



Understanding the Motivations and Challenges Faced by Married People Participating in Sports Program: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

This study investigated the lived experiences among married people in Barangay Sto Niño, Tanjay City year 2024. A phenomenological approach was employed to describe the phenomenon and through purposive sampling, the participants were selected based on the criteria set by the researchers. Moreover, a self-made interview was utilized coupled with open-ended questions. In terms of the richness and saturation of the data, the researchers took eight sessions with the residents of the participants for their convenience. With the use of thematic analysis, the findings revealed five major themes namely, a) Promoting physical fitness, b) Psychological advantage, c) Connectivity amidst diversity d) Drawbacks in the game, and e) Embracing sportsmanship. Thus, the findings recommend that Local Government Units continue to provide recreational activities to help people foster and promote healthy lifestyles especially adult and married people.

Keywords: *Qualitative research; phenomenology; lived experiences of married people participating in sports programs; motivations of married people in sports*

Introduction

Sports programs are not limited to children and teenagers. Married people who participate in sports might also get significant benefits. They thought about participating in sports for a variety of reasons, including enjoyment, socialization, and fitness. Participating in sports regularly might help people feel more confident and better about themselves. Playing sports can improve strength, skills, and stamina; it will also boost self-image (Admin, 2024). Moreover, playing sports gives people a sense of control and mastery, which sometimes builds pride and confidence. Engaging in physical activity can provide you with increased energy and strength, which can help to succeed in responsibilities both on and off the field (Keeping-Lawrence, 2022). Despite these benefits, it is also significant that people must possess and appreciate the power of sportsmanship. Sportsmanship encompasses knowledge and passion for fair play, moral conduct, honesty, and all-around camaraderie with an opponent. It is a confirmation that an athlete has the self-control to keep perspective, maintain calm, and act in their teammates' best interests (Fort Worth Country Day, 2023).

Special difficulties and benefits arise from striking a balance between specific goals, common goals, and the demands of a committed relationship. For many couples, sports are more than just a hobby; they're a shared passion, a source of connection, and a means for dealing with the ups and downs of married life (Nguyen, 2023). Participating in sports can also boost one's self-worth and confidence. People gain self-confidence and a sense of success when they create goals, work hard to achieve them, and overcome obstacles (Gill, 2017). The life of adult individuals in sports can be a source of joy, connection, and personal growth. By engaging in physical activity together, couples can strengthen their bond, reduce stress, and cultivate a sense of support and achievement that enhances their relationships and well-being. According to McCarvel (2021), no matter if a person is living in a refugee camp, as long as he/she plays sports, it can help him/her to release any negative energy and be able to feel free. This concept is associated with the activity theory developed by Robert J. Havighurst in 1961. According to this theory, maintaining social connections and an active lifestyle makes older persons happier. This explains that older people get physically and emotionally fit when they constantly and continually engage in physical activities (Seegert, 2021). Aside from this, people who regularly spend time on physical pursuits improve social interaction and self-perceived well-being, as well as lower the risk of several chronic illnesses and cognitive decline that are commonly associated with aging (Szychowska & Drygas, 2021).



Based on the literature above, people's lives are significantly shaped by sports programs. This allows a better grasp of the influence of sports programs on different facets of peoples' lives by researching their significance and ideals. Sports programs provide a multitude of advantages that can enhance total growth, ranging from mental and physical health to overall development. In this regard, this study aims to investigate the lived experiences of married people in joining sports programs in Barangay Sto Niño, Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Philippines in the year 2024. Furthermore, this study sought to address the following questions.

1. What are the lived experiences of married people participating in sports programs in barangay Sto. Niño, Tanjay City?
2. What is the meaning of these experiences?
3. Based on the result of the study, what recommendation can be made?

Methodology

This section elucidates the research design, locale, participants, instrument, data-gathering procedures, and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design

This research employed a phenomenological approach. A branch of study called phenomenology looks at how humans experience things to explain their nature. Translates, it means "study of phenomena." Which is, it refers to the study of the importance that these objects (or phenomena) hold for the audience you are researching (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). Relevantly, this study utilized phenomenology to look into the lived experiences of married people participating in sports programs in Barangay Santo Niño, Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Philippines in the year 2024. Moreover, codes and themes were created using thematic analysis to provide insight into the participants' experiences.

Research locale

Selecting an appropriate research location is essential for any investigation since it can significantly influence the findings and deductions made from the study. A suitable site for the goals and objectives of the research must be chosen. In this regard, the research locale of the study is the residential areas of Barangay Sto Niño, Tanjay City. This site is located near Sto Niño High School where the participants lived.

Research Participants

Due to their ability to give researchers invaluable information and data, research participants are essential to the field of study. They aid in the collection of data and the formulation of findings in a variety of research projects, experiments, surveys, and interviews. In this study, the researchers employed a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling, sometimes referred to as judgmental or expert sampling, is the deliberate selection of participants by the researcher according to their areas of competence. Participants are selected specifically to meet the goals of the study, not at random. This approach enables the researcher to focus on people who have particular characteristics that are pertinent to the study, making it appropriate for small groups with a defined research goal (Bisht, 2024). Anent, participants in this study were carefully selected based on the criteria set by the researchers as follows: a.) he/she must be married and, b.) participating in volleyball for women and basketball games for men under the sports program in Barangay Sto Niño, Tanjay City, Negros Oriental.

Research instrument

Since tools assist in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, research instruments are essential to qualitative research. Among regularly applied research tools in qualitative research include document analysis, focus groups, interviews, and observations. Every research tool has advantages and disadvantages; therefore researchers must choose and use the right tools wisely depending on their goals and the type of study. Researchers can produce significant and perceptive findings that expand our understanding of their topic by skillfully utilizing the appropriate research tools (Ruellicanto, 2023). Consequently, the researchers used a self-made interview guide during the interview. This was necessary to test questions and for the interviewer to be flexible in extracting the data. Rigor-wise, the researchers asked permission for the participants' responses to be recorded for credibility purposes. Also, member checking was necessary to establish high credibility of the participants' responses. Aside from this, researchers strictly audit all the procedures in the study for future reference for dependability purposes. Moreover,



the researchers accordingly describe the participants, research locale, and the limitations of the study for future replication or generalization of the findings.

Data Gathering Procedures

In qualitative research, methods for collecting data are essential for producing a deep and comprehensive understanding of the details of human experience and behavior. At present, this research utilized three procedures to gather data namely; pre-data gathering, during-data gathering, and post-data gathering. In the pre-data gathering phase, the researchers invited the researchers to an orientation and explained the nature and significance of the study. Moreover, the distribution of the informed consent materialized, and data privacy was emphasized. It was also mentioned that at any time, participants can withdraw from the study since the participation is voluntary. Consequently, the gathering of data commenced when the researchers conducted eight sessions to saturate the data. The researchers carefully recorded all the information obtained from each interview. Furthermore, in the post-data gathering phase, researchers transcribed all the collected data, analyzed it, and categorized codes resulting in themes.

Ethical considerations

To safeguard the rights and security of participants in qualitative research, ethical issues are essential. A respectful, open, and equitable research process can be achieved by researchers by adhering to ethical rules and principles. In the end, ethical issues support the honesty and reliability of qualitative research. In this study, ethical-wise, the identity of the participants was treated privately. Through coding, it was made possible. Moreover, to the confidentiality of the data, it is promised that all data and information collected in this study will be held with the utmost confidentiality. Evidently, with the strict observance of rules and policies in the selection and protection of the participants, the review process made by the school's review board allowed the student researchers to conduct the study.

Results and Discussions

The main findings of the study are presented in this section. By using thematic analysis to develop codes and themes, the lived experiences of married individuals participating in sports programs in Barangay Santo Nino year 2024 were highlighted. The researchers were able to obtain a thorough understanding of the distinct experiences that each married person had with the sports program.

Table 1. Thematic map of the lived experiences of married people participating in sports programs in Barangay Sto. Niño, Tanjay City, Negros Oriental in the year 2024

Codes	Themes
Enhances physical activities	Promoting physical fitness
Improve motor skills	
Provides pleasure and joy	Psychological advantage
Stress reliever	
Builds confidence	Connectivity amidst diversity
Making friends	
Adjusting to young members	
Children disturb their parents who are playing	Drawbacks in the game
Inevitable injuries and back pains	
Understanding instances of accidents causing injuries	Embracing sportsmanship
Accepting the referee's decision	

Promoting Physical Fitness

Participating in physical activities and sports with your partner can help to improve your general well-being and build your relationship. It's a common misconception that married individuals have less time or energy for physical activity. But nothing could be further from the reality of this. There may be much greater advantages to participating in sports. Some married individuals who exercised reported lower rates of anxiety and depression, better mental health, and an increased ability to prevent and manage non-communicable diseases like diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. This also includes improving motor skills and enhancing physical fitness (World Health Organization: WHO, 2024). This theme is expressed by the participants.



Participant 1 said, *"Even though I'm married, I joined a sports team as a player to strengthen my immune system and gain exercise. Being physically active and taking care of our health is more vital as we age".*

Participant 2 said, *"For me, joining a sports team has been a fulfilling and happy experience. In addition to obtaining the exercise I need to maintain my health; I get to socialize and enjoy myself while doing it. Being a married person means that we should put our health and well-being first, and playing sports is only one way to do this".*

Participant 3 said, *"My goal as a budding basketball player has always been to get better in shooting, dribbling, and general playing. I think that improving these crucial facets of my game will make me a more competitive and well-rounded player on the court. I want to focus on improving my shooting skills first and foremost. On the court, I frequently struggle to make shots from a variety of distances. I'll work on my form, technique, and follow-through to get better at shooting. I'm going to put in more time honing my shooting drills, which include mid-range jump shots, three-pointers, and free throws. Through commitment and diligence, I am sure I can improve my accuracy and dependability as a shooter".*

Participant 4 said, *"I'm a married sports enthusiast, and I think participating in sports will benefit me in many facets of my life. It's a fantastic method for me to keep active and gain exercise, but it also helps me improve as a player and helps me forget about some of the issues I might be dealing with daily".*

Participant 5 said, *"As married individuals, we should always strive to better ourselves in all facets of our lives. Focusing on skill development, maintaining an active lifestyle through exercise, and improving our playing ability are some ways to do this".*

Participant 6 said, *"Participating in sports can strengthen our immune systems in addition to helping us become better players. Being physically active can assist to boost our immune systems and reduce our susceptibility to sickness by improving cardiovascular health and blood circulation".*

Participant 7 said, *"First and foremost, playing sports is an excellent way to stay active and get the exercise your body needs to stay in good shape. Numerous health benefits of regular physical activity, including a reduced risk of chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. As a married individual, I've found that participating in sports improves cardiovascular health, strengthens muscles, and enhances overall fitness levels. These benefits not only contribute to a healthier body but also improve one's quality of life".*

Promoting physical activities and fostering physical fitness are beneficial to health since they make physical activities more enjoyable and improve motor abilities. Married individuals who participate in sports can also benefit mentally from this. Endorphins, sometimes referred to as hormones that make us less stress, anxiety, and sadness, have been demonstrated to be released during exercise. Married players can enhance their mood, confidence, and general sense of well-being through regular physical activity, which can result in improved perspectives. This was substantiated by the participants' responses as they revealed how joining sports can improve their physician fitness. Thus, individuals who participate in these activities regularly are more likely to be physically fit in terms of their ability to sustain their heart and breathe. It's crucial to start these exercises softly and build up to a higher level over time (Newman, 2023).

Psychological Advantage

Engaging in sports can bring significant physical and emotional health benefits for individuals, including those who are married. Apart from these advantages, married people who do sports may also have psychological benefits. This benefit can promote personal development, enhance relationships, and raise self-esteem. Exercise in outdoor settings offers numerous clear advantages for recommending social behavior and mental health self-management (Wicks et al., 2022).

Participant 1 said, *"Even though it can be exhausting at times, I enjoy playing sports. Even with the additional duties that accompany marriage and raising a family, I'm determined to keep playing and getting better at it. The satisfaction of winning, the health and psychological advantages of regular exercise, and the chance to develop and learn. I will always find time in my life to pursue sports since they provide me with a sense of contentment, enjoyment, and purpose".*

Participant 2 said, *"Playing sports as a married person has made me feel incredibly happy, content, and joyful. My life has been centered around sports, which provide me with an outlet for stress, a means of expressing my feelings, an escape from boredom, and an escape from everyday issues. My favorite pastime for pleasure, relaxation, and emotional release is sports, which has improved my general well-being and made me a happier, healthier person".*



Participant 3, *"As a married person, sports are really important to me since they provide me joy, excitement, and a sense of fulfillment. They give me a way to decompress myself from the stresses of everyday life, celebrate victories with my partner, and infuse energy and diversity into our marriage. Nothing compares to the ways that sports may deepen our connection, produce enduring memories, and enhance our partnership"*.

Participant 4 said, *"Married individuals might find great satisfaction and fulfillment in participating in sports. It gives people a much-needed way to let go of everyday issues, relieve stress, and improve wellbeing in general"*.

Participant 5 said, *"As a married individual unquestionably, winning a game is the best feeling in sports. It was an incredibly unforgettable event because of the adrenaline rush, the sense of success, and the team spirit"*.

Participant 6 said, *" As a married individual playing sports is not just about physical activity and competition; it is also about developing enjoyable, happy sportsmanship. Sportsmanship is a crucial aspect of playing sports because it involves treating others with respect, showing good character, and demonstrating fair play"*.

Participant 7 said, *"Playing sports as a married person can be a wonderful method to enjoy life, lessen troubles, find happiness, and relieve tension. Playing sports offers chances for social contact, personal development, and a sense of achievement in addition to physical activity and fitness"*.

Couples can enjoy the benefits of regular physical activity and quality time spent together when exercising and playing sports together. Couples who can support one another on their path to better health may have higher levels of pleasure and contentment in their relationship. Couples can improve their overall relationship satisfaction, deepen their bond, and improve their mental health by adopting healthy habits, engaging in physical activity, and working towards a common objective. According to positive psychology, leading a "disease-free" existence requires mental health above all else. It supports health practices that encourage happiness, self-contentment, positive attitude, emotional control, and self-control (MindStar Wellness Pvt Ltd, 2024).

Connectivity Amidst Diversity

In the context of sports, socialization is the process by which people pick up the attitudes, customs, behaviors, and abilities needed to engage with and support their local sports community. This method fosters a sense of belonging and personal growth while improving leadership, teamwork, and communication abilities. Because socialization in sports fosters both physical and social well-being, players need to understand it. People acquire beliefs about themselves and the people they contact through socializing (Guttmann et al., 2024). Married people participate in sports to enhance their confidence and make friends. This is supported by the participants' responses.

Participant 1 said, *" As a married person in sports, establishing new friendships and strengthening relationships with teammates are greatly aided by confidence. When players are confident in their abilities, they are more likely to approach others and build connections that go beyond the playing field"*.

Participant 2 said, *"One of the many advantages of being a married player is the opportunity to form a support system of friends and companionship. Sports have a special ability to unite people, forging enduring friendships and connections"*.

Participant 3 said, *"As a married player, I have discovered that participation in sports has not only kept me physically strong and active but has also given me the chance to socialize with new people, meet new players, and build my confidence"*.

Participant 4 said, *"Playing sports can be a fantastic opportunity to meet new people and form relationships. As a married player, I have discovered that these pursuits offer me numerous opportunities to form bonds and connections with people outside of my marriage"*.

Participant 5 said, *"As a married sports participant, I've discovered that physical activity has significantly increased my confidence in several areas of my life. In addition to keeping me physically active, sports enable me to overcome obstacles on and off the area and preserve a positive mentality"*.

Participant 6 said, *"Being a married player, I believe playing sports should be about more than just being better at it or winning. In my eyes, the real significance of sports is their capacity to motivate young people to participate, gain confidence, and form enduring bonds with their teammates"*.



Participant 7 said, *"My main objective as a married player is to take advantage of the mental, emotional, and physical advantages that come with playing sports. Essential components of my life include developing my passion, gaining confidence, and striking a healthy balance between my family obligations and my sporting goals. A big part of who I am and what makes me happy and fulfilled has always been and always will be sports"*.

Sports socialization is essential for the growth of players who want to develop their relationships, interact with others, and gain confidence. Couples can develop new friendships, increase their self-esteem, and enhance their communication skills by engaging in physical activity together. Socializing involves interacting with other people in various social contexts, such as at home, school, work, parties, or get-togethers. It's an essential aspect of life that improves well-being and supports a person's physical, mental, and emotional health throughout their lives (Vanta, 2024).

Drawbacks in the game

While sports participation offers excellent benefits for maintaining health, reducing stress, and strengthening relationships, it can also present challenges for married people. One drawback is the potential disruption caused by children, who may interrupt their parents' playtime. Additionally, the inherent risks of injury, including back pain, can also pose concerns. Sports-related injuries can result in permanent effects in severe circumstances (Brent, 2023). This is supported by the participants' responses.

Participant 1 said, *"Playing sports can be rewarding and enjoyable past time, but it can occasionally present its own set of difficulties. One of the difficulties a married player may face is getting finger pain when playing sports. Several athletes, married or single, may run across this at some point throughout their sports careers"*.

Participant 2 said, *"It might be difficult for a married player to strike a balance between the demands of sports and family. Sometimes, even when I do my hardest to concentrate on the game, my child will get in the way and make me forget my line of thought, which could affect how well I play"*.

Participant 3 said, *"It's common for married players to experience finger pains and to occasionally get blocked by rivals. These difficulties are a regular feature of the game and can be annoying at times, but they all contribute to the thrilling and competitive nature of sports"*.

Participant 4 said, *"I play sports like a married player, and I've had a lot of injuries sustained on the field. I was staring at the ball during a recent game when it suddenly hit me in the face, resulting in immediate pain and aches in my muscles"*.

Participant 5 said, *"I play sports, and I'm married, so I've had some injuries. I've also sprained my ankle and had my face accidentally struck by someone's elbow during a game"*.

Participant 6 said, *"Married players can have a great time participating in sports, which is also an excellent way to meet new people and stay active. But I've come to understand that the reason I do sports is because I have a weakened immune system, get angry easily, and occasionally get finger pains"*.

Participant 7 said, *"Even though I'm married, I occasionally sustain bruises from sports. Trying to strike a balance between my family and my sport is another difficulty I encounter. When I'm playing a game or practicing, my child frequently interrupts me to ask to participate or to get my attention. Though it can be annoying at times, I make an effort to keep in mind that spending time with my child is just as vital as playing sports"*.

Married players may have several issues that could negatively impact their performance and general well-being. Married players often have to deal with their kids' distractions when they're attempting to concentrate on the game. During practice or competition, kids may interrupt the players, which makes it harder for them to focus and give their best effort. An additional disadvantage for married players is the possibility of back pain and injury. Participating in sports involves physical effort and can be stressful on the body, particularly as players age. Married players may be more prone to back discomfort and injuries because of their responsibilities at home and the additional strain of balancing their sports commitments with their personal lives. Competitive sports can lead to various social issues, such as social isolation due to intense training, relationship problems with loved ones, and conflicts of interest between sports and studies or work. There are pros and cons to getting involved in sports. On the one hand, sports can help you stay fit and healthy. People get new abilities. Conversely, athletics may be costly and time-consuming activities. Moreover, there is a chance that participating in sports will result in damages and injuries (Kramer, 2023).



Embracing sportsmanship

Married athletes should embrace sportsmanship as a cornerstone of their lives, both on and off the field. It cultivates a supportive and encouraging environment, enhancing their athletic experiences and fostering stronger relationships. Embracing sportsmanship involves understanding that accidents happen, accepting referee decisions, and showing respect for opponents, teammates, and officials alike. Sportsmanship is an understanding of and commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity, and general goodwill toward an opponent. It is an affirmation that an athlete is disciplined enough to have perspective, maintain poise, and do what is best for his or her teammates. Being able to make appropriate behavioral choices at the "moment of truth" and in a pressure situation will often reveal a player's character and his or her ability to be a good sport. Simply put, sportsmanship is a choice. Sports have long been a popular activity for individuals of all ages. Whether it's playing on a team or participating in individual sports, the benefits of physical activity are well-known. However, it's not just about the physical aspect of sports. Players are most effective in an environment that is encouraging and supportive, which is why good sportsmanship is so important (Selby, 2024).

Participant 1 said, *"Respecting the referee's judgment is crucial when playing sports, even if we disagree with it. Referees oversee fair play and uphold the game's regulations. We demonstrate excellent sportsmanship and provide a good example for others by respecting their choices".*

Participant 2 said, *"Sports participation has long been a popular means of maintaining an active lifestyle, but it goes far more than simple physical fitness. In social relationships, sports can lead to difficult motions, particularly between teams. The spirit of competitiveness, teamwork, and friendship that are fundamental to sport itself are created by this environment".*

Participant 3 said, *"Playing sports as a married player requires not only sportsmanship but also a sophisticated awareness of your opponents, especially when encountering unexpected obstacles like being hit by the ball. This scenario not only tests one's physical reflexes but also highlights the crucial role of ethical considerations in competitive settings".*

Participant 4 said, *"When you play sports, you need to know your opponent's well. This knowledge comes from experiences and sometimes from lucky chances you get during games".*

Participant 5 said, *"It's important for players and coaches to understand what causes sports injuries, and it's also important to have good sportsmanship. This is especially true for married athletes. Sports injuries can really hurt an athlete's performance and their long-term health. These injuries can be small like sprains, or really serious".*

Participant 6 said, *"As a married athlete participating in sports, it's important for coaches and players alike to understand the decisions made by a sports team because they have a big impact on output and performance. Because team activities are fundamental to sports, participants need to share a similar understanding of strategies, roles, and objectives".*

Participant 7 said, *"Players should be good sports, and referees are really important for making sure games are fair. Remember that referees are just people, so they can make mistakes".*

Married players exhibit excellent sportsmanship by being respectful and understanding of their rivals, teammates, coaches, and referees. They acknowledge that mishaps and injuries can occur in sports, and they respect the decisions of officials, even when they don't agree with them. A crucial component of sportsmanship and personal development is learning to accept both winning and losing in a game. Regardless of the outcome, it's critical to acknowledge and learn from successes with respect and defeats with resilience. Additionally, maintaining a positive view on both winning and losing helps people grow as individuals and create a healthy mindset. It is essential to maintain the integrity and spirit of athletics, so let's aim to be good (O'Connor, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the findings revealed major themes that reflect the lived experiences of married people who participate in the sports program in Barangay Sto Niño, Tanjay city. These themes are as follows, promoting physical fitness, psychological advantage, connectivity amidst diversity, drawbacks in the game, and embracing sportsmanship. Married people tend to join sports since they believe that it can make their body fit and healthy. Moreover, they become less stressed and feel cheerful as the activity theory explains. Apart from the physical and psychological benefits that married people experience, the opportunity to socialize and connect with people despite cultural differences. However, there are disadvantages when married people join sports events. This is evident when they feel back pain due to inevitable injuries and accidents in the game. Having experienced this event,



married people were open to accepting and understanding any unpredictable injuries obtained from the games. Thus, participants appreciate the values of sportsmanship. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the local government of Tanjay City shall continue to provide sports opportunities and other recreational activities to all kinds of people. To future researchers, the instrumentation on sports engagement can elicit timely characteristics and variables for the targeted participants.

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