

FAMILY RITUALS: A TOOL TO THE STABILIZATION OF FAMILY STRUCTURE

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Abstract— This study investigated the extent of the effect of family rituals in strengthening family relationship and examined whether there is a significant difference on the effects when the family is classified according to family structure. The target respondents were 200 Louisian students from the different college departments. This study utilized frequency to determine the rituals that the family engage into, weighted mean to determine the extent of effect of the rituals and the analysis of variance to identify whether there is significant difference in the responses of the respondents. Based on the analysis, it has been found out that rituals positively strengthen the family relationship and that there is a difference in the perception of the respondents with regards to the extent of the effect of the family rituals in strengthening family relationship that lead to the stabilization of family structure.

Keywords— *family rituals, family relationship, family stabilization, family structure*

INTRODUCTION

Whenever somebody notices a person did a good act, they would ask who raised him/her. Every time they see something bad in that person, they would also ask the type of family environment he/she grew up with. In everything that we do, we are always tied up with the kind of parents we have, the kind of relationship we have with the other family members, and the kind of family atmosphere where we have been exposed into since the day that we were born. The way we are molded, shaped and brought up will always be questioned by the type of family that we have. Many sociologists believe that the family is the very first social institution created by man. Family emerged as the oldest, most universal and most influential of all institutions (Salcedo, 2001). It is where we are reared and it is where we learned the “firsts” in our life. It is where we based our behavior and the way we live our own life. It can be defined as a set of people related by blood, marriage or adoption who shares the primary responsibility for reproduction and caring for members (Schaefer, 2005). Reiss (1980) also defined it as an institution in a small-kinship structured group with the key function of nurturing socialization of the newborn. Like many other institutions, the family consists of structure (Panopio, 1990). The family structure refers to the organizational framework that

determines family membership and the functions and hierarchical position of family members (education.com). According to Dintwat (2010), there are three types of family structure: the extended family, the nuclear family and the single-parent family. These structures more or less give stability on performing roles and functions of members that makes life and relationship enduring (Chesser, B.1980).). But the family is not always on the good road. Similar with other institution, it has its own share of problems. In the 18th century divorce was exceedingly rare since women who left their husbands had no viable means of survival. Marriages were usually harmonious, children were treated kindly and a belief in God was extremely important. The inherent goodness in people provided a solid backbone for families and produced a law-abiding and civilized society in which families flourished (Fiese, B. 1992). But as the years passed and as things gradually changed so as the family. Issues of broken families have come up as it has moved towards the world of modernity. Families of the 21st Century come in all shapes and sizes. Divorce, remarriage, out-of-wedlock and a host of other variables have turned nuclear families into the exception rather than the norm. As little as a half-century ago, children were typically raised in homes with two biological parents, and chances are, those two parents had the support of extended family members nearby. When one questioned their own parenting, they had only to turn to one of these supporters for reassurance and a confidence boost. Stepfamilies are the most common form of “non-traditional” families, but think of the many variables within stepfamilies: everything from two partners with custody of their respective children to households where one partner has children and the other doesn't. There are still even more types of families: single mothers, single fathers, grandparents raising grandchildren, multi-generational households, the list is endless (Blackwell, 2012). In the Philippines, marriage annulment cases have been rising. According to the report received by CBCP from the office of the solicitor general, annulment has increased by more than 40 percent over the past ten years, from 4,520 cases in 2001 to 8,282 in 2010 (Manila Bulletin, 2011). CBCP news on 2008, also cited the increasing number of broken families due to migration. But along with these problems, numerous recommendations have been made to strengthen the family and

one of which is the engagement of families in family rituals (Friesen, 1990).

Family rituals are forms of symbolic communication and repetitive social interaction which usually require an enduring and emotional commitment (Cheal, D. (1988)). It refers to any symbolic action for any particular event that carries meaning shared by all family members (Fiese, 2006). Family rituals serve important and diverse functions in family relationships (Eaker, D. and Walters, L., 2000). According to them, the first and foremost function of family rituals is to bind people together and sustain ongoing interaction. In addition, rituals in family create solidarity among its members. Family rituals also affirm common identity which gives the family a unique and distinctive character. Moreover, rituals increase intimacy and solidify a shared identity (Moriarty & Wagner, 2004). Roos and van Resburg (2008), in their study among adults in south Africa that rituals contribute to a feeling of more intimate attachment among family members which underscores that the family is a safe social environment where emotional changes take place.

Through meaningful family rituals, positive outcomes in family relationships happen (Leon & Jacobitz, 2003). It keeps the family intact and keeping the families together is about keeping vulnerable families protected, complete and supported. Families who involved themselves in rituals have a sense of cohesion, a sense of uniqueness as a group, meanwhile the family without rituals has a sense of chaos or a sense of flatness, Miriam Ben-Haim said in an interview written at Jet (1997). As have been mentioned that rituals serve as means in keeping the family intact, the absence of rituals might be the reason for miscommunication and misunderstanding since rituals make way in uniting the family.

For many years researchers have attempted to identify the characteristics underlying strong, healthy families. Family rituals have become a very good research topic in the field of social sciences but limited researches have been conducted in the country in relation to this topic, especially in Tuguegarao city.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

This study would like to find out the effects of family rituals in the stabilization of family structure among selected students of the University of Saint Louis. Specifically, this study is intended to address the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of family structure:
 - a. Nuclear
 - b. Extended
 - c. Single-parent
2. What are the different family rituals that the respondents engage into?
3. To what extent is the effect of the different family rituals in strengthening the family relationship that leads to the stabilization of family structure?

4. Is there a significant difference among the perceptions of the respondents as regards the extent of the effect of family rituals in stabilizing family structure, when grouped according to family structure?

Significance of the Study

The result of the study will be beneficial to the children for this will contribute to a deeper comprehension of the importance of engaging into family rituals and the effects that it may bring to their family and family members. It will also benefit the parents and the would be parents for this study will be a source of information for them on how to make ways in order for them to create a strong and intact family in the future. This study will help them determine the necessary rituals that will help their family stable. And future researchers as this study study will give them ideas on how to go about their research and what other topics can be developed from this research.

Literature Review

Underpinning Theory

This paper is anchored on the theory of attachment. This theory was conceived by John Bowlby (1969).he said that the term attachment refers to an emotional bond to another person. It was also described as a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings. Bowlby believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have an impact throughout their life. According to attachment theory, early parent-child relationship experiences are internalized in the form of mental representation of attachment, which influence the quality of later relationships, by organizing cognition and emotion, and can be customized by later experiences (Bowlby, 1969). Family rituals create and entail close and long-lasting relationships as well as attachment-related interactions so; they may be influenced by attachment representations, and also may influence attachment demonstrations (Jacobitz & Leon, 2003).

Family Structure

As mentioned earlier, the family as an institution has its own structure. Dintwat (2010) has given three types of family structure: the nuclear family, extended family and the single-parent family.

The nuclear family consists of a mother, father and their biological or adoptive descendants. This type of family is often described as the traditional family (Toby Shelton, 2010). Meanwhile, the extended family composes of more than parents or children; it may be a family which includes parents, children, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents and foster children (Toby Shelton, 2010). The single-parent families would compose of only one parent who can either be mother or a father (Shelton, 2010).

Family Rituals

Family rituals refer to a figurative form of communication that, owing to the realization that family members experience through its repetition, is acted out in an orderly manner over time (Wolin and Bennett, 1984). It is a form of cyclical behavior to which we connect symbolic meaning (Hill, 2000). Family rituals can be determined in numerous ways. There are many types of family rituals, including day to day family communications such as family dinners and weekend practice; family traditions such as vacations, holidays and birthdays; special celebration of life cycle events such as weddings and funerals and unique and ethnic traditions (Fiese & Kline 1993; Wolin and Bennett, 1984).

According to Friedman, S. and Weissbrod, C. (2004), rituals can be grouped into three categories: everyday rituals, annual rituals and life transition rituals. Everyday rituals refer to the significant things that the family engages into from day to day. Annual rituals involve something that the family usually does yearly. Life transition rituals mark the major milestones of life, such as birth, coming of age, life partnering, parenthood, retirement, and death.

Moreover, Wolin and Bennett (1984) refer to three categories of ritual: first is family celebrations like Christmas, weddings, and other annual celebrations, second is family traditions such as birthdays and anniversaries and lastly everyday rituals that includes day by day and weekly activities.

Friesen (1990) has his own categories of family rituals. According to him, rituals can be divided into three groups. All families commemorate holidays or rites of passage which occur from their religious, cultural, or ethnic origins even though the number and quality of the merriment differ considerably. Likewise, all families practice traditions that symbolically represent their families and that attach them to preceding generations. In addition, all families report family routines which most obviously mirror the exceptional relations of the family.

Effects of Family Rituals On Family Relationship

Family affiliations are characterized by family rituals (Kiser et al, 2005). According to Crespo (2011), family rituals have direct and indirect effects on family and family members. It can be influential means in altering patterns of interactions (Kim et al, 1997). Through family rituals, families construct a more positive connection. It brings family in solidarity with one another. When individuals establish a common identity, they also articulate to one another the way to live together. Ellis rosemary (2004) added that the development of rituals will help preserve unity and relationship. Establishments of rituals are one method to realize happiness among members and it promotes growth in each member (Rosenburg, 2010). Researchers have found that through meaningful family rituals, families have the opportunity to influence the dealings of its members in optimistic ways. Family researchers have found that family rituals can smooth the interactions that take place between family members. Family rituals can also add to family

members' shared harmony about values and behavior (Roberts et al, 2011).

Puterbaugh (2008) cited in his study that families with strong, positive ritual patterns have well-adjusted families while families having no rituals are often chaotic. He further said that rituals can help keep up a sense of normalcy when other parts of life are in chaos. Rituals can help stabilize an individuals' identity in the family thereby creating oneness among its members.

METHODS

This study made use of a descriptive method in determining how family rituals play a vital role in the stabilization of family structure. This study provided information, data and characteristics of the population being studied. This method was used in describing how family-rituals help maintain stability and cohesion among families.

This study has been conducted within the realms of the University of Saint Louis in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan Valley on the school year 2011-2012, particularly in the college department. The data came from 200 students of the University of Saint Louis who belong to any of the three family structures. The sample was determined through the use of stratified random sampling. All the 6 schools and colleges were represented specifically: five (5) students from the College of Health and Allied Sciences, thirty (30) students from the College of Tourism and Technical Vocational Education, sixty-eight (68) students from the School of Business administration and Accountancy, eighteen (18) students from the School of Education, Arts, and Sciences, fifty-six (56) students from the School of Engineering and Fine Arts and twenty-three (23) from the School of Information and Computing Sciences.

This study utilized a questionnaire. The questionnaire was used in determining the family rituals that the families engage into. It helped the researchers in coming up with an in-depth examination of the rituals and how these rituals help the family develop stability in their relationship that eventually leads to maintaining their family structure. It has been floated in the classrooms during class hours but a letter was used to ask permission from the teacher. The questionnaire was validated by the experts. The data gathered through the questionnaire were classified, tabulated presented and described.

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to family structure

Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear	71	35.5
Extended	75	37.5
Single parent	54	27.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 shows the number of respondents belonging to the three types of family structure. Out of 200 respondents, there has almost equal number of respondents fitting in the nuclear and extended family structures which means that there are greater number of Louisians who still have complete family or even a larger family. On the other hand, 27 % of the respondents come from the single parent families. The study came up with these results since the equal representation of all the departments has become the concern rather than having equal respondents from the three structures..

Table 2. Extent of the everyday Rituals which Strengthen Family.

Family Rituals A.EVERYDAY RITUALS	Weighted mean	Descriptive Value
Mealtime		
The family makes sure that everybody is present before having a meal.	3.34	To a Moderate extent
The family members take turn in praying before and after meal.	4.11	To a Great Extent
The family members are conversing every mealtime.	3.85	To a Great Extent
The family prepares the food together.	3.18	To a Moderate extent
The family waits for each other to finish the food before leaving.	3.19	To a Moderate extent
Bedtime		
The family members greet one another good night before sleeping.	2.55	To a Moderate extent
The family members sleep together in one area/one room	2.91	To a Moderate extent
The family sets time for sleeping.	2.48	To a Moderate extent
The family members kiss one another before sleeping	3.11	To a Moderate extent
The family prays together before sleeping.	3.45	To a Moderate extent
Others		
The family sets a family day.	3.21	To a Moderate extent
The family goes out together once a week.	3.71	To a Great Extent
The family members attend mass together.	3.45	To a Moderate extent
The family members do general cleaning every weekend together.	2.65	To a Moderate extent
Parents drop and fetch children at school.	4.22	To a Great Extent
The family members go out and do shopping together.	3.05	To a Moderate extent
Over all	3.27	To a moderate extent

Table 2 reveals that the everyday rituals have a moderate impact in strengthening the family structure of the respondents. The ritual on dropping and fetching children to school has the highest weighted mean which shows that

among the everyday rituals it plays a great role in affecting the strength of the family ties. Meanwhile the ritual on setting the time for sleeping has the lowest weighted mean but it still has a moderate effect in strengthening the family relationship

Table 3. Extent of the Annual Rituals which Strengthen Family Structure

B. Annual Rituals	Weighted mean	Descriptive Value
Birthday		
The family celebrates the birthday of family members.	4.54	To a very great extent
The family members give gifts or greeting cards.	3.74	To a Great extent
The family goes out and eats on restaurants.	3.58	To a Great extent
The family goes out on a picnic.	3.41	To a moderate extent
The family prepares the food at home together.	3.94	To a Great extent
The family attends mass together.	3.73	To a Great extent
The family members take a picture together.	3.42	To a Moderate Extent
Christmas		
The family attends the 9 dawn masses.	3.50	To a Great extent
The family prepares the food collectively.	3.92	To a Great extent
The family eats together during Christmas eve.	4.46	To a Great extent
The family goes together to church on Christmas day.	4.25	To a Great extent
The family members exchange gifts.	3.72	To a Great extent
The family goes on a trip.	3.34	To a great extent
The family visits their relatives together.	3.93	To a Great extent
New year		
The family lists New Year's resolution.	3.18	To a Moderate Extent
The family prepares the food together.	4.19	To a Great extent
The family eats together at New Year's Eve.	4.58	To A Very Great extent
The family participates in New Year's beliefs.	4.22	To a Great extent
The family attends mass on New Year's Day.	4.24	To a Great extent
The family visits their relatives together.	3.99	To a Great extent
Others		
The family set out on vacation once a year.	3.88	To a Great extent
The family celebrates fiesta together	4.23	To a Great extent
Over all	3.95	To a great extent

The table shows that annual rituals greatly strengthen the family relationship that leads to the stabilization of family structure. Among the annual rituals, it explicitly shows that eating during the New Year's Eve has the greatest extent of effect in firming up the kind of relationship that the family has. Opposite to it, the one that has the lowest weighted mean is when the family members list down together their new year's resolution. All the other rituals as shown in the table, also has a great effect in stabilizing the family structure.

Table 4. Extent of the Life transitional Rituals Which Strengthen Family structure

Life transitional	Weighted mean	Descriptive Value
The family celebrates graduation ceremonies.	4.55	To a very great extent
The family attends wedding ceremonies together	3.96	To a Great extent
The family attends burial together.	3.96	To a Great extent
The family participates in barangay activities together.	3.64	To a Great extent
The family joins in church activities together.	3.78	To a Great extent
The family commemorates marriage and death anniversaries together.	4.03	To a Great extent
Over all	3.98	To a great extent

It shows here that the ritual which strengthens the family relationship to a very great extent is when the family members celebrate the graduation ceremonies of the member of the family. The family's affiliation to the different activities in the barangay has the lowest weighted mean but still greatly affects family relationship. Similar with annual rituals, we can tell from the table that life transitional rituals have great impacts towards strengthening the family relationship of the members in their respective families.

Table 5. Significant Difference on the Extent of effect of Rituals across family stratification

Rituals	Groups	N	mean	F-value	Sig.	Decision
Everyday Rituals	Nuclear	71	40.0845	3.286	.039	Significant
	Extended	75	34.3333			
	Single parent	54	41.1481			
Annual Rituals	Nuclear	71	72.6056	4.306	.015	Significant
	Extended	75	62.6267			
	Single parent	54	70.9074			

Life transitional Rituals	Nuclear	71	19.7042	2.993	.052	Not significant
	Extended	75	16.8800			
	Single parent	54	19.8148			

The table shows that there is a significant difference in the perception of the respondents with regard to the extent of the effect of everyday family rituals in strengthening their family relationship. As seen from the table, single-parent families have the highest mean which explains that for them everyday family rituals plays a vital role in keeping the family intact. This also tells us that respondents that belong to single parent family structure really value the family rituals that the family has. On the other hand, in the context of annual rituals, the nuclear family has the highest mean. For them, the annual rituals really keep their family relationship strong. There is no significant difference in the perception of the respondents on the effect of life transitional rituals in the strengthening their family structure.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the effect of the family rituals in strengthening the family relationship that leads to the stabilization of family structure and to identify whether there is a difference in extent of the effect of the family rituals in strengthening the relationship when the family is grouped according to nuclear, extended and single-parent families. It has been mentioned among all the researches that rituals positively affects the relationship of families thus creating a great impact in strengthening their ties and stabilizing the family.

Results showed that family rituals have a great effect in strengthening the family relationships of the respondents. Family researchers have found that family rituals can smooth the interactions that take place between family members. Family rituals can also add to family members' shared harmony about values and behavior (Roberts et al, 2011). Everyday rituals in particular moderately strengthen the family structure. The actions that are done every day like eating, sleeping and the like, are the everyday rituals that work with families to deepen their experience of loving connection. When it comes to annual rituals, we can see that it has a greater or higher effect when compared to everyday rituals. Annual rituals are those activities that are done once a year. Activities that are done annually are the one that is really celebrated by the members of the family. Since it occurs only once, members of the family make sure that all of the members are present since this is the only time that they will be gathered as one. Annual activities are mostly big events thus it is expected that it is coordinated by the members. Lastly, on life transitional rituals, we can see its average which is 3.98, it is somewhat similar with annual rituals which is 3.9.

This type of ritual also has a great effect in strengthening the family relationship. Life transitional rituals mark the major milestone in the life of the person and how the family deals with the society. Similar with the annual rituals, the occurrence of life transitional rituals is not that frequent. It may occur only once, for instance wedding anniversary or wedding ceremonies.

This result on the effect of rituals in strengthening the family relationship is supported by the claim that rituals can help stabilize an individuals' identity in the family thereby creating oneness among its members. Family rituals can really be a factor that helps build strong families.

The major finding of this study is that there has a difference in the effects of rituals in strengthening the family structure. In everyday rituals, we can see that the single parent families has the highest mean which means that everyday rituals makes their family more attached with one another. On their perception, everyday rituals help a lot in maintaining the stability of their families. Next to it is nuclear family which has a mean of 40.08. It is not really far with the result of single-parent families. This means that everyday rituals, on their perception, help a lot in making their family bond tighter. With regard to annual rituals, the nuclear family is the ones who are best affected positively. On their perception, annual rituals help make their family relationship more cohesive and intact. Meanwhile, on life transitional rituals we can see that there is almost equal extent of the effect of rituals in strengthening the family relationship. This ritual has an equal effect on the three structures.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that family rituals play a vital role in strengthening the family relationship of the respondents as a whole but we can see the difference of its effects when the respondents have been classified according to

the family structure. There is difference in the response of the respondents in the 2 classification of ritual which is every day and annual ritual but they have the same perception with regard to life transitional rituals.

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