

## What Do Filipinos Value Most in Life?

The family is what matters most to Filipinos. Everything else that they consider important is anchored on the family. Values like dependability, self-worth, emotional and financial security, professional and personal growth, and gratitude to parents are upheld to preserve the family. It is also the family from which they draw much love, support, and happiness.

*“My life is incomplete without them because they are the ones who give me strength and inspiration. When something bad happens to our family, you feel that you lost something. It's like a part of yourself is missing.”*

— MARRIED FEMALE

What Filipinos want most for their family is financial stability. A good education, a stable job, and a healthy mind and body are considered key ingredients in achieving this.

### Hierarchy of Values

It is predictable that values change in order of importance as one goes through the different stages of adulthood.

### Single Teeners

For single teeners (15-18 years old), establishing their own identity and self-worth is what matters most, and they look to their families to help them achieve this.

Finishing their studies is considered an achievement and is ranked second in their list of priorities. Friends are considered important for “gimmicks” but it's still family that counts most as their source of strength and emotional support. Peer pressure is more defined among

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This paper is based on findings in “Project Dynasty,” a qualitative research study carried out in January-February 2003 by AC Nielsen for The Social Acceptance Project-Family Planning (TSAP-FP). TSAP-FP is being implemented in the Philippines by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with funding support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The study was conducted among 230 respondents composed of male and female, 15-34 years old, single and married, belonging to Class DE and Broad C, and residing in Metro Manila, Cebu and industrial areas in Cavite, Batangas and Laguna. Most of the respondents were working, while the youngest respondents (15-18 years old) were usually still studying. Married respondents had one to six children.

Combining focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the study aimed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Identify knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about family planning and related issues, including sex, pregnancy, and children
- Determine constraints and barriers to acceptance and use of family planning methods in terms of myths, misconceptions, taboos, fears, and cultural norms
- Understand perceptions of modern vs. traditional methods
- Understand perceptions of modern vs. traditional method users
- Identify channels of information/ influence that impact on the family planning decisions of the target segments



single teeners in Manila than in Cebu. Cebuanos seem to listen more to their parents. Manileños also tend to be more liberal in matters of sex. Many have had premarital sex. Their Cebuano counterparts, on the other hand, claim to have gone only as far as kissing with their partners.

### **Single Young Adults**

For single young adults, 19-24 years old, their mantra seems to be “career first before love”. (This is not to say, however, that they have remained pure and chaste.) Foremost in their minds at this time is to contribute to the household till — to support their parents as well as their siblings.

*“(I want) to finance the education of my siblings because we're seven in the family and I am the eldest. With a good education they could have a bright future.”* — SINGLE FEMALE

As the least of their priorities, boyfriends of those in this age group are merely to spice up one's life. Their male counterparts, however, see their current partners in a more favorable light — as someone they could actually walk down the aisle with.

A lot of young single females believe they would have better luck in providing for themselves and their family if they had their own business or if they worked abroad. Their most fervent wish is to own a house or to improve the family home. For young single females in Cebu, a deep faith in God, as their parents have taught them, makes it even more possible to achieve their goals.

*“I turn to God for support. Anything is possible if you just put your trust in Him.”* — SINGLE FEMALE

For single young males, ages 19-24, what's most important is that they are able to assert their independence from their parents. They want to be appreciated as dependable, both as sons and as future husbands and fathers. Those in the industrial sector expressed a strong desire to start their own family right away.

*“I want to stand on my own two feet. I'm of legal age and I have a mind of my own. I need to separate from my family and start my own.”* — SINGLE MALE

### **Mid-20s to Mid-30s**

As one enters the 25-34 age group, financial stability remains to be the number one priority. However, those in this age group do not only have their family's future in mind, but also their own. At this age, men and women are said to be in settling down mode. Boyfriends are now regarded as potential husbands. Males prefer to be with their girlfriends more than with their friends. They also start paying extra attention to their health. Friends — especially the very close ones — serve as confidantes and as sounding boards in their lives.

### **Married Adults**

Once married, men and women equally show devotion to the family, but their priorities in terms of objectives may be slightly different. Married women feel more strongly about nurturing their family to advancement, while the married men feel more strongly about being able to provide for their families' financial needs. Both agree, however, that their children's needs take precedence over their own.

Married men still bask in their traditional role of breadwinner and expect their wives to play out the traditional role of homemaker. Married women, however, feel it is incumbent on them to work not just to help augment the family income but also to develop their self-esteem.

*“I also value my career. How will I help my husband if I won't give myself importance? He doesn't have to work hard by himself because times are hard. If you help your husband, you can raise your children properly, give them a good education as long as you work together.”*

— MARRIED FEMALE

Men's expectations of their wives remain just as traditional in the bedroom, where they choose to remain on top of things, lording it over their more submissive wives. This is particularly true for women in the Class D and Class E socio-economic group (Class D is considered low-class while Class E is extremely low-class). These women consider it their role to be ever-ready to please their husbands anytime he feels the urge to “use” (or, “gamit” as they refer to the sexual act) them.

Things are looking up, however, especially for women belonging to the Class C (middle class) group. The study shows that, here, women are now able to demand equal status in the marital bed.

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Moreover, it was learned that users of modern FP methods — i.e., the pill, IUD and ligation — from both the Class DE and Broad C groups, are just as assertive about what they want in lovemaking.

Still, it's a man's world out there. For instance, some men believe that it's acceptable for men to have sex with other women while still single, but they expect their partners to have sex only with them.

### **Sex and the Young Single Adult**

Single males, particularly those from Metro Manila and Southern Luzon, say it is only normal for men to have sex. For them it is a rite of passage and part of being male. Premarital sex appears to be common and is considered “natural” between two people in love. Those who admitted to being sexually active said they were driven by curiosity, peer pressure, conducive circumstances (absence of parents in the home) and libido (“nag-init”). Being sexually active, however, does not mean being promiscuous. One-night stands are uncommon among the young. Those who chose to remain chaste (mostly teenagers in Cebu) cite their religious background and upbringing.

*“I want to remain a virgin before I get married. That's for my husband.”*

— FEMALE, CEBU, 17 YEARS OLD

Others cite fear of parents and not being economically stable.

*“I'm afraid of [how] my parents [will react] if I get my girlfriend pregnant.”*

— MALE, 17 YEARS OLD

*“I have no experience yet because I'm afraid to do it to my girlfriend. I have no job. I have no means to earn a living.”*

— MALE, 16 YEARS OLD

### **Young Single Adults and Unplanned Pregnancy**

Single males and females cite two major drawbacks of an unplanned pregnancy. One is losing the trust of their parents, and the other is not being able to realize their goals in life. For Cebuano teens this includes not being able to finish their studies. Older females are also worried about tainting their and their family's reputation. Another concern — especially among those who are family breadwinners — is the possibility

that they may have to cut down on their contribution to the family income. They also worry that they may not be ready for the attendant responsibilities of raising a child.

*“... Having a kid is another responsibility. I won't be able to work when my stomach is already big. After delivering the baby, my parents won't support me anymore. Of course, they'll get mad at me because they always tell me that they trust me.”*

— SINGLE FEMALE

Nevertheless, many believe that while parents may initially react unfavorably about their pregnancy, they are confident that once they see their grandchild, all will be forgiven.

### **Married Adults and Unplanned Pregnancy**

For married couples, overall, an unplanned pregnancy at this time would mean a strain in the family budget. The working mom may have to give up her job and therefore there would be less money in the bank when, ironically, this is the time when they could use a little more of it. Other children who may still be too young to fend for themselves would have to compete with the new arrival for their mom's attention. If they are of school age, and the family is financially strapped, they may have to stop schooling too. And then,

of course, there's the health risk involved in having another baby very shortly after a previous childbirth. Men who are still dependent on their parents or in-laws for material support say they would be embarrassed to impose on them the burden of another mouth to feed.

Despite the many drawbacks of an unplanned pregnancy cited by couples, many still persist in leaving everything to chance. Should an unplanned pregnancy occur, they believe that it is God's will and, therefore, He will provide whatever they would need.

*“Should [my wife] get pregnant, it is God's gift so we have to accept.”*

— MARRIED MALE, WITHDRAWAL USER ■

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## Sketches

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