

Transitions Among Filipino Elderly Women: A Phenomenological Study

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Significance of the Study

- Implications for Counseling Psychology
- No study yet on transitions among retired elderly women
- Prepare for, coping with, reconstructing life after certain life event changes
- Attaining psychological well-being, preventing crisis situations, achieving a satisfying old age
- A help to Gerontologists, Nurses, Caregivers, Psychiatrists, and Counselors

Conceptual Framework

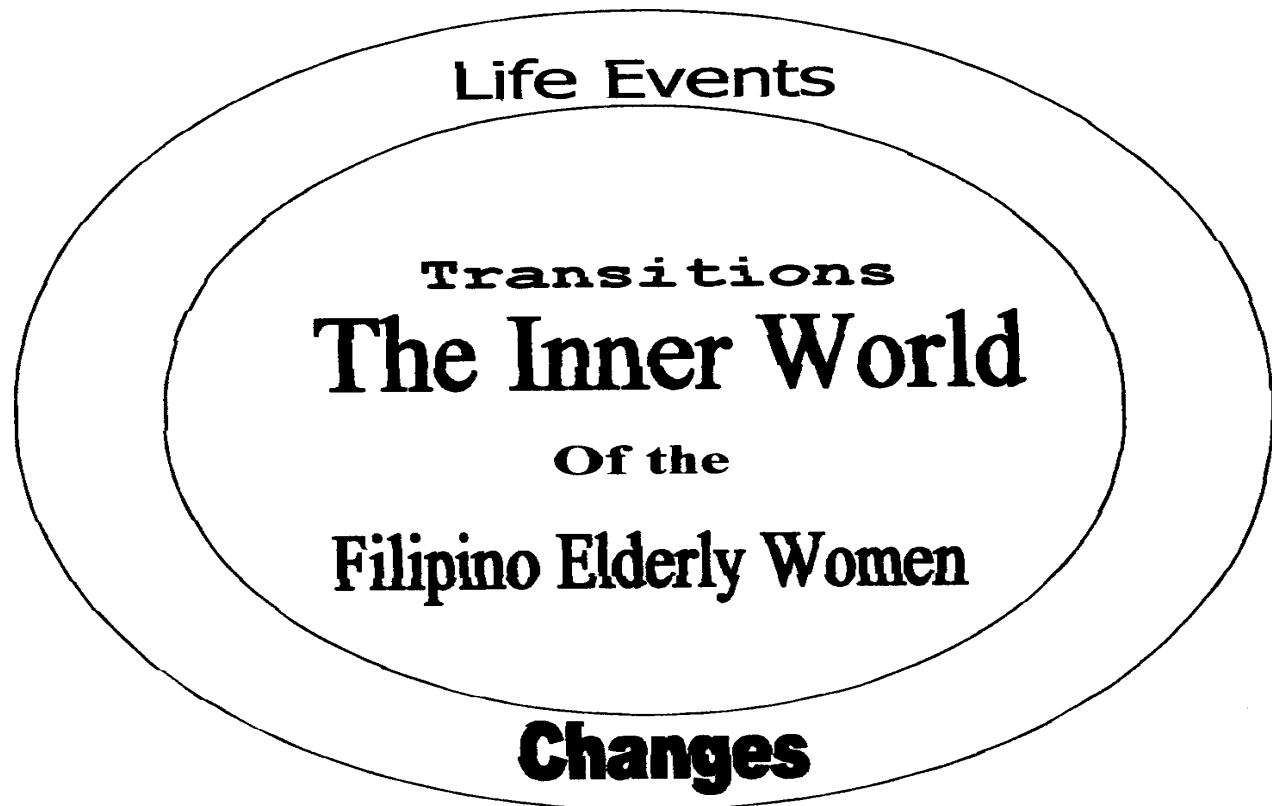


Figure 1. A paradigm showing the inner world at the core of transitions among filipino elderly women.

Research Questions

1. What transitions do the elderly experience?
2. What are the experiences of the elderly during their life event/changes in terms of the following:
 - a. their feelings?
 - b. the problems they encounter?
 - c. ways in which they cope with their transitions?
 - d. positive experiences that may have come out of the various transition points?

Research Questions – continued...

3. What are the themes of the experiences of the elderly?
4. How do the elderly view their transition points?
5. What factors may have influenced the ways the elderly view their transition points?
6. What are the circumstances surrounding the elderly that may have helped them cope with their transition?

Methodology

Subjects:

- 16 retired elderly women
- 60 years old and above
- going through life event changes or transitions
- Must have been retired from work at least 6 months
- Must have had 10 or more years of continuous work history

Data Gathering Procedures

- Qualitative
- Phenomenological
- “Pakikipagkwentuhan”
- Content: Life stories - narratives

Analysis of Data

- Data transcription
- Analysis for themes



Findings:

Q1: Transitions the Elderly Experience:

- Retirement
- Widowhood/Loss of Significant Others
- Sickness/Disability
- Grandparenting

Q1: Transitions the Elderly Experience:

a. Retirement

- reached the compulsory age of 65
- offered early retirement
- retired earlier than 65 due to an illness/disability

Q1: Transitions the Elderly Experience:

b. Widowhood

- Widowed ten years ago or longer
- Lost husbands before retirement
- Widowhood within the last five years
- A special kind of widowhood
- Losing parents, sister who serve as caretakers

Q1: Transitions the Elderly Experience:

c. **Sickness/Disability**

- Major and common illness: cancer, diabetes, nerve problems, chest pains, arthritis, osteoporosis, memory failure, hearing and sight problems, heart ailments, high blood pressure.

Q1: Transitions the Elderly Experience:

d. Grandparenting

- Fulfilling
- Do not want to play the role of grandparenting

Q2a. Feelings of the Elderly during their life event/changes – On Retirement

- Without much struggle
- A welcome event for homebodies
- Smooth transition – reached compulsory age; priority to family needs
- Had problems with retirement (disequilibrium)

Q2a. Feelings of the Elderly during their life event/changes – On Widowhood/Loss of Significant Others

- Most painful: length of recovery depends on many external factors and individual characteristics.
- “strong life disruption” – widowed
- Not depressed or lonely – singles

Q2a. Feelings of the Elderly during their life event/changes – On Grandparenting

- Grandparenting Styles:
 - Funseekers
 - Surrogate parents
 - Reservoir of family wisdom
- * Fulfilling – with minor problems

Q2a. Feelings of the Elderly during their life event/changes – On Sickness/Disability

■ On Sickness/Disability

- feel death is at hand
- become more prayerful
- careful of diet
- see need for exercise
- inquire, learn, read about health matters
- psychosomatic disorders

Q2b. Problems encountered by the Subjects during their life event/changes

- Lesser/lack of social interaction
- Relocation
- Lack of health interaction
- Sensitiveness
- Communication gap
- Sensory deterioration – dependence on ADL
- Marital problems
- Financial problems
- Adapting to simple living
- Depression/loneliness

Q2 C. Ways of Coping with Life Event Changes

- Keeping Busy
 - house choirs
 - making up for absence at home
 - improvement of home environment
 - gardening
 - grandparenting
 - meeting or going out with people
 - telephone conversations
 - prayers and mass attendance
 - involvement in social, civic, and religious programs and activities

Q2c. Ways of Coping with Life Event Changes – continued.....

- Trips – local and abroad
- Going to Malls
- Listening to radio
- T.V. viewing
- Reading
- Ballroom dancing
- Bowling with husbands
- Health exercises
- Buying new clothes
- Dyeing one's hair

Q2d. Positive Experiences out of the Various Transition Points

- On Retirement:
- More spiritual activities
- Freed from tension and daily rush
- Helped improve health
- Use skills in civic and community project
- Enjoy company of family members
- Saved marriage and family life
- More trips outside the country

Q2d. Positive Experiences out of the Various Transition Points

- On Sickness/Disability:
- lack of skill in ventilating feeling
- sympathetic with those living alone
- learned patience and humility with self and others
- facilitated growth and maturity
- need for a facility for professional elderly

Q2d. Positive Experiences out of the Various Transition Points

- On Widowhood/Loss of Significant Others:
- closer relationship with God and their children
- develop appreciation for the goodness of their loved ones
- For those with marital problem: gained more insights worth sharing to people
- For single parents: felt stronger and stable
 - realization of need to get in contact with friends and people.

Q2d. Positive Experiences out of the Various Transition Points

- On Grandparenting:
- Joy and Fulfillment in doing grandparent roles
- Consolation – merely visiting

Q3. Themes of the Experiences of the Subjects

- Childhood days
- War/Japanese time
- Group activities/programs – religious devotions/former work
- Time and training – children
- Accomplishments – loved ones

Q3. Themes of the Experiences of the Subjects – continued....

- Trips – here and abroad
- Marital problems
- Gratitude to husbands/grieving w/ husband loss
- Problem with helpers

Q4. How the Subjects view their Transition points – On Retirement

- Taken positively – 65 yrs old, homebodies, those who retire the same time as husband, freed from work stress, saving marriage/family life
- Disequilibrium – workaholics, focused on careers, missed colleagues at work, meeting people, busy schedule, trips

Q4. How the Subjects view their Transition points – On Widowhood

- Depression
- Widows with children – better adjusted

Q4. How the Subjects view their Transition points – On Sickness/Disability

- Loneliness – for those who cannot afford medication
- Not being able to go to places and visit friends – increases frequency of being alone and left out in old age
- Emotionally related – oversensitiveness
- Embarrassing – dependence in ADL
- Boring – varied activities

Q4. How the Subjects view their Transition points – On Grandparenting

- Great satisfaction and pride in their grandchildren
- Contributing to the grandparent's overall sense of purpose and worth

Q5. Factors that may have influenced the ways the Subjects view their transition points

- Students with behavioral and emotional problems
- Freed from dealing with subordinates
- Personality types
- Life time experiences
- Smooth transition: health, money, ways to occupy time meaningfully, prayerfulness, emotional support, strong social network

Q6. Circumstances surrounding the Subjects that may have helped them cope with their transitions

- **Personality Factors**
- **Independence in ADL**
- **Social and personal relations**
- **Environmental factors**
- **Financial resources**
- **Leisure activities**
- **Spiritual well-being**

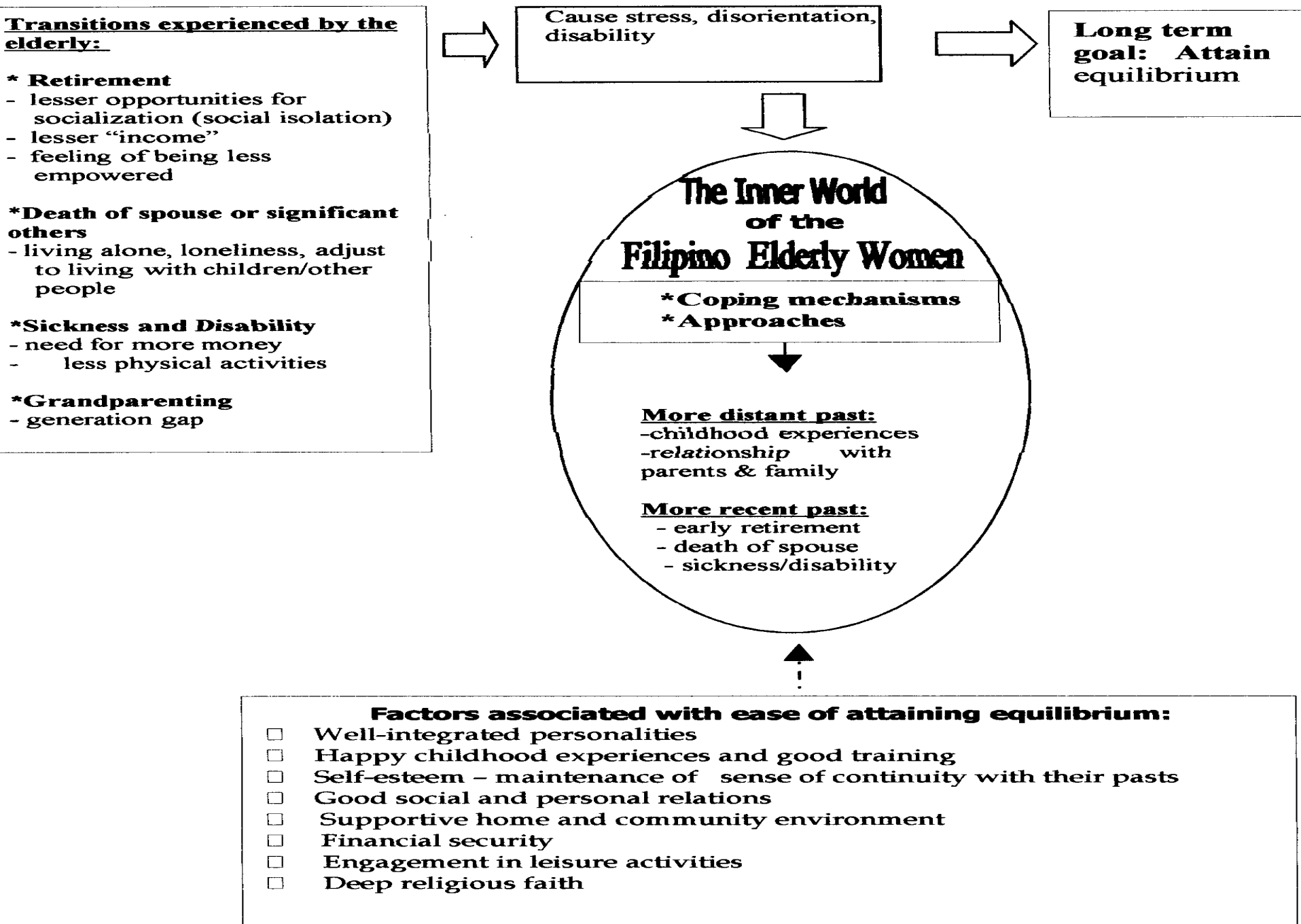
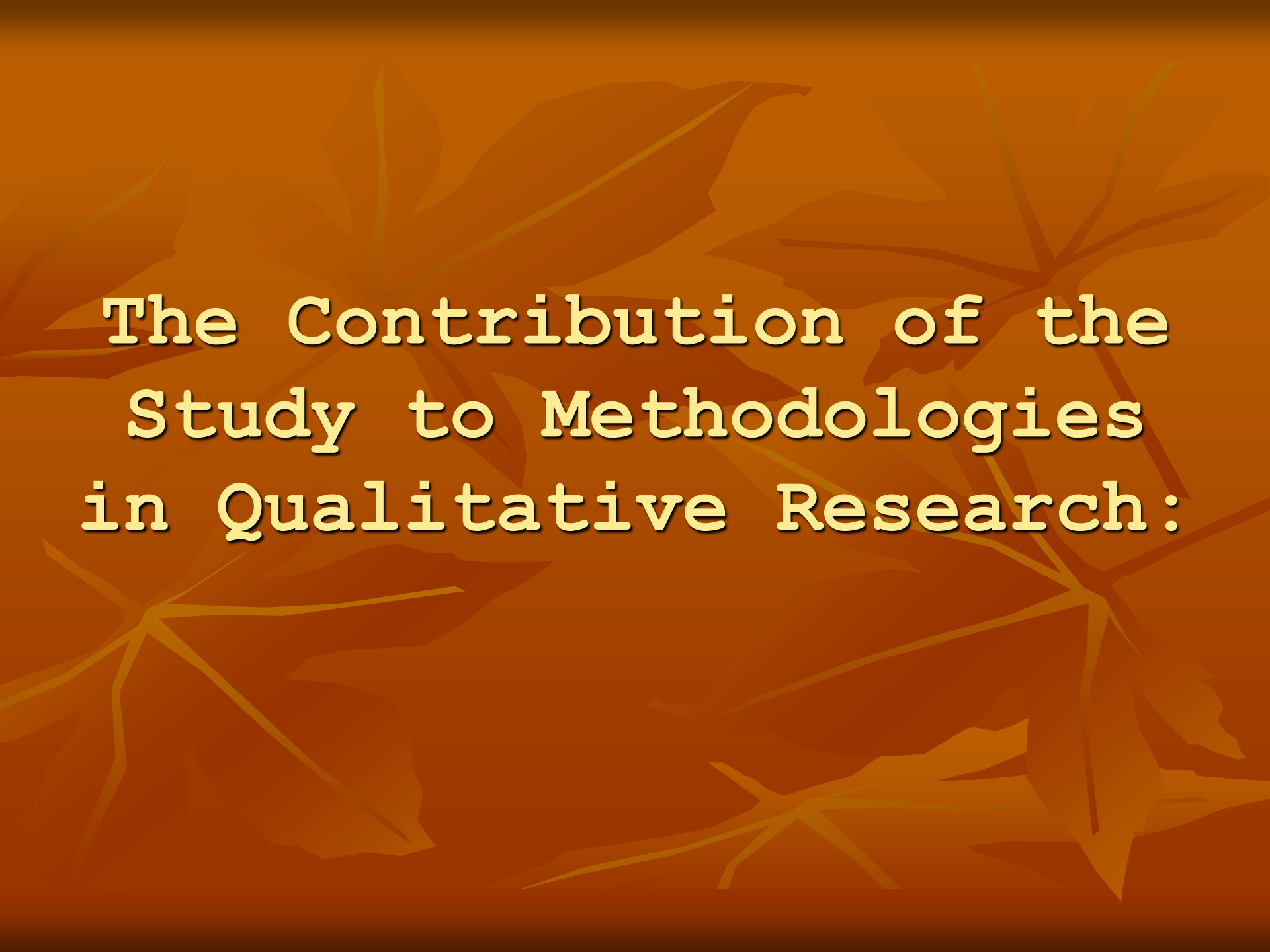


Figure 2. The modified framework showing the inner world at the core of transitions among filipino elderly women.



**The Contribution of the
Study to Methodologies
in Qualitative Research:**

Conclusions:

- In the Philippines – the family is the number one social support of the individual as one gets old; * “Utang na loob”
- Social contacts – associated with feelings of self-worth
- Social support networks and peer connections – new skills & behaviors
- Life satisfaction – dependent on social activity
- Not being able to converse with others – cause of sensory deterioration

Conclusions: continued.....

- Reading – helpful in keeping the mind active
- Physical health problems – influence self-esteem (those with health problems – lower feelings of self-worth).
- Usefulness/competence – an important predictor of well-being
- Relationship with God – positive view of life
- Positive worker identities – anticipate retirement positively

Conclusions: continued.....

- The more financially secure - the more positive one's attitude toward retirement.
- Marital status – positively related to attitudes toward retirement
(Being married provided social support that buffered the uncertainty of retirement; more time for family members)
- Ageing makes the Filipino more devoted to one's spiritual life.

Recommendations: (For Research Purposes)

- That a comparative study be done on retirement/transition experiences in old age by gender, civil status, and culture.
- That a similar study be done among single elderly women especially those living alone.
- That a counseling model on transition among elderly women be empirically developed.
- That a study investigating coping styles as it relates to ageing be done.

Recommendations:

(For Research Purposes - continued)

- That a model be developed on successful transition in relation to retirement pre-planning.
- That a study be done on how the elderly can continue to remain productive members of society in spite of the modern trend towards industrialization in which there seem to be loss of role and status for elderly people.

Recommendations: (For Programmatic Purposes)

- That programs that may give opportunity for older workers to begin to plan for their retirement and improve the quality of their retirement experience be provided.
- That a facility where the elderly can come to and meet on a regular basis be made available for them especially for those living alone or those having problems in social contacts.

Recommendations: (For Programmatic Purposes)

- That efforts to bolster the self-worth of older workers with low self-esteem be looked into and that depressed workers be aided as they face varied life changes and transitions.
- That individuals who are not married, are approaching retirement, and who do not view themselves as competent workers as they enter retirement be given the assistance they need.