

Original Article

Living Apart, Legally Bound: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the Experiences of Legally Married but Separated Individuals in the Philippines

Angel May M. Buhisan¹, Benjun B. Jamorol¹ , Maria Felicitas M. Mamauag¹ ,
Jason O. Manaois² , Verly Mae P. Amoncio¹, Joval Grace D. Atadero¹, Maxie Gem E. Guarte¹,
Caryl Jan C. Encabo¹, Julie Ann S. Resma¹, Arnel S. Galamiton¹

Author Information:

¹Xavier University - Ateneo de Cagayan,
Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

²Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute
of Technology, Iligan City, Philippines

Corresponding Author:

20220025600@my.xu.edu.ph

Article History:

Date received: March 25, 2026

Date revised: May 6, 2026

Date accepted: May 21, 2026

Recommended citation:

Buhisan, A.M., Jamorol, B., Mamauag, M.F.,
Manaois, J., Amoncio, V.M., Atadero, J.G.,
Guarte, M.G., Encabo, C.J., Resma, J.A., &
Galamiton, A. (2026). Living apart, legally
bound: An interpretative phenomenological
analysis of the experiences of legally married
but separated individuals in the Philippines.
Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives, 4(6),
331-347.
<https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2026.171>

Abstract. This study examined how legally married yet separated individuals in the Philippines interpret their experiences in a context where divorce is not an option. Using a qualitative framework grounded in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the study investigated the emotional, financial, and social circumstances of six participants from the Philippines. The discussion illustrates how Rational Choice Theory (RCT) elucidates the decision-making process individuals undergo when evaluating the costs and benefits of divorce. The results indicated that separation frequently followed persistent issues, including abuse, emotional exhaustion, infidelity, and the progressive deterioration of communication and mutual respect. Participants articulated the challenges posed by social stigma, financial hardship, and legal ambiguity, especially regarding annulment and legal separation, which many impacted individuals perceived as arduous, expensive, and inadequate. Their narratives indicate that choices regarding separation were influenced by a meticulous evaluation of individual welfare in relation to familial obligations, religious convictions, and financial constraints. Even with these limits, participants found strength in their faith, the support of their families, and a growing sense of independence. Some individuals still did not want to get divorced for moral or religious reasons, while others saw it as a necessary legal way to end bad marriages and start over. The study emphasizes the critical need for accessible legal reforms informed by the lived experiences of affected individuals to tackle systemic barriers and promote individual well-being.

Keywords: *Rational Choice Theory; Divorce; Legal separation; Marital breakdown; Annulment*

Marriage in the Philippines continues to be normatively framed as a permanent and family-centered institution, yet family formation and union trajectories have become more complex in recent years. Recent scholarship shows a continuing increase in non-marriage and cohabitation, alongside more

liberal attitudes toward marriage and cohabitation, suggesting that intimate relationships in the country are changing even as legal institutions remain comparatively rigid (Abalos, 2024). Earlier demographic work likewise showed that union dissolution in the Philippines has increased over time despite the absence of divorce and despite the high social and economic barriers to formally ending a marriage (Abalos, 2017). More recent policy analyses further indicate that the divorce debate has regained national visibility through renewed legislative efforts, particularly House Bill No. 9349 and Senate Bill No. 147, which seek to provide legal remedies for irreparably broken marriages (Blanco, 2025). Recent survey evidence also suggests that divorce support is no longer marginal in the Philippines, with a substantial proportion of adults agreeing that irreconcilably separated couples should be allowed to divorce (Social Weather Stations [SWS], 2024). Taken together, these developments point to a widening tension between the cultural ideal of lifelong marriage and the lived reality of marital breakdown.

Despite these social shifts, the legal framework available to Filipinos in failed marriages remains limited. Under the Family Code, annulment and nullity are available only on specific grounds, while legal separation allows spouses to live apart but explicitly does not sever the marriage bond, thereby preventing remarriage (Family Code of the Philippines, arts. 45, 55, 63). In practice, these remedies are often procedurally demanding, emotionally taxing, and unequally accessible, especially for those with limited financial resources (Abalos, 2017; Blanco, 2025). Thus, many separated individuals occupy a condition of legal liminality: although the relationship has effectively ended in everyday life, the law continues to bind them to a marriage that no longer functions in any meaningful relational sense.

Although marital dissolution in the Philippines has received scholarly and policy attention, the existing literature has focused primarily on demographic trends, changing union forms, correlates of separation, and legal or policy debates surrounding annulment, legal separation, and proposed divorce reforms (Abalos, 2017, 2024; Blanco, 2025; Executive Order No. 209, 1987; H.B. No. 9349, 19th Cong., 2024; S.B. No. 2443, 19th Cong., 2023). Under the Family Code of the Philippines, legally married but separated individuals may pursue remedies such as legal separation, annulment, or a declaration of nullity, but these remedies do not always align with the lived realities of spouses whose marriages have already functionally ended. Recent legislative proposals, including House Bill No. 9349, the proposed Absolute Divorce Act, and Senate Bill No. 2443 on the dissolution of marriage, further show that marital dissolution remains an active legal and social issue in the country. Taken together, these laws and proposed reforms suggest that less attention has been given to how legally married but separated individuals themselves understand their condition, interpret the law, and navigate the limited remedies available to them. This gap is theoretically important. Legal consciousness scholarship argues that law is not experienced only through formal rules, statutes, bills, and court processes, but also through the ways ordinary people interpret, invoke, resist, or bypass law in everyday life (Chua & Engel, 2019). In the context of marital separation, this perspective allows the study to move beyond doctrinal discussion and examine how legal constraints shape people's sense of identity, justice, agency, and future possibility. However, to fully realize this contribution, the analysis must return closely to the participants' raw narratives and conduct a more interpretive reading of their experiences. Rather than drawing only obvious or common-sense conclusions about the difficulty of separation in a country without absolute divorce, it is necessary to examine how participants make meaning of legal liminality, emotional injury, social judgment, moral conflict, and constrained agency. This deeper engagement is necessary to move from a descriptive account of hardship toward a rigorous, theory-building analysis that honors the gravity of participants' lived experiences.

Specifically, this study examined the lived experiences of legally married but separated individuals and their views on the existing legal alternatives, particularly annulment and legal separation, within the broader and continuing debate on divorce in the Philippines. By centering lived experience, the study aims to contribute not only empirical evidence to an underexplored area of Philippine scholarship but also a deeper understanding of how law is felt, interpreted, and negotiated by individuals whose marriages have ended socially but not legally.

Methodology

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative, phenomenological design, specifically Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), to investigate the lived experiences of legally married yet separated individuals and their perspectives on divorce. The phenomenological approach was selected for its capacity to facilitate an in-depth analysis of the participants' personal experiences, emphasizing their subjective realities and emotions (Neubauer

et al., 2019). This methodology is suitable for understanding the essence of participants' shared experience, especially as they navigate separation without a formal divorce under Philippine law.

In line with this phenomenological approach, IPA focuses on how people make sense of significant events in their lives. It is idiographic in nature, meticulously analyzing each participant's narrative before discerning points of convergence across cases. IPA acknowledges that meaning is derived from interpretation: participants endeavor to comprehend their experiences, while the researcher aims to contextualize that comprehension within the participants' personal, social, and cultural frameworks. In this study, these principles supported a nuanced exploration of separation as a lived and meaning-laden experience, allowing the research to move beyond description toward an interpretative understanding of how participants experienced and understood marital separation in a setting where divorce remains legally unavailable.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants for this study were chosen through purposive sampling, adhering to specific inclusion criteria aligned with the research objectives: they must be legally married but currently separated individuals, aged 35 to 55 years, who have previously been married and are now separated—either legally or informally—without an annulled or voided marriage. Participants must also have been separated for at least 5 years and have originated from low- to middle-income backgrounds. To get a complete picture of how men and women think, both genders were included. The study examined non-Muslim Filipino individuals married under the Family Code, as they are governed by the nation's legal restrictions on divorce.

The participants were six people from the Philippines. This number was considered appropriate for a qualitative study that would allow participants to talk about their experiences in depth. Morse (1994) suggested that at least six participants may be sufficient for phenomenological studies, while Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) found that basic thematic patterns may begin to emerge within the first six interviews. The adequacy of the sample was further supported by data saturation, evident when participants' narratives began to reveal recurring meanings, experiences, and interpretive patterns, and when no substantially new themes emerged from later interviews.

The participants had been apart from their spouses for different amounts of time. Fifty percent (50%) said they had been apart for 10 to 15 years, thirty-three percent (33%) said they had been apart for more than 15 years, and seventeen percent (17%) said they had been apart for 5 to 10 years. There were five women (84%) and one man (16%) in the sample. The participants' ages ranged from 37 to over 62 years, with the majority (67%) between 40 and 50 years old. These profile characteristics provide important context for interpreting their narratives and for understanding how legally married but separated individuals make sense of their lives under a restrictive marital dissolution regime.

Research Instrument

The principal method employed in this study for data collection was semi-structured individual interviews. The subject matter was sensitive and personal—separation and perspectives on divorce—thus, the interviews provided an opportunity to cultivate trust and promote the sharing of individual experiences in a secure and supportive environment. The interview guide was created to fit with the study's phenomenological and interpretive approach. The questions were intended to elicit detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences, the meanings they gave to separation, their social and relational realities, their coping processes, and their views on the current legal alternatives to divorce in the Philippines. The questions were designed to look into the main parts of the study: the important events that led to separation, how separation affected relationships with family, friends, and children, the problems participants faced and how they dealt with them, and their thoughts on annulment, legal separation, and divorce. Some examples of questions are:

Can you describe any significant events or circumstances that contributed to your decision?

How has separation affected your relationships with family, friends, or children?

What are your thoughts on the current legal alternatives to divorce in the Philippines?

How did you overcome the challenges you faced as you came to your decision to separate?

This structure helped the researcher keep things consistent between interviews while still giving participants the freedom to talk more about issues that were important to them. The study used semi-structured individual interviews because the topic was sensitive and personal. The added framing here makes that method fit with the

study's larger methodological goals.

Data Gathering Procedure

The interviews were done either in person or online, depending on what the participants wanted and what worked best for them. Before data collection, each participant was given a clear explanation of the study's goals, the steps involved, that participation was optional, and that audio recording would be used during the interview. Before the actual interview, the participants were given informed consent and told that they could choose not to answer any questions or leave the study at any time without any consequences. Once consent was obtained, the interviews were audio-recorded with approval and later transcribed for analysis. We also got information about the people, like their age, sex, and how long they had been apart.

After the interview, the participants were debriefed to ensure they understood the study and how their information would be used. They were also able to ask questions, clarify any details about their participation, and voice any concerns about the interview process. To maintain ethical standards, participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential, that identifying information would be excluded from the presentation of findings, and that the data would be utilized exclusively for research purposes. This process helped participants speak to each other respectfully and demonstrated the study's commitment to ethics by supporting autonomy, privacy, and informed participation.

Data Analysis Procedure

Given that the study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the data were analyzed using an interpretative, case-oriented process consistent with IPA principles. The goal of the analysis was not simply to identify recurring topics, but to understand how participants made sense of their experiences of being legally married yet separated within a restrictive legal and cultural environment. The analysis began with repeated reading and re-reading of each transcript in order to achieve close familiarity with the data. This was followed by initial noting, in which the researcher paid close attention to descriptive content, language use, emotional expressions, and interpretative insights found in each participant's narrative. From these detailed notes, emergent themes were developed for each case. These themes captured essential aspects of how each participant understood and experienced separation.

After the themes for each case had been identified, the researchers examined how these themes related to one another and organized them into broader conceptual groupings. Each participant's account was treated as a distinct case before any attempt was made to identify commonalities across participants. Once individual case analyses were completed, patterns of convergence and divergence across cases were examined to develop a set of shared themes that reflected both the common and unique dimensions of participants' lived experiences.

Throughout the analytic process, interpretation moved recursively between the participants' actual words and the researcher's developing understanding of the larger meanings embedded in those accounts. To strengthen the rigor of the analysis, two researchers independently reviewed the transcripts and emergent themes and then discussed their interpretations to refine the thematic structure. A third-party reviewer also examined the synthesized themes to provide an additional layer of scrutiny and help challenge premature or unsupported interpretations. This iterative and reflective process enhanced the credibility and dependability of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study addressed personal and sensitive experiences related to marital separation and perspectives on divorce, necessitating meticulous adherence to ethical standards throughout the research process. Prior to the interview, each participant was told of the study's objective, the procedures to be followed, and the utilization of audio recording during the interview. Before collecting data, participants were asked for their consent and were free to choose whether or not to participate. Participants were also told that they could refuse to answer any question and leave the study at any time without any consequences. This made sure that their freedom and right to make their own choices were respected.

The study also kept everything private. We collected only the demographic information needed, and we kept all responses completely private. The audio recordings were used only for transcription and analysis, and any identifying information was removed from the results presentation. To make participants feel more at ease, interviews were conducted in person or online, depending on their preference. This gave them a safe and easy

place to talk about what they had been through.

These ethical practices aligned with the application of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in the research. IPA's goal is to understand how people make sense of their lives, so the researchers were careful, respectful, and sensitive when talking to the participants. Their experiences were regarded not merely as research data, but as significant personal narratives. This way, ethical practice was followed not only by keeping the participants safe, but also by carefully and respectfully interpreting their stories.

Results and Discussion

The analysis generated twenty emergent themes and subthemes across the major areas explored in the study. First, six subthemes were identified regarding the significant events that contributed to participants' decision to separate. These were organized under two broader thematic clusters: cycle of abuse and emotional exhaustion, and the influence of family dynamics on marriage (see Table 1). Second, four subthemes emerged regarding the effects of separation on the participants' relationships with family, friends, and children. These were grouped under cultural and social stigma toward separated individuals and emotional detachment and self-preservation (see Table 2). Third, the participants' coping strategies in dealing with the challenges of separation were reflected in themes related to faith as a source of strength and motivation, family support and encouragement, and self-belief (see Table 3). Finally, the participants' perspectives on the current legal alternatives to divorce were organized into themes concerning the challenges posed by existing legal remedies and their views on the possibility of divorce in the Philippines (see Table 4). The succeeding sections discuss each theme in detail and support the analysis with selected verbatim excerpts from the participants' narratives.

Significant Events that Led to the Decision to Separate

The participants' decision to separate did not arise from a single incident, but from the cumulative impact of painful and destabilizing experiences within the marriage. As shown in Table 1, the accounts of the participants suggest that separation was often the result of a prolonged process marked by emotional suffering, relational breakdown, and the gradual realization that remaining in the marriage was no longer sustainable. Two major thematic clusters emerged from the data: the cycle of abuse and emotional exhaustion, and the influence of family dynamics on marriage.

Table 1. *Thematic Analysis of the Significant Events that Led to the Participants' Decision to Separate*

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
The Cycle of Abuse and Emotional Exhaustion	Maltreatment and Neglect	This is the emotional fatigue that results from one spouse continuously abusing and neglecting the other, which leaves the other feeling completely exhausted and powerless.
	Infidelity and Disloyalty	This refers to repeated betrayals through cheating, leaving the other partner emotionally devastated and distrustful, creating a harmful circle of hurt and insecurity.
	Emotional Exhaustion and the Need for Freedom	This means getting to a point where the weight of emotional struggles becomes too much to bear, forcing a difficult choice to let go in order to protect one's mental and emotional health.
	Loss of Respect and Communication	This has to do with the breakdown of trust and communication between people, leading to misunderstandings, conflicts, and emotional distance in relationships.
Influence of Family Dynamics on Marriage	Enabling and Condoning Wrong Behaviors	This shows that the family is passively accepting or supporting bad behavior, which means that the partner's bad behavior is okay or even encouraged.
	Baseless Accusations and Judgment	This means that family members are very critical and judgmental, which makes the person feel bad about themselves and adds to their decision to separate.

The Cycle of Abuse and Emotional Exhaustion

Maltreatment and Neglect. Subtle but major forms of abuse and neglect can show up in relationships, making one partner feel unloved and alone. At the same time that one partner's behavior or apathy may lead to emotional discomfort, emotional neglect can generate a sense of isolation within the family, which can lead to emotional distress.

"I can no longer force myself, because my husband treats me differently, and even with my children."
(P1)

"I was like a battered wife. He was a drug user, and he was extremely jealous. He would make up stories about me, and he would hurt me."
(P2)

The desire to get away intensifies when the relationship worsens, and the lack of care or violence becomes intolerable. There are various instances in which an individual may feel confined as they attempt to maintain a marriage that is no longer satisfying or healthy. Not only can the decision to separate become a means of regaining one's own sense of well-being, but it also becomes an essential step in the process of breaking away from a destructive cycle of abuse and neglect.

Infidelity and Disloyalty. Infidelity and disloyalty are two of the most tragic problems that married couples face. These problems often lead to a big break in trust and emotional connection. Betrayal by one spouse, whether physical or mental, can hurt the relationship and leave the other partner feeling betrayed, hurt, and unsure.

"He was looking for someone else, another woman."
(P2)

"That was it. I found out that it was not just one or two, but three relationships while I was in Saudi for two years. There was really nothing I could do. No matter how much effort I made, it kept happening again, so it really could not continue because it was always the same."
(P4)

These experiences show that rebuilding trust is often hard after it has been broken, and the emotional scars can make it almost impossible to stay in the relationship. In many cases, the only choice is to break up because the pain of betrayal makes it impossible to make up and heal.

Emotional Exhaustion and the Need for Freedom. There are many reasons why individuals choose to get divorced, but one of the most important is emotional exhaustion. Over time, the constant stress of unresolved problems, unmet needs, and emotional neglect can lead to severe burnout. Partners may feel overpowered and trapped in a cycle of disappointment and frustration, with every attempt to fix the relationship seeming to fail.

"I felt like I could no longer feel anything in life. It was as if I could not breathe because of the heavy burdens I had carried in my heart for so long."
(P5)

"No matter what we did to fix it, I kept looking for ways for us to reconcile and correct what had happened, but it just kept repeating, so nothing changed. It is no longer worth fighting for someone who no longer wants the relationship."
(P4)

This means that staying in a relationship that does not help their mental health is not worth the overwhelming feelings of tiredness, wanting peace, and not making any progress in their own lives. Wanting freedom is an important part of getting back to being themselves and feeling good.

Loss of Respect and Communication. Good communication can fix problems and bring people closer together. However, it could also become limited, useless, or even disappear, leaving problems unresolved and feelings hidden. This can also be very hurtful, especially if one partner feels like they do not matter or are not valued.

"It happened twice that he would leave without informing me. I decided that was enough because it felt like he had already lost the respect even to ask my permission or inform me."
(P3)

In addition, some instances illustrate how communication breakdowns and the loss of mutual respect can escalate confrontations, especially when pride and defensiveness replace understanding and the ability to find solutions.

"My husband and I talked over the phone, and I put it on loudspeaker because I wanted him to fetch me. But he said his pride was too high and he thought I could not live without him, so he told me, 'You were the one who left, so you should be the one to come back.'"

(P5)

"There was a problem in my life that made the decision that maybe it cannot be solved by two people. My partner is no longer staying in my place, that's why I have not already contacted him, and maybe we are not already happy in our relationship."

(P6)

Influence of Family Dynamics on Marriage

Enabling and Condoning Wrong Behaviors. In Filipino culture, where family is crucial to personal relationships, the involvement of in-laws can either assist or impede the victim's efforts to confront abusive or hurtful behaviors. When a partner's family ignores or even defends bad behavior, they may unintentionally perpetuate unhealthy habits, making it harder for the affected spouse to change or fix the problem.

"What also hurt me was that even though his parents knew he had another relationship, they never corrected him or told him that what he was doing was wrong."

(P4)

"I messaged my mother-in-law and asked, 'Did [retracted] go home there? They said he went back to Pagadian.' She did not reply. It was only the next day that she responded and said, 'I'm only replying now because I still had to think about what to tell you.' So it felt like they were also consenting to what he was doing."

(P3)

In some cases, even when family members know about a partner's bad behavior, they may not step in, which makes the victim's emotional pain even worse.

"His mother, first of all, was an enabler. It was as if she would always defend her child."

(P2)

"At the beginning, things were really shaky between my in-laws and me because, of course, they were on his side."

(P3)

This failure to take action or reluctance to hold the partner accountable demonstrates how family members can encourage inappropriate behavior by failing to establish limits or provide advice, which in turn permits abusive patterns to continue.

Baseless Accusations and Judgment. False accusations and judgments can be very damaging to relationships, especially when they come from family members. Some claims not only hurt a person's self-esteem but also undermine the emotional support and trust that are important parts of any relationship. Some individuals said that:

"What made it worse was that my in-laws got involved. I was triggered because they kept attacking me and calling me a flirt."

(P1)

"His mother really looked down on me. She said, 'Do not expect that [retracted]'s property will ever go to all of you, especially not to you;' 'Do not marry her because she does not even own land.' That hurt my pride. She called me a gold digger, saying I only married [retracted] because he was rich."

(P1)

In most cases, this is due to a lack of comprehension or a desire to protect the family's reputation, yet it can have a devastating effect on the partner being blamed. This kind of criticism not only diminishes their sense of dignity but also cuts them off from the support structures they could otherwise rely on.

These findings may be understood through the lens of Rational Choice Theory (Green, 2002), which suggests that individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of available choices. In the context of marital separation, participants appeared to weigh the emotional, psychological, and relational costs of remaining in the marriage against the uncertainty and stigma associated with leaving. When abuse, neglect, betrayal, and conflict became persistent, the costs of staying appeared to outweigh the perceived benefits of preserving the marriage. This interpretation is consistent with Fincham and May (2017), who emphasized the deeply damaging effects of infidelity on trust and emotional security. Similarly, Gottman and Silver (1999) highlighted poor communication and unresolved conflict as central contributors to marital breakdown. Viewed in this light, separation emerged not as an impulsive act, but as a reasoned response to prolonged relational harm.

The data also show that the decision to separate was influenced not only by marital experiences themselves but also by the broader family system in which the marriage was embedded. The themes that enable and condone harmful behaviors, baseless accusations, and judgment suggest that family members sometimes reinforce harmful dynamics instead of helping resolve them. This finding may be explained using Bowen's Family Systems Theory (1978), which holds that unresolved patterns within family relationships can sustain dysfunction across interpersonal contexts. In the Philippine setting, where family ties are strong and extended families often play an active role in marital life, such dynamics may intensify marital strain rather than relieve it (Medina, 2001). Thus, the decision to separate was shaped not only by the couple's private conflicts but also by family interactions that either tolerated abuse, deepened emotional distress, or made reconciliation more difficult.

The participants' experiences must also be understood within the Philippine legal context, where divorce remains unavailable for most citizens and where separation carries both legal limitations and social consequences. In such a setting, the decision to separate involves not only emotional courage but also the practical burden of navigating a system that offers limited and often inaccessible remedies. This makes the choice to separate especially significant, as it reflects both the participants' resilience and the structural barriers that continue to shape intimate life in the Philippines.

Effects of Separation on Relationship with Family, Friends, and Children

Separation significantly reshaped the participants' relationships with their families, friends, and children. As reflected in the themes, these effects were neither uniform nor straightforward; rather, they involved a complex mix of social judgment, shifting relational boundaries, emotional protection, and adaptation to new family realities. For some participants, separation brought support and understanding from people close to them. For others, however, it exposed them to criticism, stigma, and pressure to conform to social expectations regarding marriage, family unity, and gender roles.

Table 2. *Thematic Analysis on the Effects of the Participant's Separation on Their Relationship with Family, Friends, and Children*

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Cultural and Social Stigma Towards Separated Individuals	Social Judgments and the Pressure to Conform	This is about how society and culture expect people to follow traditional norms, especially in families and relationships. People who do not follow these rules often feel judged, ashamed, and stressed out.
	Self-Presentation and Identity Protection	This has to do with the things people do to hide or deal with their own problems, like problems with relationships or separation, so they do not have to deal with other people's criticism.
Emotional Detachment and Self-Preservation	Rejecting External Social Pressures	This is the choice to go against social norms and expectations in favor of being true to oneself and taking care of oneself, rather than following what others think or want.
	Adjusting to New Family Dynamics	This means that after a separation, family members need to change how they relate to each other and their roles, while still being there for their children and maintaining good relationships.

Cultural and Social Stigma Towards Separated Individuals

Social Judgments and the Pressure to Conform. When individuals who are separated are judged by society, it adds another layer of emotional weight. This often puts too much pressure on them to live up to society's

expectations. As illustrated by one participant's experience, many separated individuals face blame or discrimination.

"Sometimes there really is a difference in how they treat me. Because I am outspoken, they blame me. Their view of me is really different, although it also depends on how you carry yourself."
(P1)

The judgment applies to children as well, who may internalize societal biases or perpetuate misplaced blame, as noted by another participant:

"My children would even say, 'It's because you are too harsh.' That is how they were – they really used that as the reason why, according to them, my husband became fed up."
(P3)

Even though these things are hard, individuals who are separated often try to keep their kids from feeling ashamed or stigmatized. One participant stressed how hard they were trying to calm their kids down:

"My children did not want to go out. So I kept telling them, 'Do not be ashamed, because we are not the only ones in this situation.' I kept saying, 'I am your mother. I am here behind you.'"
(P1)

People who are separated may face unfair assumptions, sharp judgment, and unwanted advice, which can make it harder for them to move on or heal. They must also manage their personal issues and navigate others' expectations and criticism.

Self-Presentation and Identity Protection. When people are confronted with societal judgment and demands, one coping mechanism they use is to maintain their identity and present a particular image to others. Some people choose to keep their problems secret, as evidenced by participants' experiences.

"For two years after our separation, my family did not know. I really was not the kind of person who told them. I would tell my co-workers at school more than I would tell them."
(P1)

"My family did not know what happened in my life. I am the kind of person who hides my problems because I do not want them to know. I do not want them to see me as a failure. Yes, I really hid it."
(P5)

Participants also often feel like they have to tell a story that fits with what society expects, especially when they are with family or in public.

"In the family, whenever there were family gatherings, and they asked why things were like that, I would explain a little, but I would not tell them that he hurt me. I would only say that he was just very jealous."
(P2)

This shows how self-presentation can be a way to protect both your own identity and the way others see you. People try to protect their image while still having some control over how others see them.

Emotional Detachment and Self-Preservation

Rejecting External Social Pressures. Many people cope with separation by rejecting social expectations and judgment. Detachment helps some preserve their peace and focus on themselves. Some mentioned finding comfort in the realization that they are not the only people who experience this.

"Not really. I was not that affected because it felt like I was not the first one to go through something like that. So I just told myself, 'Ah, I am not the first one.'"
(P2)

"Not really. I am probably not the only one, right? Why should I suffer in one relationship and then just show people that you are intact when you are not happily married?"
(P3)

Nonetheless, some participants highlighted a more uncompromising attitude toward societal expectations, choosing to disengage completely from the situation.

"I'm the kind of person who does not care. I really do not care what everyone says, and I have nothing to lose anyway."
(P5)

"I'm not relating to other persons. I just stay at home. So, I'm not affected by whatever they say."
(P6)

This illustrates that there are people who refuse to comply with expectations that are no longer in alignment with their personal happiness or ideals. They care more about their own health than about the stress that society puts on them. By not letting criticism get to them, they can change their lives to fit their own standards.

Adjusting to New Family Dynamics. It is common to redefine ties and maintain connections wherever possible to successfully adjust to the new dynamics of the family after a separation. Some people accept these changes with little conflict.

"For me, none – I was not affected. Maybe only that on my family's side, communication with him stopped, but on his family's side, I am still welcome."
(P5)

"Since our separation, I have not spoken again with his parents up to now. We really have not talked again. But my mother has spoken with my ex and with my ex's parents, and they are okay; they do not have any conflict."
(P4)

As parents, their top priority remains to maintain a stable, positive relationship with their kids. Even though their family dynamics have changed, they stressed how strong their bond is and made sure their children's well-being remains a top priority.

"There is really no problem with the children because if they need anything, they message me. Our relationship with the children is still good."
(P4)

These experiences show how various individuals navigate the challenges of new family dynamics, prioritizing communication and harmony when they can while still ensuring their kids are safe.

In the Philippine context, where marriage is widely regarded as permanent, and family unity is often prioritized over individual well-being, separation can expose individuals to criticism and disappointment from others. Medina (2001) observed that Filipino society places a strong value on family cohesion, and the present findings support this view by showing how participants felt pressure to endure broken marriages rather than risk social disapproval. From the perspective of Rational Choice Theory (Green, 2002), separated individuals may therefore be understood as navigating a difficult trade-off between the cost of public criticism and the emotional relief that comes from leaving a harmful relationship. Although separation may invite judgment, remaining in a destructive marriage may impose a heavier emotional burden.

The findings also suggest that separated individuals actively managed how they presented themselves to others. This may be interpreted through Goffman's theory of self-presentation (as discussed in Khan, 2020), which posits that people regulate how they present themselves in social settings to avoid stigma and preserve dignity. Participants' efforts to protect their identity, set relational boundaries, and resist outside pressure indicate that separation required not only emotional recovery but also social negotiation. In this regard, emotional detachment

was not simply withdrawal; it also functioned as a form of self-protection in response to criticism, misunderstanding, and social pressure.

The effects of separation were likewise evident in participants' relationships with their children and broader support networks. The findings suggest that participants had to adjust to new family arrangements while continuing to provide care, stability, and reassurance to their children. Friendships also shifted, with some becoming sources of support and others becoming strained or distant. Separation, therefore, emerged as a family and social transition rather than merely the dissolution of a marital bond. It reconfigured roles, expectations, and emotional responsibilities across multiple relationships.

Coping Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

The participants experienced marital separation as a deeply stressful and disruptive life event. Beyond the emotional pain associated with the breakdown of the marital relationship, separation also involved practical, familial, and, in some cases, legal difficulties that intensified the burden of the experience. Rather than ending with the decision to separate, the struggle often continued through the challenges of rebuilding daily life, managing responsibilities, and adjusting to a new personal and social reality. Examining how participants coped with these difficulties provides important insight into the ways legally married but separated individuals endure, adapt, and move forward despite prolonged uncertainty.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of Participants' Coping Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Strength and Motivation Through Faith		This reflects the participants' reliance on their faith in God to overcome difficult times and challenges, particularly during separation.
Family Support and Encouragement		This highlights how participants navigated their separation and its challenges with the support and encouragement of their families.
Believing in Themselves	Self-Reliance	This shows how strong they are and how well they can handle life on their own after the separation or divorce.
	Choosing Freedom and Independence	This means that the participants wanted to be free from their husbands and the rules of their previous marriages, which is why they chose to separate.

Strength and Motivation Through Faith

For people who are legally married but separated, faith in God is the most important way to deal with the problems that come with separation. The fact that they gave their problems and circumstances to God shows how much they trust and depend on Him. This shows how important faith is in helping them get through tough times and find meaning in their lives.

"I really lifted everything to God, because without Him, I would be nothing as well."
(P1)

"It was really just prayer. I truly surrendered everything to God."
(P3)

Even when they are spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically drained, they find strength and motivation in their faith by praying and asking God for the strength to get through the tough times.

"My motivation was that I had to show them that I am different. That is it. I am different, my strength is God, and I will not let them affect me."
(P1)

"One of the main ways I overcame it was really through prayer. You pray and say, 'Give me strength.'"
(P4)

For certain individuals, faith is also a source of hope and a literal lifeline, giving them the strength to keep going even when things are hard. They get their strength and motivation back through prayer, which helps them slowly heal from the emotional pain and problems that come with being apart.

"Prayer, really. That is the number one thing that helps with your problems because it lightens everything. In my case, if I did not have God, I might have taken my own life."
(P3)

Family's Support and Encouragement

Family is very important for people who are legally married but separated when things get tough. When spouses or significant others do not give the support they need, the constant presence of parents and siblings can often help people get through tough times. In some cases, this network of support includes close friends who are seen as family. The emotional and practical help they give people helps them get through tough times and find hope, as shown by these examples:

"Through the support of my mother, my siblings, and the friends around me. They showed me that they still loved me despite what happened. They encouraged me that my life did not end there and that someday I would find something that would make me happy."
(P4)

"With my parents – with their support, I was able to endure it."
(P5)

Believing in Themselves

Self-Reliance. After a separation, people who are legally married but living apart often have to handle all their responsibilities on their own, such as keeping the house clean, meeting their children's needs, and handling daily tasks. This shows that they can stand on their own by using their skills, talents, and confidence to deal with the problems they face.

"Because I can stand on my own without my husband. I am the one who earns a living anyway."
(P5)

"You have a choice. You were not born together as one. So it really depends on you, as long as you do not stay under his shadow and depend on him."
(P6)

The effect on children is another important part of separation. Parents often strive to remain strong for their children, relying on their resilience to act as role models. By demonstrating strength and self-reliance, they teach their children the importance of perseverance during difficult times.

"And I also do not want to show my child that I am weak. I will stand strong – I really can do this!"
(P3)

Choosing Freedom and Independence. Many legally married but separated individuals choose separation to achieve freedom and independence from a relationship that no longer serves them. Despite repeated efforts to repair the relationship, the lack of resolution often leads them to opt for separation. While the process may be challenging at first, many ultimately find happiness and relief from stress.

"That was my point – why should I stay any longer in this relationship when even you, my spouse, no longer want it? If I am the only one who wants to stay, it is still useless, so it is better to end it and just separate, then just focus on the children."
(P4)

"I have no regrets. Instead, I realized that life can actually feel good when you are living without stress."
(P5)

Faith emerged as a major source of strength and meaning for many participants. In situations marked by emotional pain, uncertainty, and prolonged legal limitation, faith appeared to provide hope, endurance, and a framework

for understanding suffering. This supports the work of Koenig (2012), who found that faith and spirituality can serve as important coping resources during stressful life events. In the present study, faith did not merely comfort participants; it also seemed to help them remain psychologically grounded as they navigated the consequences of separation.

Family support likewise played an important role in the coping process. Participants described the encouragement, reassurance, and practical help they received from family members as vital to their moving forward. This is consistent with Cohen and Wills (1985), who argued that social support helps reduce psychological stress, particularly during major life disruptions. For the participants in this study, support from trusted family members helped lessen feelings of isolation and provided both emotional and practical stability during a difficult period.

At the same time, the findings show that coping also involved the rebuilding of personal agency. Several participants described becoming more self-reliant, more confident, and more willing to embrace independence after separation. This process may be understood through Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and self-belief for psychological well-being. The participants' accounts suggest that separation, while painful, also opened a space for reclaiming personal freedom and reconstructing identity. In this sense, coping was not limited to enduring hardship; it also involved transformation, empowerment, and rediscovering the self.

Perspective on the Current Legal Alternative to Divorce

The absence of divorce as a legal remedy in the Philippines places legally married but separated individuals in a particularly difficult position. In a social context where marriage is often regarded as sacred, permanent, and morally binding, the issue of marital dissolution is shaped not only by law but also by deeply rooted cultural and religious values. As a result, individuals seeking to end dysfunctional or irreparably broken marriages are left with limited legal alternatives, primarily annulment and legal separation. Examining how separated individuals view these options is especially important, as they are among those most directly affected by the lack of a divorce law and by the limitations of the remedies currently available.

Table 4. *Thematic Analysis of the Participant's Perspective on the Current Legal Alternatives to Divorce*

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Challenges with Legal Alternatives to Divorce	Lengthy and Uncertain Process of Annulment	This shows how long and expensive the annulment process is, and that there is no guarantee that the court will approve the petition even after several hearings, which costs a lot of money.
	Limitations of Legal Separation	This outlines the specific problem with legal separation as a substitute for divorce: couples can be legally separated but still be married, which prevents them from remarrying.
Strong Belief in the Sanctity of Marriage		This shows that marriage is seen as a holy gift from God that should not be broken. Religion plays a big role in fighting divorce and strengthening the idea that marriage is holy.
Perspectives on the Possibility of Divorce in the Philippines	Opposition to Divorce	This shows that people do not like divorce because they worry that it could be used for things other than ending a marriage.
	Conditional Acceptance of Divorce	This means that how people feel about divorce depends on several factors, such as their financial stability and how well their children and future families are doing.
	Support for Divorce	This shows support for legalizing divorce.

Challenges with Legal Alternatives to Divorce

Lengthy, Expensive, and Uncertain Annulment Process. An annulment is a court decision that says a marriage is invalid and that the union was never valid. However, getting an annulment is a long process that requires a lot of patience because there are many hearings and court cases to go through, and you have to accept the outcome, as there is no guarantee the judge will approve the petition. This is one of the biggest problems that many legally married but separated people have to deal with during the annulment process.

"With annulment, like in my case now, I filed it a long time ago, and until now, there is still no decision. There are so many requirements, and even if they have already seen where the problems are, they could still have decided by now. It has been so many years, and still nothing."

(P4)

The long annulment process, which often involves going to court several times and obtaining expert testimony, also costs a lot of money. This burden makes many people less likely to seek an annulment rather than a divorce.

"The expense is huge because every time there is a hearing, you have to pay the attorney. It is really costly because you also have to get a psychologist, undergo psychological testing, and then pay for their appearance too."

(P4)

These problems with getting an annulment make it hard for people to start over and build a new life, including the chance to marry someone they think is their true partner. These people are still stuck in a marriage they do not want to be in because there are no good or convenient options for them to leave. This keeps their emotional and legal problems going.

Limitations of Legal Separation. In the Philippines, legal separation is one option for couples who do not want to get a divorce. The Family Code of the Philippines states that this is a court-ordered process that allows a married couple to live apart while remaining legally married. However, the definition makes it clear that the people are still technically married, which makes it very hard for them to start a new life with someone else.

"If you are legally separated, you are still only separated, but you still cannot remarry."

(P4)

"There came a time when I really wanted to file for annulment, so I told him we should get an annulment so everything could be settled peacefully. He kept hiding things, and if I were ever linked to another man, it would look bad."

(P3)

Many Filipinos choose legal separation to make their separation from their spouses official because they do not have enough resources. This is mostly for legal reasons related to responsibilities and personal boundaries. However, this is often not enough because they are still tied to a broken marriage that they are trying to leave behind. Individuals who want true independence and a chance to start over face a big problem when they cannot fully move on.

Strong Belief in the Sanctity of Marriage

The Philippines is a very religious country, and religion has a big impact on how people think about marriage. When people talk about divorce, they often get a lot of pushback. Many individuals say that their religious beliefs are the reason for their stance.

"Of course, in our country it is not acceptable, because we are Catholic."

(P6)

Individuals believe that marriage is a holy bond, made and blessed by God, that no one should break. This belief is what makes participants strongly against divorce. From a religious point of view, God is at the center of marriage, and those who enter into the holy sacrament are expected to keep the bond.

"As for divorce and annulment, for me, even though that is my situation, I still would not vote for them. Why? Because our marriage is sacred."

(P1)

These perspectives show how deeply religious values shape how individuals feel about marriage, which makes it hard to make divorce an acceptable legal option in the country.

Perspectives on the Possibility of Divorce in the Philippines

Opposition to Divorce. As was said in the previous sub-theme, religion or a belief in the sanctity of marriage is not the only thing that makes individuals against divorce. Some individuals think that divorce could be used for reasons other than ending a marriage. For example, individuals may use it for their own benefit, such as obtaining

money, property, or avoiding their responsibilities. These worries are especially strong when the breakup was messy.

"For me, if possible, really no. I would not allow divorce even though I am in this situation, still no. Why? Because not everyone's intention is truly right."

(P1)

Conditional Acceptance of Divorce. As discussions about divorce become more common in the Philippines, individuals are learning more about it and thinking about its pros and cons. However, for people with limited resources, the cost of the divorce process is a major concern. This is why they are only willing to accept divorce under certain conditions, as shown in the exemplar below:

"I am actually okay with divorce, but they say it is very expensive, so because of that, I would rather not think much about it."

(P2)

This conditional acceptance is also based on how it might affect their kids. Some people said they were worried that making divorce legal would make it easier for couples to split up, which would make it easier for them to end their marriages. This could make families more likely to break up, which they do not want to happen for future generations.

"It is actually fine with me because my legal husband and I are already separated, but I would not want it applied in a way that affects my children if divorce becomes legalized, because a broken family is really not okay. It feels different when I think about the future – if it also happens to my children and divorce is legalized, it might become too easy for them."

(P2)

Support for Divorce. The Philippine House of Representatives recently passed the Absolute Divorce Act, a step toward legalizing divorce in the country, despite strong opposition. If a couple has been apart for at least 5 years or legally separated for more than 2 years, this bill would allow them to obtain a divorce. Half of the people in this study who are legally married but living apart said they would like divorce to be legal in the Philippines.

"It could really help a lot. The result would probably be good if divorce were truly available here."

(P3)

One of the main reasons they support this is that it will let them end bad marriages and move on with their lives without dealing with legal problems. For these people, getting a divorce is a way to get away from relationships that are hurting them and causing them pain.

"I have really been monitoring that law. It has already passed Congress, and hopefully it will pass the Senate. Because many people are suffering now, not just me; many people want to get out of toxic relationships."

(P4)

"For me, I am very much in favor of divorce becoming legal in our country, so that those in unhappy marriages can be given the chance to be free and also the chance to be happy and meet someone they truly deserve."

(P5)

The present findings suggest that annulment and legal separation were often perceived as inadequate responses to the realities of failed marriages. Annulment was viewed as expensive, time-consuming, and uncertain, while legal separation was seen as limited because it allows spouses to live apart without dissolving the marriage bond or permitting remarriage. This supports the position of the Philippine Commission on Women (2020), which noted that existing legal remedies may be insufficient for individuals seeking protection from abusive or irreparable marital situations. The data, therefore, indicate that participants did not merely see these legal options as inconvenient; rather, they experienced them as structurally inaccessible or incapable of fully addressing their circumstances.

Again, Rational Choice Theory (Green, 2002) helps explain these perspectives. Faced with the high financial, procedural, and emotional costs of annulment, many participants appeared to regard informal separation as the more practical option, even if it offered no full legal resolution. In effect, they seemed to weigh the burdens of formal legal processes against the partial relief provided by living separately. This helps explain why some individuals remain legally married but functionally separated for many years: informal separation may offer a degree of emotional freedom while avoiding the heavy material cost of legal remedies.

At the same time, participants' views on divorce were shaped by more than legal convenience. Their responses also reflected cultural and religious beliefs about the sanctity and permanence of marriage. Some participants opposed divorce on moral grounds, while others accepted it only under certain conditions, such as abuse, abandonment, or irreparable breakdown. Others openly supported its legalization, arguing that individuals in destructive marriages should have a legitimate means of ending the union and rebuilding their lives. These varied responses show that attitudes toward divorce are complex and situated at the intersection of personal pain, moral conviction, and lived experience.

The findings also suggest that socioeconomic context intensifies these legal burdens. For participants in the southern Philippines, the costs of marital breakdown may be compounded by poverty, service gaps, and unequal access to legal and psychosocial support. In contexts marked by limited institutional resources, the burdens associated with separation and legal remedy may become even heavier. Thus, the issue is not only one of family law, but also one of social inequality, access to justice, and social protection.

Conclusion

People who are legally married but separated have been battling for a long time because there is no divorce law in the Philippines. This is made worse by the problems and limitations of other options, such as annulment and legal separation. Even though these people can live with these restrictions, their experiences show that there is a strong need for better options and changes to the rules that govern non-Muslim marriages in the Philippines. This research promotes a more nuanced discourse on the legalization of divorce, drawing on the perspectives of the population directly affected by the absence or potential enactment of such legislation. The implications of this study's findings transcend the academic domain, promoting the circumstances of these individuals to obtain the opportunity to commence anew and regain their autonomy, free from the legal obligations associated with marriages now deemed dissolved. These findings also encourage policymakers to conduct more focused research on this issue and to use data-based facts when discussing divorce laws at the national level.

The study enhances theoretical understanding by illustrating that marital separation, in a context where divorce is legally unattainable, constitutes not merely a legal or relational status but also a process of meaning-making influenced by constraint, survival, and agency. The findings enhance current understandings of separation by illustrating that individual choice operates within a multifaceted social and institutional framework, thereby providing a more contextualized narrative of how individuals manage marital dissolution in contexts where formal avenues for termination are limited. Policymakers could also use this study to push for plans like community-based support systems or mental health services that are easy to get to and are made for people who are legally married but separated. These kinds of resources could help them deal with the emotional and mental problems they are having, making it easier for them to grow and adapt. These efforts could not only help people who are going through a separation deal with their social and mental health problems, but they could also help create a fairer and more compassionate legal system.

Contributions of Authors

Not indicated

Funding

Not indicated

Conflict of Interests

The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest in relation to the phenomenon investigated in this study. All aspects of the research were conducted with impartiality and without any financial, personal, or professional considerations that could have influenced the outcomes.

Acknowledgment

The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable guidance and constructive support provided by mentors and colleagues, which contributed significantly to the completion of this study.

References

- Abalos, J. (2017a). Divorce and separation in the Philippines: Trends and correlates. *Demographic Research*, 36(50), 1515–1548. <https://doi.org/10.4054/demres.2017.36.50>
- Abalos, J. (2017b). The rise of divorce, separation, and cohabitation in the Philippines. N-IUSSP.
- Abalos, J. (2024). Do Filipinos still say “I do”? The continuing increase in non-marriage and cohabitation in the Philippines. *Journal of Family Issues*, 45(5), 1326–1349. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X231182366>
- Blanco, D.V. (2025). The divorce debate in the Philippines: Actors, stakeholders, issues, challenges, and capacities (Discussion Paper Series No. 2025-24). University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies.
- Bowen, M. (1978). Family therapy in clinical practice. J. Aronson.
- Chua, L., & Engel, D. (2019). Legal consciousness reconsidered. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 15, 335–353. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsofsci-101518-042717>
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T.A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98(2), 310–357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310>
- Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Executive Order No. 209. (1987). The Family Code of the Philippines.
- Fincham, F., & May, R. (2017). Infidelity in romantic relationships. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 13, 70–74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.03.008>
- Gottman, J.M., & Silver, N. (1999). The seven principles for making marriage work. Three Rivers Press.
- Green, S.L. (2002). Rational choice theory: An overview [Seminar presentation]. Baylor University Faculty Development Seminar on Rational Choice Theory, Waco, TX, United States.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82.
- House Bill No. 9349. (2024). An Act Reinstating Absolute Divorce as an Alternative Mode for the Dissolution of Marriage, 19th Congress, Republic of the Philippines.
- Khan, S. (2020). Erving Goffman, The presentation of self in everyday life (1959). *Public Culture*, 32(2), 397–404. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-8090145>
- Koenig, H. (2012). Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications. *ISRN Psychiatry*, Article 278730. <https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/278730>
- Medina, B. T.-G. (2001). The Filipino family. University of the Philippines Press.
- Morrison, T. (2025). Mixed methods interpretative phenomenological analysis: Bridging lived experience and contextual complexity. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 24, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069251400179>
- Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (pp. 220–235). Sage.
- Neubauer, B., Witkop, C., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 8(2), 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2>
- Philippine Commission on Women. (2020). Amending the Family Code provision on legal separation. <https://tinyurl.com/44b28far>
- Senate Bill No. 2443. (2023). An act expanding the grounds for dissolution of marriage, instituting divorce and setting the procedures thereof, providing protections to the parties to the marriage and its common children, amending for this purpose Executive Order No. 209, or the Family Code of the Philippines, 19th Congress, Republic of the Philippines.
- Social Weather Stations. (2015). Fourth quarter 2014 Social Weather Survey: 60% favor legalization of divorce; was 50% in 2011 and 43% in 2005. <https://tinyurl.com/6h9swktk>