

**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE  
SINGLEHOOD: EXTERNAL REALITY  
VS. INTERNAL REALITY\***

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ABSTRACT

This study titled "*Social Construction of Female Singlehood: External Reality vs. Internal Reality*," primarily aimed to determine socially-ascribed stereotypes and roles attributed to never married women both by themselves (NMW) and by other people (non-NMW). It further sought to know the role of communication in the continuous construction and possible deconstruction and reconstruction of realities about the NMW. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- A. What are the prevailing social constructions regarding never married women and/or singlehood?
- B. What can a constructionist communication approach do to elaborate on and understand the situation of never married women?
- C. How convergent or divergent are internal (by the NMW themselves) and external (by the non-NMW) realities regarding female singlehood?

These questions were specified into the following objectives:

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- A. To determine prevailing constructions/stereotypes regarding singlehood and NMW.
  - 1. to determine perceptions regarding the role of women in the family
  - 2. to explore if and how factors such as family background/parental characteristics, education and socio-economic conditions are explanatory resources for singlehood
    - a. reasons for singlehood
    - b. characteristics of NMW
    - c. role and function of NMW
- B. To explore how a constructionist communication approach can elaborate on and understand the situation of Never Married Women.
  - 1. to apply “reflexive elaboration”, an emerging reflexive-constructionist method of constructing data
  - 2. to generate more meanings and elaborate understandings on female singlehood in general, and never married women in particular
- C. To compare and contrast reality constructions regarding female singlehood.
  - 1. to know the convergence between internal reality constructions (by the never married women themselves) and external reality constructions (by the non-NMW) regarding female singlehood
  - 2. to know the divergence between internal reality constructions and external reality constructions regarding female singlehood

Theories used in the Study Framework were Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality Theory and Klaus

Krippendorffs Emancipatory Theory of Communication, two theories with constructionist orientation.

Following the proposed phases of an alternative approach to data construction called *'reflexive elaboration'*, this research employed the qualitative research design.

There were two sets of participants: nine never married women (NMW) and 13 key informants (non-NMW).

Data were generated from these respondents through focus group discussions (FGDs) and focus interviews (FIs).

Socially-ascribed stereotypes and roles attributed to never married women which were surfaced in this study are: *malungkot; kawawa; tuyo/nawala na'ng katas/matanda na; bugnutin/maligalig/masungit/istrikto; hindi nakatikim ng luto ng Dyos/walang experience; galit sa lalaki; naubusan; naiinggit/maiinggit; nakalimutan ang sarili/nakalimutan ang pagpapaligaw; mayong nag-ilusyon/mayong nag-agom; taga-ampon ng pamangkin; mapili*. In this study, these stereotypes and roles are referred to as external realities—meaning, they are, more often than not outside of the actual experiences of the NMW participants. They have, however become social truths. As indicated in the results, most of these constructed realities are not true to the NMW's individual experiences because they are, first and foremost, products of the generalized truth about women.

In this research, however, it was pointed out that the never married women can reconstruct their own realities and eventually their self-image by participating in the process—both in the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of their own realities and identities as unmarried women.