

# Impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Marital Relationship Satisfaction

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## Abstract

The study aims to challenge stigmas surrounding the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) on marital relationship satisfaction. It recognizes the significant influence of upbringing on individuals' capacity for healthy relationships, especially in Filipino culture, where parental involvement in romantic relationships is common. The stigma suggests individuals with ACEs lack the ability to heal and engage in nurturing relationships. Thus, the study evaluates the correlation between ACEs and marital satisfaction to address this perception. The researchers collected 194 responses from Metro Manila using the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire and the Relationship Assessment Questionnaire to understand the relationship between ACEs and marital satisfaction. The coefficient of determination of 0.0217 of ACE accounts for 2.17% of the variability in Relationship Satisfaction scores and the p-value of 0.041 presented significance at  $p < 0.05$ . Although the study revealed a significant relationship between ACEs and marital satisfaction, the explained variance was relatively low. This suggests that other factors beyond ACEs may contribute to relationship outcomes. Future research could explore these aspects to develop more comprehensive interventions for individuals with ACEs. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying the relationship between ACEs and marital satisfaction, aiding in the development of targeted interventions and stigma reduction efforts.

**Keywords:** Adverse Childhood Experiences, relationships, marital satisfaction



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## INTRODUCTION

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) were significant sources of stress for young people (World Health Organization, 2020). Statistics showed that 61% of adults had at least one type of ACE, while 16% had at least four ACEs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). These children were often neglected, abused, and had dysfunctional families, often exposed to excessive alcohol and substance misuse. The World Health Organization emphasizes the importance of providing solid and reliable care during a child's development to foster secure relationships (World Health Organization, 2020).

Individuals who had experienced abuse and neglect often viewed their guardians as dishonest. ACE has severe long-term effects on a child's psychological, cognitive, and behavioral development. Exposure to ACE at an early age increases the risk of proper development (Nelson, 2020). The adult

connection hypothesis suggested that relationships were stable and reasonable, originating from early connections. Two elements of the connection style were avoidance and tension, which proposed to present instability. Connection avoidance involves fear of rejection, aversion to cozy connections, and controlling feelings. The need for closeness, tenacity, or demandingness characterized connection tension. These elements contributed to the instability of relationships (Narayan et al., 2021).

A safe environment and nurturing relationships are crucial for a child's physical and mental well-being. However, many children lacked healthy relationships and environments, making them vulnerable to ACE. Adverse childhood experiences, including abuse and neglect, occurred before children reached 18 years old and could cause trauma. Research showed that children without healthy relationships and environments were at higher risk for ACE (Child Welfare, 2022).

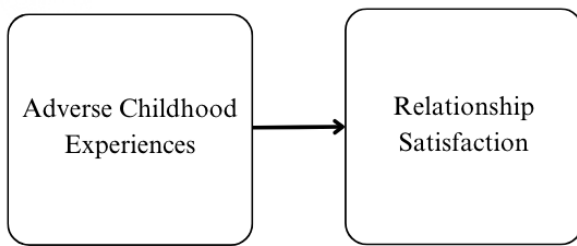
The researchers conducted this study to see if having an ACE generated more attachment concerns during their young and middle married adulthood and broke the stigma about their incapacity to build a safe environment for themselves and cope with life as the same of those people who were fortunate to have not experienced what they had gone through. The existence of ACEs in a person generated a handful of studies in determining that their history was detrimental to their capacity to build a successful relationship.

Research showed that having an ACE could predict conflict and wrath in future relationships (Kogan et al., 2016). Exposure to ACEs at a young age could increase the likelihood of encountering conflict in developing relationships. High ACE scores could also affect attachment patterns, social ties, and romantic relationships, which could worsen relationships and affect satisfaction. ACE could make individuals more vulnerable to feelings of deceit, rejection, and lack of safety, increasing the risk of social isolation (Clark et al., 2015). It was crucial to explore childhood experiences as they could impact a person's future health, well-being, and relationships (Hughes et al., 2016). However, not all adults with ACE were incapable of building successful relationships. ACE survivors could make meaningful adjustments to overcome adverse experiences. This study aimed to break the stigma about ACE survivors and provide a more quantitative interpretation of the data collected to help break the stigma and promote understanding.

ACE was an essential psychological topic due to its association with physical and mental health issues. Toxic stress from ACE could disrupt brain development and body response to stress, making it difficult for adults to understand the dangers to their mental and physical well-being (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). This study aimed to understand the risk of negative childhood events and assist young and middle-married adults in dealing with them as early as possible. It also aimed to prevent future violence, victimization, and lost health prospects. ACE-affected adults might be more willing to follow treatment and prevention

strategies. By exploring the struggles of young to middle-married adults who had experienced ACE trauma, we gained insight into their challenges and coping mechanisms. This data provided further insights and awareness for mental health facilities and communities, enabling the creation of potential interventions and treatments and increased awareness of and de-stigmatizing their experiences with failing relationships and physical and mental health struggles.

This study examined the impact of ACE on individuals, focusing on the three core values of Paulinians: Christ-centeredness, commitment to mission, and community. The first core value of being Christ-centered is the focal point of being a Paulinian. This study on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) suggests that it can have a negative impact on an individual's life, but it can also have a positive effect on natural religion. It has the potential to heal individuals' aftermath experiences through prayer, thereby mitigating the negative consequences of adverse events. A correlational study found that individuals who experienced more horrific mishaps had higher levels of customary religion, which could provide meaning, mastery, and increased confidence (Unzueta & Clements, 2017). Being a Paulinian had a mission to spread the Good News and be like Christ to improve life quality. The second core value is the Commitment to Mission. The study emphasized the importance of analyzing promising youth experiences and using advanced training and services to alleviate the pressure and social issues related to ACE (Crandall et al., 2019). The African Proverb "It took a village to raise a child" emphasizes the need for a support system to ensure a healthy and safe environment for holistic growth (Reupert, 2022). Community, as the last Paulinian core value, was highlighted in this study as its involvement was crucial in helping children develop their physical and cognitive structure as they aged. Overall, understanding and addressing ACE could lead to better individual life outcomes.



**Figure 1**  
*Adverse Childhood Experience and Relationship Success*

Figure 1 shows that a person's early emotional and social experiences correlate with attaining satisfaction in a relationship. The present study introduced a conceptual framework to examine the association between ACE and attaining a satisfactory relationship by categorizing it under Bowlby's Attachment theory.

According to this conceptual paradigm, ACE has the potential to exert a substantial impact on an individual's capacity to form and sustain satisfying, successful relationships (Goldberg & Kerr, 2013). The researchers focused on two components of the attachment theory: Secure Attachment and Avoidant Attachment. The researchers hypothesized that individuals who experienced ACE and fell under the category of secure attachment might have had a higher likelihood of achieving relationship satisfaction. Conversely, if an adult experienced ACE and was categorized as having an avoidant attachment, there might have been a possibility of decreased levels of relationship satisfaction.

The ACE questionnaire was utilized to quantitatively evaluate and assess the magnitude of unpleasant experiences encountered during an individual's formative years, whereas the RAS was employed to gauge the caliber and efficacy of present relationships.

The hypothesis posited that people who had experienced a greater number of bad childhood events might have faced increased challenges in establishing and maintaining healthy and successful relationships, potentially due to the emotional and psychological consequences of such experiences. By examining the relationship between early life encounters and later relationship outcomes, this study sought

to shed light on the potential long-term effects of childhood experiences on an individual's relational abilities. Using these methods, the present framework endeavored to elucidate the complex interplay between early life experiences and the subsequent consequences of adult relationships. To explore the effects of adverse childhood experiences on establishing relationship satisfaction as adults, the researchers intend to answer the following areas:

1. What is the level of adverse childhood experiences among young and middle-married adults living in Metro Manila?
2. What is the level of relationship satisfaction among young and middle-married adults living in Metro Manila?
3. Is there a significant relationship between adverse childhood experiences and relationship satisfaction of young and middle-married adults?

## LITERATURES

**Individual and Relationship Functioning.** One study found that ACEs, particularly sexual and emotional abuse, were associated with reduced partnership quality in adult women (Schütze et al., 2020). The study found that ACEs were associated with lower relationship satisfaction in military couples. However, the association between one's ACEs and their partner's individual and relationship functioning has not been explored. Partnership quality and relationship satisfaction: Khalifian et al. (2022) suggest that ACEs can significantly impact partnership quality, relationship satisfaction in adulthood, and mental health outcomes for individuals and couples. The association between ACEs and reduced partnership quality, as well as the influence of ACEs on mental health and relationship satisfaction in military couples, highlights the relevance of studying the impact of ACEs on married couples. ACEs in married couples, including communication, emotional regulation, trust issues, and the role of trauma in conflict situations. Investigating these areas can provide valuable insights into

the mechanisms through which ACEs affect marital relationships and inform the development of targeted interventions to support couples who have experienced childhood adversity.

**Decline of Marriage.** According to traditional ideas, one of the main causes of a couple's breakup is a decline in satisfaction. Numerous variables might be blamed for the drop in relationship satisfaction in young adulthood during the initial years of a partnership. Research indicates that stability and pleasure in relationships are also influenced by other aspects, such as commitment, perception of options, and investment. This reduction might also be attributed to adjusting to new demands and moving into a committed relationship. Satisfaction may also be lowered by disappointment, disillusionment, and consideration of other alternatives. (Bühler et al., 2021)

**Gaps in Filipino Context.** Specific literature on the stigma of ACEs in married couples within the Philippine context is limited. Nonetheless, it is evident that ACEs can have a profound impact on interpersonal relationships, including romantic relationships, and may require trauma-informed approaches to address the associated challenges (Chen et al., 2017). Future research should investigate cross-sectional studies, age ranges, and intercultural issues (Dullas et al., 2021). However, there are various factors deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, such as strong family values, religious beliefs, and cultural norms that prioritize familial bonds and support systems.

**Family Satisfaction among Filipinos.** The study explains that satisfaction among Filipinos regarding their relationship with their family is a significant source to determine satisfaction. Strong family relationships lead to high satisfaction and are less prone to negative situations (Cavanagh and Huston, 2008). Conversely, Filipinos who lack family support are more likely to engage in negative relationships and behavior (Lee et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important for Filipinos to

consider their relationships when building satisfying connections with others.

**Filipino Resilience.** The study examines the factors influencing deviant behavior in Filipino adolescents aged 12-19 years old. The results showed that deviant conduct and family satisfaction were negatively correlated, with those engaging in more deviant activity often having lower levels of family satisfaction. The study also highlighted the importance of family bonds in affecting teenagers' personalities and behaviors, emphasizing the role of family happiness in reducing hazardous conduct. The study concludes that Filipinos find happiness and contentment in their relationships, reflecting the resilience and interconnectedness prevalent in the Filipino community (Dullas et al., (2021). Additionally, resilience reduces the risk of mental health, and the children can cope and adapt to the adversity that they experience. Increasing resilience fosters security and belonging that protects the child from stress.

**Filipino Interpersonal Dynamic.** Filipino couples have approaches to maintaining a long-term romantic relationship, satisfaction, happiness, and contentment. (Chonody & Gabb, 2018). One of the Filipino approaches is the act of service (*pagsisilbi*), which is one way of showing their love, care, and support to their partners. Additionally, communication is important for Filipino married couples. It has been revealed that Filipinos are more likely to engage in their intimacy through the use of verbal expression (Vazhappilly and Reyes, 2016).

**Long-distance Marriage.** Some couples need to have a long-distance marriage because of the career that they are having. A long-distance marriage has less chance of having satisfaction due to the limited time for the couple's physical interaction. However, long-distance marriages can have satisfaction through the use of technology where they can show their intimacy to their partner and less misunderstanding (Krapf, 2017). Despite the distance between the couple, some studies define that long-distance marriage communication has a responsiveness quality due to the limited physical interaction in

which they engage their time and effort in remote communication (Stafford & Merolla, 2007).

**Marital Communication.** The influence of their communication skills impacts the quality of marriage in their relationship, which goes through their pleasure and satisfaction. Communication between married couples has different perspectives regarding their patterns of interactions, which depend on how they handle their conflicts in their daily lives. There are studies that show that couples who have the same demands for a relationship are more drawn to communicate positively unlike those couples who have less similar standards who are more likely to involve negative communication (Chi et. al., 2013). Furthermore, emotional investment has gained trust, security, and belonging, which has increased their intimacy towards their partner (Graciyal & Viswam, 2021). The study indicated that the social media platform has established communication and connection in a relationship where the outcome is happiness and pleasure, which will cause one to feel contentment and fulfillment from their expectation.

**Marital Satisfaction.** Studies have shown that attachment style and marital satisfaction have a relationship (Amani & Khosroshahi, 2021; Bedair et al., 2020). Additionally, a couple with a secure attachment style showed a high level of balancing in their relationships. People with a secure attachment style tend to see the relationship with a high chance of trusting in their perspective, compared to a person with an insecure attachment style, is more likely to sense of fear and anxiety (Abbasi et al., 2016; Amani & Khosroshahi, 2020; Bedair et al., 2020; Wijaya & Widyaningsih, 2020).

**Mediator.** According to the study of Zhan et al. (2022), people with varying empathy levels could react to satisfaction variations in various ways, which could affect how lonely they feel and how they end up phubbing. To explain the association between phubbing behavior, romantic relationship satisfaction, and loneliness, empathy is a key mediator. Stronger sensations of loneliness occur when romantic

relationship happiness declines since high empathy levels amplify the negative link between loneliness and romantic relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, a lack of empathy reduces the relationship between loneliness and contentment. As a result, empathy has a significant impact on phubbing behavior and romantic relationship pleasure.

**Married Couples in Testing the Relationship Satisfaction.** Married people were the target respondents for the study on the impacts of ACEs on adult relationships, likely because marriage provides a stable and long-term relationship. Additionally, studies of married individuals allow researchers to explore the impact of ACEs on the formation and quality of relationships because marriage often involves emotional and psychological investment (Brannigan, 2020). By focusing on married couples, researchers can understand how ACEs may affect longevity—relationships: Good relationships, communication patterns, and overall satisfaction. Marriage provides a social bond; married people were included as respondents in a study on long-term relationships that would examine the effects of adverse childhood events (ACEs) on adult relationships and the impact of ACEs on the relationships of older adults. Couples are committed to long-term partnerships that can provide researchers with insights into how ACEs affect relationships, communication, and problem-solving over time. Neglect and exposure to violence can affect older people's health and well-being, which in turn can affect their relationships. This information can inform interventions and support services designed to help people with ACEs develop and maintain healthy and successful relationships in adulthood.

**Relevance of Parents.** Effects of ACE on a Child's Development: According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (2021), ACEs impact the development of a child's behavior, which may affect adulthood. It has shown that an individual who experiences more than four is at risk of developing their behavior, which affects their perspective in life and their treatment of others. However, some positive

experiences, also known as PCEs, have a good health outcome in adulthood. This childhood traumatic experience has long-term effects that may result in many outcomes throughout their lifespan.

**Emerging Transitions to a Child with Multiple ACE.** As individuals transition into late puberty and adulthood, managing close relationships becomes crucial due to evolving needs and goals (Kansky & Allen, 2017). Finally, the review highlights the impact of ACEs on children's behavior and life, with high levels of ACE resulting in increased pressure, more complicated memories of adulthood, and increased risks of injuries like sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, and chronic diseases (Thomas, 2020).

**Parent-Child Attachment.** Using a nationally representative sample, the study validates the risk cascade association between higher ACEs and health and developmental challenges. It investigates the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on attachment between parents and children and the possibility that a healthy and encouraging connection between parents and children might guard against detrimental effects on relationships and development. According to the study, interventions aimed at assisting families with young children ought to prioritize improving the level of connection, particularly for kids who have had adverse childhood experiences. Additionally, it also looks at how the bond between parents and children helps to foster resilience (Webster, 2022).

**Raised by a Parent with Mental Health Concerns** Research has shown a link between women's depression and specific ACE domains, such as family mental distress, local violence, and domestic violence are connected to major depressive episodes (MDE). However, a study did not find a significant link between women's depression and neglect, suggesting that neglect, associated with deprivation, has a different impact on depression than ACEs related to threats and violence (LeMasters et al., 2021). Traumatic experiences have been linked to parenting practices, with

maltreatment causing increased unfriendly and meddlesome behavior towards newborn children and sexual maltreatment causing diminished contribution to babies. Additionally, injury-related results, including psychological maladjustment, are connected with nurturing ways of behaving, such as unreliable parent-child connections and diminished maternal aversion to child signals (Lange et al., 2018). These issues can lead to adulthood betrayal, social isolation, and mental issues, causing further stress and communication issues (Zlate, 2020).

**Stigma: Abuse and Neglect.** Kim et al.'s (2021) study identifies four categories of ACE: child abuse, household dysfunction, violence, and low diversity. Children who have experienced maltreatment are more likely to develop depressive symptoms. Children exposed to abuse and neglect at a young age have reduced self-esteem and increased self-shame, which can lead to depression symptoms in adulthood. Additionally, children exposed to neglect and abuse are more likely to develop interpersonal connection issues as adults, potentially leading to a recurrence of the toxic environment cycle. Therefore, people exposed to ACE are more likely to experience depressive symptoms and engage in toxic relationships if not addressed. Maltreatment has an effect on the child's behavior, which can be carried when a child grows into an adult. Those who experience physical neglect are likely to see a negative self-portrayal, which can cause them to feel like a failure (Silva & Calheiros, 2020).

According to Wagner's study (2022), maltreatment suffered as a child can have a lasting impact on an individual's adult relationship, including those with potential spouses. According to the findings, emotional neglect is the foremost indicator of marital satisfaction for both men and women. Additionally, the study found that there are gender inequalities since women are most likely to seek therapy for their problems. As a result, in all types of abuse, men were more strongly associated with marriage quality than women. Furthermore, it was mentioned that when it comes to types of abuse, emotional

neglect is frequently disregarded. The study's overall findings indicate that childhood maltreatment experiences can have a lasting impact on adults, which may subsequently affect their romantic relationships. Mental health practitioners should prioritize helping people who are vulnerable to emotional neglect, recognize warning signs, and know when to step in. Correlation of ACE in having an adult woman as a partner/Societal Misconception: Married women who experienced childhood sexual abuse (CSA) may have different sexual and marital relationships with their spouses as a result, according to a study by Shirkani et al. (2023). This is a delicate and significant subject to talk about because it fits with their culture, in which the majority of women hide the incident out of fear of social humiliation. The study's overall findings suggest that married women who were sexually abused as children may face unfavorable consequences on their level of marital happiness, sexual pain, and sexual desire. Women who were abused as children should receive the right psychiatric care to heal.

Societal misconceptions and victim-blaming attitudes: A systematic review of stigma towards intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors by Taccini & Mannarini (2023) highlights the negative public reactions to their experiences, including victim-blaming, shame, and discrediting attitudes. These negative public reactions can lead to discrimination, ostracism, and professional inaction, worsening the negative impacts of IPV on survivors' mental health and relationships. The review emphasizes the need for increased awareness and support for IPV survivors to overcome this stigma and improve their mental health and relationship satisfaction. Without intervention, these behaviors and worries may be transmitted into adulthood, causing further interpersonal relationships and correspondence issues (Zlate, 2020). Adverse Childhood Experiences can lead to feelings of betrayal, secret-keeping, worthlessness, and social isolation. These experiences can also result in social withdrawal, sadness, disobedience, hostility, and mental issues in adulthood.

**Stigma in Relationship Satisfaction.** Childhood Trauma: Childhood adverse events (ACEs) can lead to social stigma and negative effects on the brain and behavior, resulting in a lack of social support and depression. These traumas also affect adult relationships, emphasizing the need for early intervention and prevention strategies to reduce the impact of ACEs on mental health and prevent negative attitudes, violent behavior, and social problems in adults (Brannigan, 2020).

Correlation of ACE in having adult women as a partner: This study by Schütze, Geraedts, and Leeners (2020) focuses on the relationship between adverse childhood events (ACEs), especially physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect, and relationships among older women. Research has shown that women with ACEs may experience stigma in their relationships due to the impact of ACEs on mental health and relationships, particularly sexual and emotional abuse. Additional research results provide additional information about the impact of ACEs on romantic relationships and problem behaviors. This research suggests that addressing the impact of ACEs on psychological and social well-being may help reduce stigma and improve collaborative relationships.

Having a relationship with an individual with ACE: Exposure to ACEs can lead to various negative outcomes in relationships. According to Andersson et al. (2021), individuals with more than three ACEs are more likely to be widowed. Furthermore, they tend to exhibit insecure attachment styles, reduced commitment and trust, and perceive relationships as more costly over time. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of divorce, widowhood, or remaining unmarried. Financial strain, often stemming from insecure parenting techniques, is also identified as a contributing factor to divorce. Matsukura et al. (2023) highlight that childhood poverty is associated with higher divorce rates in females.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design.** This study utilized a quantitative approach to investigate the

influence of ACE experiences on adult relationship success. The method, as per Babbie (2020), involved objective estimations through numerical or mathematical analysis of measurable data. To quantify the study, a correlational research design was applied to determine the degree of relationship between the two variables. This was facilitated to identify correlations between factors and make predictions (Johnson, 2001). The design helped the researchers look into the possible relationship between an individual with ACE and their success in relationships.

**Instrumentation.** Researchers utilized printed copies of the questionnaires and Google Forms for participant screening and variable measurement. The form included six sections: Informed Consent, Demographic Profile, ACE Questionnaire, RAS Questionnaire, and the researcher's contact information. The researcher's contact information was provided to the participants to facilitate referrals to professional assistance should the need arise.

The ACE Questionnaire, a standardized test with 10 items adapted from Felitti et al. (1998), measures adversity in childhood experiences. The ACE questionnaire had a good test-retest reliability of  $\alpha=.88$ , indicating a reliable and valid score. The scoring ranged from zero to 10 based on the number of yeses, which was equivalent to one point. The lowest risk score range was zero; the intermediate risk score ranged from one to three; and the highest risk score ranged from 4 to higher.

In addition, the researchers utilized the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) Questionnaire authored by Susan S. Hendrick in 1988, which aims to measure the success of relationships, employing the Likert scale. The RAS is a seven-item measurement, that assessed general relationship satisfaction, with a mean inter-item correlation ranging from 0.49 and an alpha of 0.86 (Hendrick, 1988). This correlated with related factors in the relationship, such as sexual view, romance, and individual belief (Hall et al., 1991). The results were on a five-point Likert scale, with the total score ranging from seven to 35. The lowest

satisfaction scores ranged from seven to 14, while scores of 15 to 21 indicated average satisfaction, and scores from 22 to 35 indicated higher satisfaction. If necessary, the researchers would contact a professional to conduct a debriefing of the respondents via the Zoom platform.

**Population and Sampling.** The researchers studied individuals aged 20 to 50 in early and middle adulthood, male or female, who were legally married, registered their marriage in Metro Manila, Philippines, and took the ACE questionnaire. Their scores should fall within the range of one to three, interpreted as "intermediate risk," and 4+, interpreted as "high risk." The higher the score, the greater the risk for social, mental, or other well-being problems for an individual. The results of the responses from the population are as follows:

## Demographics

**Table 1**  
*Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to risk levels. (N= 194)*

| Profile                | Variables          | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| Sex                    | Male               | 77        | 39.69      |
|                        | Female             | 117       | 60.31      |
| Age                    | 20 to 30 years old | 23        | 11.85      |
|                        | 31 to 50 years old | 171       | 88.14      |
| Civil Status           | Married            | 177       | 91.24      |
|                        | Separated          | 13        | 6.70       |
|                        | Widowed            | 4         | 2.06       |
| Length of relationship | 1 - 10 years       | 121       | 62.37      |
|                        | 11 - 20 years      | 43        | 22.16      |
|                        | 21 - 30 years      | 29        | 14.95      |
|                        | 31 - 40 years      | 1         | 0.51       |
| Location               | Manila City        | 51        | 26.29      |
|                        | Caloocan City      | 36        | 18.56      |
|                        | Pasay City         | 31        | 15.98      |
|                        | Quezon City        | 21        | 10.82      |
|                        | Paranaque City     | 16        | 8.25       |
|                        | Makati City        | 14        | 7.22       |
|                        | Mandaluyong City   | 9         | 4.64       |
|                        | Marikina City      | 9         | 4.64       |
|                        | Muntinlupa City    | 3         | 1.55       |
|                        | Valenzuela City    | 2         | 1.03       |
|                        | Taguig City        | 2         | 1.03       |

The researchers relied on purposive sampling for this study. A non-probability purposive sample was chosen based on demographic characteristics and the study's goal. Judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling

were other terms for purposeful sampling. In addition, this sampling method could be quite beneficial when you need to promptly access a specific sample (Crossman, 2020). The initial sample size for screening computed via G\*power was 89 respondents in the research Locale (Metro Manila, Philippines) for the ACE and RAS questionnaire. The researchers doubled the number of respondents to 178 to generate a good result.

**Data Source.** The researchers obtained ethics approval from St. Paul University Manila and recruited respondents via social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Respondents accessed a Google form via a QR code or link, which directed them to a five-page questionnaire. Consent forms outlined study limitations and data privacy, allowing respondents to withdraw if they experienced distress.

To maximize respondent reach, the researchers collaborated with marriage organizations like Couples for Christ and other groups that fit the study criteria. Hard-copy questionnaires were distributed during random prospecting and face-to-face group facilitation sessions with the different marriage organizations. A purposive sampling method was employed to select respondents based on the study's demographic requirements. Researchers explained the study and obtained consent before proceeding to collect demographic information and administer the ACE and RAS questionnaires.

The survey began after seeking permission from potential participants, starting with an informed consent page that outlined the research title, researchers' contact information, and a brief study description. The questionnaire was structured with informed consent and demographic information (age, civil status, relationship length, optional proof of marriage, and marriage location), followed by the ACE and RAS questionnaires. The last page provided researchers' contact information and instructions for accessing professional help, with researchers offering to arrange and cover the cost of consultations if needed.

Data collected were organized into an Excel spreadsheet for descriptive statistics analysis and processed with JAMOV for statistical computations. Forming the basis for the study's conclusions.

**Data Analysis.** Researchers utilized the ACE and RAS questionnaires to collect quantitative data on childhood trauma and relationship satisfaction. The ACE questionnaire, comprising 10 items, assessed various types of childhood trauma, while the RAS, consisting of seven items, measured relationship fulfillment. Researchers employed descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to analyze levels of adverse childhood experiences and relationship satisfaction. Researchers used simple linear regression and looked at the p-value ( $p < 0.05$ , which means a meaningful relationship) to see if ACE scores can be used to predict relationship satisfaction among young and middle-aged adults. Taking into account other factors, the regression coefficient found the average change in relationship satisfaction for every unit increase in ACE score. This process addressed the third SOP. Statistical analyses were performed using Microsoft Excel and JAMOV software, with JAMOV being particularly suited for regression analyses, facilitating the examination of relationships between independent and dependent variables crucial for interpreting study findings.

## RESULTS

**Level of Adverse Childhood Experience.** Table 2 below provides descriptive statistics summarizing the level of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) among 194 respondents for different ranges.

**Table 2**  
*Level of Adverse Childhood Experiences (N= 194)*

| Variables      | Mean | Standard Deviation | Interpretation    |
|----------------|------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Score of 1 - 3 | 1.83 | 0.78               | Intermediate Risk |
| Score of 4+    | 4.90 | 1.06               | High Risk         |
| All            | 2.99 | 1.74               | Intermediate Risk |

A score falling under 1 – 3 in ACE has a mean of  $1.83 \pm 0.78$ , interpreted as “Intermediate Risk.” While scores of 4+ have a mean score of  $4.90 \pm 1.06$ , indicating “High Risk.” Lastly, the dataset for all the respondents has an overall mean of  $2.99 \pm 1.74$  with an interpretation of “Intermediate Risk.” (Aces Aware, 2020).

**Level of Relationship Satisfaction.** Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the level of relationship satisfaction among 194 respondents.

**Table 3**  
*Level of Relationship Satisfaction (N = 194)*

| Variables          | Mean  | Standard Deviation | Interpretation    |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|
| ACE Score of 1 – 3 | 26.15 | 4.10               | High Satisfaction |
| ACE Score of 4+    | 25.33 | 3.80               | High Satisfaction |
| All                | 25.84 | 4.00               | High Satisfaction |

It indicates that an ACE score of one-three has a mean score of  $26.15 \pm 4.10$ , interpreted as “High Satisfaction”. Conversely, an ACE score of 4+ indicates “High Satisfaction,” with a mean score of  $25.33 \pm 3.80$ . Lastly, the overall respondents have a mean score of  $25.84 \pm 4.00$  also interpreted as “High Satisfaction” (Greenspace, 2020).

**Predictive Relationship between Adverse Childhood Experience and Relationship Satisfaction of Young and Middle-Married Adults.** To test the significant relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and the Success of Marital Relationships, researchers used Simple Linear Regression analysis with JAMOV 2.3. Table 4 presents the Model Fit Measures. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.0217, indicating that ACE accounts for 2.17% of the variability in Relationship Adjustment Scores. The F-value of 4.25 with 1 and 192 degrees of freedom is associated with a p-value of 0.041, showing statistical significance at  $p < 0.05$ . With this, the researchers reject the null hypothesis. The results suggest a significant relationship between ACE and Relationship Adjustment Scores (RAS) among 194 eligible respondents.

**Table 4**  
*Relationship between ACE and RAS (N = 194)*  
**Model Fit Measures**

| Model | R     | $R^2$  | Overall Model Test |     |     |       |
|-------|-------|--------|--------------------|-----|-----|-------|
|       |       |        | F                  | df1 | df2 | P     |
| 1     | 0.147 | 0.0217 | 4.25               | 1   | 192 | 0.041 |

**Model Coefficients – RAS**

| Predictor | Estimate | SE    | t     | P     |
|-----------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| Intercept | 26.854   | 0.568 | 47.25 | <.001 |
| ACE       | -0.339   | 0.164 | -2.06 | 0.041 |

The Simple Linear Regression analysis found a significant coefficient estimate for ACE (-0.339), indicating a negative relationship with the dependent variable. As ACE increases by 1 unit, RAS decreases by approximately 0.339 units. They obtained t-value of -2.56 with a corresponding p-value of 0.011. These findings underscore the importance of childhood experiences in shaping individuals' ability to navigate romantic relationships, emphasizing the need to consider ACEs when studying relationship outcomes.

## DISCUSSION

As established in the results reflected in this quantitative study that measured the effects of adverse childhood experiences and predictive relationship satisfaction of young and married adults, it is evident that there is a significant relationship between the two variables based on the outcome of Model Fit Measure coefficient of determination that; the data presented ACE with a significant 2.17% variability in the Relationship Satisfaction score. In proportion to the outcome of the data, most of the population, which was 62.37%, fell into the category of Immediate risk. These are the respondents who had at least one to three adverse childhood experiences that they can recall. On the other hand, those who scored four or higher on the ACE questionnaire were 37.63% of the population and were categorized as High Risk (Aces Aware, 2020). Contingent with the outcome of the scores gathered in the Relationship Assessment Scale used to

measure the relationship satisfaction of the respondents; it was reflected that the overall rating was at a High Satisfaction rating. Therefore, the result of this study only leads to rejecting the null hypothesis presented based on the p-value of 0.041, which showed a statistical significance at the  $p < 0.05$  threshold.

The predominant literature findings of the researchers for this study conveyed that ACE and relationship satisfaction have an inverse or negative linear correlation. To explain this, when there is an increase in the ACE score (the independent variable), there will be a decrease in the RAS score (the dependent variable). The attachment theories of Bartholomew and Bowlby both had viewpoints regarding the effects of early attachments on the success of adult-related relationships. In retrospect, those adults experiencing relationship satisfaction and who have not experienced attachment concerns during childhood were addressed objectively. It is easy to believe that these theories can be utilized to predict a person's future outcomes if they have experienced traumatic events as a child. Both theories predict such patterns in attachments and their aftereffects are often linked with challenges in creating deep relationships and managing love life well. (Mikulincer et al., 2002). The important value for ACE (-0.339) shows that if ACE goes up, the scores for how well people manage their relationships usually decrease. This numerical confirmation matches the idea that bad things in someone's young years can change how they handle and feel about their relationships when they grow up, just like attachment theories suggest.

After meticulously calculating the data, its interpretation gave the researchers an interesting insight into the results. Table 1 of this study showed that 37.63% of the population fell into the category of High risk. Interpreting this, it can already be expected that those respondents would produce a low score on the Relationship Assessment Scale. Oddly, the mean score of those respondents classified as High Risk draws out the result of having a High Relationship Satisfaction. In addition, the researchers looked at the other side of the data

outcome. The remaining 62.37% of the population falls into the "Intermediate Risk" category based on the results also presented in Table 1. This is to check for any possibility of a result discrepancy contingent on the level of adverse childhood experience interpretation. Astoundingly, the scores revealed that even those who scored between 1 and 3 on the ACE questionnaire expressed that they also had an experience of High Satisfaction with their relationship.

Conclusive to the outcome of the results, Adverse Childhood Experiences do not impact the level of satisfaction of the population utilized for this study. The respondents' interpretations piqued the researchers' interest as they deviated from the anticipated result based on the literature employed and the theories used throughout the study. This made the researchers investigate one factor that might have operated, given that all of our respondents come from a single culture: the level of resilience that Filipinos have in them. The "Superhuman Patience" as labeled by the author of *An Illustrated History of the Philippines* (Ortuoste, J., 2021), resilience was observed to be one of the strongest common traits amongst Filipinos since time immemorial (Garay, 2020). This is a phenomenon that was observed across cultures. In dealing with life difficulties internally and externally, Filipinos have always put resilience at the center of their cycle, always bouncing back and staying hopeful that when recovery sets in, gratitude should always follow. Historically, Filipinos have experienced grievances in the presence of natural calamities due to the geographical setting of the country. From there, they experience massive emotional dysregulation, as complicated situations are unpredictable and will always be out of their control. Those factors may or may not have strengthened their resilience as an accurate fact; however, with the results gathered in this study, it can be concluded that despite the adverse childhood experiences, due to the level of resilience present amongst Filipinos, their capacity to bounce back and ensure their level of satisfaction in life and relationships with others will be on a satisfying level.

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