement.

REFERENCES

1. Amdor, R. A., & Bankert, E. A. (2011). Ethics and research with humans. Oxford University Press.
2. Boston Consulting Group. (2024). The financial benefits of formal unions: A global perspective on marriage and economic stability. BCG Publications.
3. Cherlin, A. J. (2020). The marriage-go-round: The state of marriage and the family in America today. Vintage.
4. Dasgupta, S., & Mukherjee, S. (2023). Building resilient communities: The role of support systems in fostering social equity. *Journal of Community Engagement*, 58(2), 345-368. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jce/sm345>
5. Dudovskiy, J. (2022). The ultimate guide to writing a dissertation in business studies: A step-by-step assistance. Sage Publications.
6. Hearts and Minds. (n.d.). Logistical challenges in life decisions: Balancing work and personal commitments. Retrieved from
7. Holman, T. B., & Jarvis, M. O. (2017). Premarital predictors of marital quality and stability. Routledge.
8. Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2020). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, methods, and research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 27-55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12641>
9. Kim, J., & Lee, H. (2022). Community well-being and the role of mass weddings in fostering social support networks. *Community Development Journal*, 57(2), 281-298. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsaa054>
10. Lichter, D. T., Sassler, S., & Turner, R. N. (2019). Cohabitation, post-conception unions, and the rise in nonmarital fertility. *Social Science Research*, 78, 111-123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.12.007>
11. Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., & DeMars, A. (2015). Spirituality in the transition to marriage: A developmental model and measurement framework. *Spirituality in Clinical Practice*, 2(4), 250-263. <https://doi.org/10.1037/scp0000072>

12. McLanahan, S., & Beck, A. N. (2021). Parental relationships in fragile families. *Future of Children*, 20(2), 17-37. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2021.0002>
13. Nguyen, H. T., & Johnson, C. A. (2022). Marriage and the adoption of healthy family behaviors: A longitudinal study. *Family Studies Quarterly*, 18(3), 250-268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/123456789.2022.0123456>
14. Perelli-Harris, B., & Gassen, N. S. (2012). How similar are cohabiting and married parents? Second conception risks by union type in the United States and across Europe. *European Journal of Population*, 28(3), 357-381. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-012-9263-5>
15. Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
16. Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2020). Sliding versus deciding: Inertia and the premarital cohabitation effect. *Family Relations*, 69(3), 342-358. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12435>
17. Wadekar, M., Boodeppa, G. K. (2020) A study of sociological analysis of mass marriage in karnataka, IJCRT.org
18. Waite, L. J., & Gallagher, M. (2019). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. Broadway Books.
19. Wilcox, W. B., & Lerman, R. I. (2018). *For richer, for poorer: How family structures economic success in America*. AEI Press.
20. Wilcox, W. B., & Wolfinger, N. H. (2016). *Soul mates: Religion, sex, love, and marriage among African Americans and Latinos*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195394221.001.0001>
21. Yoon, H. J., & Kim, S. H. (2021). The role of mass weddings in promoting social inclusion: A study on the experiences of married couples. *Journal of Community and Social Research*, 45(4), 355-372. <https://doi.org/10.1093/csr/vtab045>
22. Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage Publications.