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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Lived Experiences of RA 8972 Solo Parent Act of 2000

Milphene C. Pinatil<sup>1</sup> ✉ Rommel T. Gimarangan<sup>2</sup> and May G. Limbaga<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Adviser, University of Cebu Political Science Program) College of Arts and Sciences, University of Cebu, Cebu City, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>Chair, University of Cebu Political Science Program) College of Arts and Sciences, University of Cebu, Cebu City, Philippines

<sup>3</sup>Professor, University of Cebu Political Science Program) College of Arts and Sciences, University of Cebu, Cebu City, Philippines

**Corresponding Author:** Milphene C. Pinatil, **E-mail:** [mpinatil@uc.edu.ph](mailto:mpinatil@uc.edu.ph)

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the lived experiences of solo parents of Cebu City upon the conception of RA 8972 known as the Solo Parent Act of 2000. An in-depth study of the solo parent's plight in their daily challenges in terms of financial and time management, disciplining and instilling time-honored values in their children, and social stigma. A shared narrative on circumstances that lead them to become a solo parent, the availability and enjoyment of solo parent benefits as mandated by law. Utilizing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, a qualitative research method, it explores an in-depth investigation of the participants' lived experiences. Ten solo parents from different age groups were interviewed as participants. The study goes to the fluidity of parental roles away from the lenses of society as it covers LGBT members' acts as parents to some. It becomes evident in the study that solo parents developed fortitude as they stay in control of the status quo solidified family relationships, acts as home counselor, and hope for the future. Sustainable livelihood programs, scholarships for vocational courses, access to legal aid services, and personality and development training are recommended to uplift the lives of every solo parent, edifying the principle of social justice.

**KEYWORDS**

Social justice, solo parents, solo parent act, interpretative phenomenological analysis, parental roles, social stigma

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### 1. Introduction

The preservation of humanity is the fundamental human law of nature. Life, liberty, and property are among the basic rights asserted by John Locke as part of his enlightened theory that all people are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights. Given two key arguments—the first being the knowledge that humans are God's creation and the second being the purposeful relationships between man and his environment—Locke places a strong emphasis on justice that centers on the responsibility of self-preservation as the basic rule of nature (Resendiz & Espinoza, 2022).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an important milestone toward eliminating discrimination against people because of their ethnicity, religion, or culture. Goal No. 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals is to ensure that all women and girls have equal access to economic, political, and social opportunities and are empowered to seize leadership roles at all levels of society (Krausse, 2022).

As long as discriminatory laws and other legal restrictions exist, women will never be able to realize their full potential as human beings. More than half of the 95 countries and territories surveyed did not have any quotas for women in their national legislatures in 2020; 63% did not have rape laws based on the principle of consent; more than 90% prohibited gender discrimination in employment; however, nearly 50% still did not allow women to vote in national elections (Kaur, 2022).

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According to the Philippine Senate, a study that was funded by the World Health Organization and carried out by the DOH found that there are an estimated 14 to 15 million single parents in the Philippines, with women comprising 95% of this population. Solo parents are breadwinners and caregivers in their families, which requires them to deal with the complexities of their basic needs. Single parents must balance their individual roles of raising their children and housekeeping at the same time. These difficulties add to single parents' living situations, resulting in characteristics that describe and influence their way of life (Philippine Senate Press Release, 2021).

Pregnancy at a young age is a major contributor to the rise of the single-parent household. According to the Philippine Statistical Authority, 538 babies were born to teenage moms in the Philippines per day in 2017. (PSA). The Solo Parent's Welfare Act of 2000 (Republic Act 8972) recognizes the state policy that the family, in its role as the basis of the country, helps to enhance national cohesion and secures the nation's general growth.

The state guarantees that all human rights are respected in full, as stated in Republic Act 9262 of 2004 Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children, which was passed in 2004. The state is also cognizant of the need of safeguarding families and its members, especially women and children, from threats to their physical and emotional safety.

Republic Act 8972, commonly known as the Solo Parent's Welfare Act of 2000, is cognizant of the State policy that the family as the foundation of the nation strengthens its solidarity and ensures its total development. It shall develop a comprehensive program of services for solo parents and their children to be carried out by government agencies identified in the provision of this law (Philippine Official Gazette, 2022).

RA9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 declared that the State values the dignity of women and children and guarantees full respect for human rights. The State also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members, particularly women and children, from violence and threats to their personal safety and security.

VAWC espouses the level of the playing field between women and men in society. Since women are, in the general sense, biologically weaker than men, they pose less resistance to threats, particularly domestic violence, and are less likely to get opportunities in a man-dominated world hence, to provide equality in society, the concept of social justice has been introduced.

This is also strengthened by no less than the Supreme law in Article 2, Section 14. The State recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men. During the regular session that took place on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, the legislators of Cebu City approved an ordinance that was given the title "Solo Parents' Discounts and Incentives Ordinance of Cebu City." This ordinance will allow solo parents to receive discounts when they make purchases of goods and services. However, there have been no implementation rules and regulations since the conception of this city ordinance till the writing of this paper.

Statistics would show in Cebu City, as per the Department of Social Welfare and Services registry, there are only 2,394 registered solo parents; however, as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority, the number of solo parents in Cebu City ballooned to 57 892, which 7, 8972 of this are a solo-male parent, and 50,000 are solo-mother parents.

From this inquiry and observation, this study will explore the lived experiences of Solo Parents under RA 8972; through the merits of this research, a recommendation will be proposed and can be used as a reference tool for the Cebu City Government and its agency, the Department of Social and Welfare Services in its crafting of the implementing rules and regulations of the City Ordinance No. 2556 and programs for the solo parents, and to be utilized for future researchers.

## **2. Literature Review**

Despite the pool of available literature elaborating on women's rights and solo parenthood, none so far tackled the details being imbued by this paper, Thus, the reason for the pursuit of this study is to explore the lived experiences of solo parents in Cebu City.

No declaration of human rights will ever be exhaustive and final. It will ever go hand-in-hand with the state of moral consciousness and civilization at a given moment in history," says the French philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) in his text "On the Philosophy of Human Rights".

According to information provided by the National Statistics Office in the year 2000, there are 2.9 million persons, of whom 95 percent are women. It is the aim of the State to encourage the family as the cornerstone of the country, reinforce its unity, and guarantee that it develops to its full potential. Republic Act 8972, commonly known as the Solo Parent Act of 2000, is the policy

of the State to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity, and ensure its total development. Natural law establishes the family as the primary social institution, superior to both the state and the civil community. Given that human law does nothing more than identify this category, it is crucial that a declaration of rights spell out in explicit detail the rights and freedoms that emanate from it. Typically, young moms who are parenting alone have emotional anguish; their relationships and education are usually damaged, which results in a need for financial support from their parents and the government (Garcia et al, 2021).

### **2.1 Definition of Family**

According to Article II, Section 12 of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, the state recognizes the family as the primary social institution and works to promote its stability and success. From the time of conception onwards, it will protect both the mother and her unborn child. The government has an obligation to protect parents' rights to raise their children and to support parents' efforts to instill moral values in their children. Article 149 of the Philippine Family Code states that the government must uphold and defend the family as the paramount social institution. In the Philippines, family is highly valued since it is considered to be the most important social unit. This means that the law determines what constitutes a family and that no harmful traditions or agreements within families can be upheld in legal proceedings. (Philippine Official Gazette, 2022).

The term "single family" may also be used to refer to a single household as well as unmarried sisters and brothers who share the same residence. One other variation is the extended family, which consists of many nuclear families cohabitating under one roof. The third category is comprised of two or more family members who are not linked to each other in any way, including not being related by blood, marriage, or adoption. This category is defined as a household that has two or more people who are not related to each other in any way (Digital, 2022).

The National Statistics Office has compiled a list of the many kinds of families that exist in the United States to serve as an acknowledgment of the fact that there are other families than the typical ones. On the other hand, these criteria are not enough to indicate that single-parent households are included in the category of non-traditional families (Garcia et al, 2021).

One of the most common reasons someone from The Global Childhood Study (2019) by Save the Children reports is that the Philippines has the second-highest teen pregnancy rate in Southeast Asia, at 5.99 percent. In 2017, the Philippines saw an average of 538 births per day to mothers who were only adolescents, according to data compiled by the Philippine Statistical Authority (PSA).

Families that don't fit the idealized traditional type, like those with a member who is disabled, unemployed, or incarcerated, receive less social support, as was highlighted by Pearce (2022). Non-conforming families can also be found in the LGBTQ+ community, the rural community, and among single-parent households. structures and practices that are generally accepted, such as the fact that not everyone can afford to live in a safe area or go to a good school.

Social construction is something that is created by members of society based on mutual understanding and accepted reality but which is not predetermined by biology or the natural world (Zack, 2023; Steets, 2016; Berger and Luckmann, 2016).

### **2.2 Parental Responsibility**

The primer on Solo Parents Welfare Act can be traced down to Executive Order 209, commonly called The Family Code of the Philippines. In the exercise of parental responsibility, the family code specifically describes the following duties and responsibilities:

- (1) To keep them in their company, to support, educate and instruct them by right precept and good example, and to provide for their upbringing in keeping with their means;
- (2) To give them love and affection, advice and counsel, companionship and understanding;
- (3) To provide them with moral and spiritual guidance, inculcate in them honesty, integrity, self-discipline, self-reliance, industry and thrift, stimulate their interest in civic affairs, and inspire in them compliance with the duties of citizenship;
- (4) To furnish them with good and wholesome educational materials, supervise their activities, recreation and association with others, protect them from bad company, and prevent them from acquiring habits detrimental to their health, studies and morals;
- (5) To represent them in all matters affecting their interests;
- (6) To demand from them respect and obedience;
- (7) To impose discipline on them as may be required under the circumstances; and
- (8) To perform such other duties as are imposed by law upon parents and guardians (Philippine E-legal Forum, 2022).

### **2.3 Children as defined under RA 8972**

In accordance with Republic Act 8972, the term "children" refers to individuals who are not over the age of eighteen (18) years old, are not married, do not have jobs, and are not more than eighteen (18) years old; or individuals who are over the age of eighteen (18) years but are unable to provide for themselves due to a mental and/or physical defect or disability.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. Paralleled to ASEAN Human Rights Declaration under its 19th general provisions, it states that, the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society is entitled to protection by society and each ASEAN Member State (ASEAN, 2012).

### **2.4 Governments' Support to Solo Parents**

The Roman Law *Salus Populi Est Suprema Lex*, the welfare of the people is the supreme law. Then Justice Secretary Leila de Lima's statement "No advocate of the law or public servant could aspire to serve under a higher principle. It is a recognition that laws and rules derive their value from how well they serve their purpose of protecting and promoting the public good. Hence, when discussing issues of legality, the question of what will truly benefit the people is not merely always relevant, but, in fact, deserves the highest consideration" (De Lima, 2011).

### **2.5 Employment-related benefits to all Solo Parents**

The eighth Sustainable Development Goal is to ensure that all people participate in, benefit from, and benefit from the economy's growth. This includes ensuring that everyone has access to gainful employment and living wages (SDG, 2022).

Social Benefits for Solo Parents- Goal No. 3 of the Sustainable Development Agenda is to guarantee people of all ages a high standard of living and happiness. Workplace safety, medicine availability, and access to essential healthcare services are just a few of the many important topics this SDG addresses for businesses.

The right to one's health is one of the most fundamental of all human rights, and it is also an important indicator of overall development. Inadequate health puts at risk the educational rights of children, restricts economic opportunities for both men and women, and contributes to an increase in the level of poverty in communities and countries all over the world (SDG Compass, 2022). Social benefits under RA 9872 falls under Sec. 09 Education, Sec. 10 Housing, and Sec. 11

### **2.6 Medical Assistance**

There is a paradigm shift when Filipino family no longer consisted solely of a mother and a father. Each father, mother, and child has a specific role to play. There were already single parents in previous centuries, and urbanization only increased their number. Anderson (2003) states that the different types of single-parent households have an impact on poverty, stressful life events, and parental functioning; special concerns in low-income and minority single-parent families, the single-parent household and single-parent father are some factors that contribute to successful functioning in single-parent households.

Republic Act 8972 shall be known as the Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000; it is the policy of the State to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development. Section 3 of this Act defines who are solo parents.

Article 15, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states that the State recognizes the Filipino family as the foundation of the nation. Accordingly, it shall strengthen its solidarity and actively promote its total development. (Philippine Official Gazette, 2022).

Cebu City approved an ordinance last March 04, 2020, entitled Solo Parents' Discounts and Incentives Ordinance that gives a 10 percent discount on goods and services to ease the plight of solo parent and their children during the bleak of Covid 19 pandemic.

Lev Vygotsky is credited with the development of social constructivism, which is based on the theory that knowledge emerges from human connections and that what we consider to be true and objective is the byproduct of a social process that occurs in the context of historical and cultural circumstances. Vygotsky's theory was first articulated in the understanding of social context. The members of a community share and uphold the same understanding of certain realities, values, and facts as the community as a whole (Aslam & Katon, 2022).

The research that Skubiejute (2019) intends to do on social constructivism will center on the aspirations that parents have for their children in terms of their own self-esteem, as well as their level of independence. They wanted to give their children the "gift of childhood," which meant instilling in them a feeling of cultural pride and freedom from the influence of their peers. When it

came to providing a space for meaningful contact between parents, the social components proved to be the most exciting. This was accomplished by improving and increasing the chances for meaningful engagement between parents' discourses that encompassed their shared experiences.

Earlier research that was carried out by Zatlé (2014) investigated the normative study in social constructions of single-family, tactics of single parents in dealing with negative accounts, and ways of coping with it in terms of moral understanding.

It's very easy for single-parent households to fall on hard times financially, which may have a detrimental effect on the mental health of the whole family. In a number of cases, single parents were unable to provide food for their children and meet their financial commitments. Their challenges are exacerbated by feelings of alienation and worry. However, psychological interventions were not adequate enough to address the needs of single parents. In order to be effective, assistance for single parents must first recognize the effects of social situations and then take into account the economic factors that contribute to misery (Stack and Meredith, 2017).

When new members of the community adopt this information, its dissemination increases even more. When the common knowledge of a community is codified into policy, the concepts of power and privilege held within that group become more institutionalized. As a consequence of this, the concepts that are socially created shape the social reality, and if they are not questioned, they come to seem to be unmovable and unchanging. Because of this, there is a possibility that groups whose views of social reality are different would engage in conflict with one another (Gergen, 2011).

In consonance with Social Justice provisions under Article 13, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution states, The Congress shall give highest priority to the enactment of measures that protect and enhance the right of all the people to human dignity, reduce social, economic, and political inequalities, and remove cultural inequities by equitably diffusing wealth and political power for the common good (Official Philippine Gazette, 2022). According to the theory of social constructivism, a person's interactions with her environment are what produce the cognitive structures that give her the ability to comprehend the world around her.

According to Rawls's conception of justice, citizens are free and equal, and society ought to be fair, if justice is to be understood as fairness (Gozum, 2022). The relation between socioeconomic and Rawls's theory of justice addresses the same subject matter but conspicuously differs in format and texture. The socioeconomic rights theories defend particular line-item requirements, such as the right to this or that opportunity or commodity. A more integrated and comprehensive normative account of a society's fundamental structure is typically a component of theories of justice. The State recognizes the plight of every solo parent in their dichotomy of individual roles as breadwinners and homemakers. Societal and behavioral factors are appraised why an individual becomes an entity of single parenthood. In itself, social constructivism maintains that diversity should be examined as individuals' reflections are expressed on their attitudes and perception (Reidy, 2022).

Single-parent families face constantly changing challenges. and concerning these difficulties, they are more likely to encounter (periods of) lower well-being when compared to, say, coupled parent families. This is due in part to the fact that in most countries, lower Single parenthood is becoming more common as a result of socioeconomic well-being, in part because single parents face more challenges in ensuring their own and their families well-being (Calder, 2018).

The moral theory of utilitarianism aims for the betterment of society as a whole. It promotes "the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. It measures prudential value: how well or poorly a life or part of life is going from the point of view of the entity living it. The acceptability of a welfare theory is determined by its normative adequacy, or how appropriate it is for moral and political reasoning, as well as its descriptive adequacy, or how well it captures and explains our considered attitudes toward welfare and related concepts (Körner & Deutsch, 2022, Summer, 1996).

Russell (2012), in his paper on the well-being of single mothers, explains that the identity construction of a solo parent is difficult for anyone because there are so many factors that can influence it. Given the changes in society in the world over the last century, it may be even more complicated for single mothers. Moral, social, and cultural norms shape how a single mother's identity is constructed and perceived in the community.

The plight of solo parents and their children should be acknowledged and the attention given to them by the State has to be evaluated in congruence to their needs as society is rapidly changing with time. Solo parents, in particular, are a socially and economically vulnerable group. Creating their identity in society is vital in the construction of social justice for the Filipino citizenry.

Republic Act No. 9262 declared that the State values the dignity of women and children and guarantees full respect for human rights. The State also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members, particularly women and children, from violence and threats to their personal safety and security.

This paralleled the principle of social justice; those who are less in life should have more in law. Leveling in the playing field in society for men and women, women are biologically weaker than men in general, they are less resistant to threats, particularly domestic violence, and are less likely to obtain opportunities in a male-dominated world. Thus, we need to provide equality in society.

The equilibrium of social welfare includes justifications for beliefs in a just world, distributive fairness, and procedural fairness. A discussion of social justice and fairness of RA 8972 concerning single parents and the construction of well-being serves to formalize this study's rationale.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), a qualitative method that strives to give an all-encompassing interpretation, was used in this specific research effort. IPA is an abbreviation for the phrase "interpretive phenomenological analysis." The significance of various encounters, occurrences, and feelings to the people who take part in the study serves as the primary currency for an IPA investigation. In other words, it is not an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself. This concern is what differentiates it from an endeavor to generate an objective account of the object or event itself, which is the focus of the other. Phenomenological research always begins with an exhaustive inquiry into the lifeworld of the subject. This is an essential phase in the research process. (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

#### **3.2 Data Collection**

The researchers used a framework for semi-structured interviews to collect the data and answers from the people who participated in the study. The researchers will also have a permission letter available for the responders, since this is an ethical concern. The questionnaire that serves as the interview guide will be validated, revised, and maybe subject to modification for the number of participants.

Alase (2017), the participant's' actual life experiences should be permitted to serve as the basis for the narrations. In a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information takes the form of in-depth interviews of ten research participants to obtain complete and unrestricted data collection on the phenomenon that they intend to study. Participants in this study are the parents who are raising their children alone in Cebu City. The researchers investigated how RA 9872 was implemented as well as the experiences of single parents in their everyday lives. This study will initially only involve a small number of participants, and the criteria are as follows: 1) You have to be a single parent, 2) you have to be between 15 and 60 years old, and 3) you have to live in Cebu City.

#### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach is to explore in a profound way the lived experiences of research participants and help them understand the phenomenological significance of their experiences through investigative procedures and the Moustakas series of methods in analyzing phenomenological studies. Transcribed key points are marked from the data collected with a series of codes extracted from the text. The codes are grouped into similar concepts to make them more workable.

### **4. Results and Discussions**

One key aim of phenomenology was to ground thoroughly the foundation of knowledge that builds a rigid foundation for learning (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) investigates how participants make sense of their personal and social environments.

#### **4.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants**

The researcher used the snowball sampling technique or referencing method to identify the participants. This is one of the challenges that the researcher encountered. Most solo parents are based in Cebu City and have tight schedules with their livelihood activities. There are ten identified participants that the researcher had successfully interviewed.

Participant	Gender	Age	No. of Children	Member of Solo Parent Association in Cebu City	Educational Attainment	Barangay
1	Female	48	2	No	College Graduate	Mambaling
2	Female	37	1	No	College Level	Talamban
3	Female	58	5	No	Elementary Level	Punta Princesa
4	Lesbian	34	1	No	Elementary Level	Kamputhaw
5	Female	61	1	No	College Level	Apas
6	Male	53	5	Yes	High School Level	Sambag 1
7	Male	40	4	No	High School Level	Inayawan
8	Female	21	1	No	Senior High School Graduate	Labangon
9	Female	49	1	No	College Graduate	Pardo
10	Female	43	1	Yes	ALS Graduate	Sambag 1

#### **Demographic Information of Participants**

As shown in Table 1, the total study participants consisted of 10 solo parents. There are seven females, one lesbian, and two males. Six female participants were 40 to 58 years old—one senior citizen female respondent. Most participants have one child, while male participants have 4 to 5 children. Educational attainment, the participant's majority of them does not finish their education.

The participants were asked about their experiences as solo parents and RA 8972 of 2000. It emphasized the four concepts: daily challenges, life's circumstances of becoming a solo parent, benefits and assistance, and empowerment. The transcribed data were used in the formulation of the concept mapping.

The Five (5) major themes are characterized by the participants' responses in their lived experiences as solo parent. The themes are not independently characterized but as an intertwined textural description to the five (5) themes as deduced from the transcripts of the participants are: Theme 1: Pertinacity, Theme 2: Happenstance, Theme 3: Government Assistance, Theme 4: Social Stigma, and Theme 5: Empowerment.

Single parenting is a life-changing experience. It has resulted in significant changes in their roles and priorities. Instead of putting themselves and their family first, they now prioritize their children (Del Mundo, 2022).

#### **4.2 Theme 1: Pertinacity**

Financial constraints have been pivotal in the lives of solo parents to make ends meet; they might get able help from their close relatives and friends (Lopez & San Juan, 2019).

*Sometimes I go to my relatives to borrow some money especially for our bills and day to day expenses. Our 3 meals will become two meals a day, it's a nice thing to point out that my children will wake up late in the morning usually at noontime, they usually ate brunch. I have my four children living with me and still dependent on my support since my eldest is already married and out of the house. (Participant 6)*

Poverty made the financial difficulty among solo parents because they do not have regular income that would sustain their regular needs. Their livelihood income cannot suffice to the demands of day-to-day challenges (Dagupon & Garin, 2022). Being the head of the household, it is up to them how they will manage their income and expenses to met the entire family's needs. Extreme diligent in money management enables one to forecast one's spending plan. Creating a spending plan allows them to determine in advanced what month finances may become tight (Apat, 2019).

##### **4.2.1 Time Management**

Mapping out daily activities is a managerial art that most solo parents employ. As homemaker and breadwinner, time management employs a great deal of dynamism among single parents and how they manage their time purposively (Encila & Madrigal, 2021).

*Balancing my times as a mother, father and breadwinner is the family is very hard for me. I make sure to make to set a plan of my activities, like if I have to attend some events, I make sure I scheduled it so I can ask someone to look out for my livelihood. (Participant 3)*

The process of choosing the most effective method to spend the time that we have available is known as time management. A person should first understand the sorts of time-management decisions they are making right now (Siddik & Tanjung, 2023; Walsh, 2008). Single parents are overburdened by their home tasks and obligations. They have shown adaptability in dealing with the rigors of their daily scheduled schedules and routines (Haudar et al, 2016).

#### **4.2.2 Home Counselor**

Turner and Berry (2000), points that counseling allows people to identify the factors that contribute to their problems and to effectively deal with the psychological, behavioral, interpersonal, and situational causes of those problems.

*When my 2 children (sons) are still kinder age I always remind them of the values in life, GMRC is very important in my upbringing to my children. I never spanked them but talked to them and remind them of their bad habits and what should be done. Even at this time they are all grown up now, I always talked to them, remind them of what is morality, respect and always I remind them that I love them. Disciplining boys is quite a challenge to me, that includes giving them household chores and I talk to them what habits are good and bad it really helps them to become a better person. (Participant 1)*

Family counseling can help improve troubled relationships within the family members (Hammond & Czychon, 2014). Counseling for families can be helpful in improving strained relationships between members of the same family. By improving communication between parents and children, we may be able decrease risk factors. The development of fair and effective relationships, as well as understanding and mutual acceptance, are all significantly aided by communication between parents and their children. When parents talk to their kids on a regular basis, their kids will develop better communication skills, and they'll have better relationships with the people in their lives (Branje & Collins, 2012).

#### **4.3 Theme 2: Happenstance**

The participants have different circumstance that leads them to become solo parents namely death of spouse, separation and in loco parentis.

##### **4.3.1 Death of Spouse**

The loss of dynamism among individuals who losses their intact counterparts into economic and social life would affect individuals' consumption choices over life cycle (Zick & Smith, 1991).

*I am widow for almost 17 years already, my husband died due to an accident. I was left with my 5 children to care of which post a great deal of challenge to me, guts and hard work is what I have to survive this life that I have due to unprecedented circumstances (Participant 3).*

Individuals who loss a cohort was left with all odds to continue to live life as it is, they developed a mind-set that there might be an opportunity hiding and use it for enterprise for future endeavors (Ojo, 2021). With the loss of marital relationship, strong relationship to their children is manifested among widowed parents (Zeevi-Cousin & Lavenda, 2023; Foster, et al, 2011). Growth and resilience in both parent and children seem to developed after the loss (Arendale, 2022).

##### **4.3.2 Separation a willful exodus**

As long as he or she is entrusted with the custody of the children, a person can be categorically identified as a Solo Parent even if they have not been legally separated from their spouse or have been separated from their spouse de facto for at least one (1) year (RA 8972).

*I decide to leave my live-in partner's home in 2017. I left when I was still 4 months pregnant with my daughter that time. I left because their family engage in illegal drugs business, mostly at night I will be awakened with people coming into their house to do spot session and their house is a drug den and I saw him using drugs as well and we come into heated argument sometimes ended up hitting me. I fear for my child's future and myself. I left him without any notice and seek comfort in my family's home. (Participant 8).*

Emotional, psychological and physical abuse are attributed to why an individual leave their partners. Underlying stimulus leads them to leave their partners as an act of self-will with the encapsulated abuses they want to break-free (Carnes, 2018). Victims of violence against women and their children (VAWC) are mostly women aged between 16 and 30 years old while emotional abuse



is common type witnessed by women regardless of age and physical abuse is common type of experience by the victims and perpetuated by their former husband or partners (Balahadia, et al, 2022).

#### **4.3.3 In loco parentis**

Any other person who only gives parental care and support to a kid or children; and any family member who accepts the obligation of head of family as a consequence of the parents' or solo parent's death, abandonment, disappearance, or extended absence (RA 8972).

*My daughter whom I raise was left to me by my partner for almost 8 years already. It was left under my care since the day the child is weaned and raise her like my own daughter. My partner leave Cebu City to find job, then communication with her was cut without any reasons and she is now out of reach. (Participant 4)*

A member of the LGBT community in the context of solo parenting is very rare and uncommon to civic lenses. Filipino lesbian single parents have their own experiences of gender and social marginalization, as they face greater challenges in balancing work and child care (staying at home) without adequate income, social security, childcare facilities, and so on (Biana & Rosallia, 2021).

#### **4.4 Theme 3: Government Assistance**

*I am part of solo parent association in our barangay, and yes I was able to enjoy some government benefits as a solo parent, like being a member of Sambag 1 Erpat Solo Parent Association, sometimes I cannot commit to attend to our meeting and events due to my work as bakeshop attendant. (Participant 6)*

It is the responsibility of the Department of Social Welfare and Services to devise and carry out all-encompassing plans for the provision of social welfare services in order to make it easier for the most marginalized and beleaguered members of Filipino society to become productive members of society (RA 9872).

*Yes, I am aware of the solo parent law, a friend of mine give me a list of requirements for me to avail the solo parent I.D. with a long list of requirements and I have to go to the barangay to process it. I was not enlisted for solo parent I.D by the GAD staff in the barangay because they know I have a job, so I gave up but I am solo parent for 20 years already. I hope I can have a solo parent I.D. I was not even invited or join any solo parent activities here in our barangay. (Participant 9)*

Government transactions must be reflection in their Citizen's Charter and RA 9485 known as Anti-Red Tape law that focus on their plan and organize their respective programs and projects with efficiency and effectiveness by which consumer satisfaction and motivation are meet in the delivery of services (Del Mundo, 2022).

#### **4.4.1 Other government benefits**

*I am thankful was able to receive government assistance during lockdown because of Covid19 pandemic, like 25 kilos of rice and Php.6000 of SAP during the Typhoon Odette. (Participant 1)*

*I am a beneficiary of 4P's monthly financial assistance and also during lockdown my family receive 25 kilos of rice. (Participant 7)*

Social justice does not favor anyone, economic inequalities cannot be avoided those on the margins and at the bottom of the social and economic ladder must be prioritized as a reflection on Rawlsian distributive justice promotes fairness in society by prioritizing the well-being of the least advantaged (Gozum & Aguas, 2022).

#### **4.5 Theme 4: Social Stigma**

##### **4.5.1 Discrimination**

The Philippines is a religiously conservative country with a strong Christian tradition and a strong emphasis on chastity and other traditional values, despite the prevalence of modern, pragmatic worldviews (Bowring, 2022).

*When I was still living in Busay, I suffer the discrimination from my closed neighbor whom I regarded her like a sister. They will harass me in front in my yard saying below the belt words and pointing out that I am useless in their community as I am a single mother, they even threatened me whenever I sell some goods in the neighborhood by saying "kana imong mga baligya amo ng itumba" during my display of goods. It pains me because that neighbor of mind I helped her when she was at rock bottom and even give her some groceries for her family and this is what they have done to me. I will cry inside my room and lift up my sorrows to God. (Participant 10)*

Discrimination originates in people's assumptions about other people's traits, social mores, and group memberships. Evidence shows that people of all social classes are negatively affected by discrimination. Managing and keeping a family happy is difficult for a single parent regardless of the circumstances. (Garcia, 2019). The stress of being a single parent can be mitigated with the help of social support, which also protects the solo parent from the negative effects of any prejudice or bias they may face because of their parenting situation (Jones et al, 2022).

#### **4.5.2 No Experience**

Regardless of their circumstances, single parents must be treated fairly. The two (2) of the participants are fortunate to live in a non-discriminatory community.

*I haven't felt any hateful remarks against me as a solo parent despite I was serving my sentence in the rehabilitation center. My comrades encourage me to focus my attention to my children amidst my circumstances. (Participant 7)*

The 1987 Philippine Constitution under Article III, Section 1, 2, 4, 8, 12 states that every person has the right to life, security of person and privacy, right to be free from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, the right to be free from discrimination and the right to freedom of expression, and the right to organize associations. Section 11, the State values the dignity of every person and guarantees full respect for human rights.

RA 11313 commonly known as Safe Space Act under Section 2 states that it is the policy of the State to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights. The State also recognizes that both men and women must have equality, security and safety not only in private, but also on the streets, public spaces, online, workplaces and educational and training institutions.

#### **4.6 Theme 5: Empowerment**

The researcher made noticed that the participants give a message of empowerment to other single parents becoming a catalyst for change in society. It encourages other solo parents to be resolute, have faith in God, focus on their children, and have a positive mindset whatever circumstance they might face.

*My message to my fellow solo parents is focus your attention to your children, invest in their wholistic development as a person, guide them and ask God for guidance for all the problems we have to face daily. (Participant 1)*

*Do not give up. Be present in your child's life. (Participant 2)*

*I will stand my ground as a mother and a solo parent, do not surrender to all challenges, have a vision in my life, and balance my role as a mother and father in the family. (Participant 5)*

According to the theory of learned optimism, people are better able to deal with the debilitating effects of adversity if they are exposed to empowering experiences that allow them to gain knowledge and control over their circumstances (Pagès, 2022).

Positive thoughts play a significant role in individuals' experiences in life crises (Fisher & Overholser, 2014). Filipino expression "bahala na" find its roots in spiritual core and value system which refocus on the positive strengths of hope, self-efficacy, optimism, courage, and search for the sacred (Menguito et al, 2010). Faith in God ensembles the steadfastness of an individual whose experiences life's woes which translates to progressive personal growth.

### **5. Conclusion**

Solo parents are our modern-day heroes, facing daily challenges to provide the needs of their family. They intensify the Filipino trait of resiliency during adversities. Financial constraints, time management, family values are the challenges they need to faced daily within the context of their homes. They felt these challenges as responsibilities they need to shoulder on as they were their children's foundation of hope.

The stung and discriminating eye of society draws emotional and physical issues among the solo parents as they have experienced it in their community however, they do not dwell in the pain and embarrassment rather they fueled themselves with hope and positivity knowing these things are temporary and will just pass over in their status quo.

Government's focus on solo parents is not that visible in the lens of the participants as most of them were not able to enjoy the benefits of RA 8972. They wanted it to be sustainable by hearing out their plight, not what they see as convenient. Solo Parent I.D. is still elusive to majority of the participants because of the imbalance implementation of the designated government agency.

Amidst the challenges the participants faced, their unwavering faith in God is reflected in their lives. They instill in themselves the sense of civic consciousness as agent of change in the society.

Moreover, the researcher's journey to make this study worthwhile was labor extensive and time-consuming as most qualitative research would do. The selection of the participants was a herculean task, as the researcher employs a snowball strategy to get rich and thick descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants.

During the conduct of the interview, the researcher follows ethical considerations and informed consent from the participant was given before the interview shall commence. Interview schedules were followed by the researcher at the participant's preferred time, and the interview was conducted either through in person or through online modality via google meet video conferencing. Most of the participants preferred personal interviews in their household.

Upon data analysis, collection is tedious and cumbersome as the caveats of qualitative research using the phenomenological method of the study. Gathering in-depth oriented information of this research study is demanding as the process involves asking participants personal and private details about themselves. Some participants become emotional as the interview goes on as they share their experiences being a solo parent and the challenges they faced daily.

The researcher observed the eagerness of the participants in the course of the interview as they display a positive attitude and confident to share their unique experiences as they wanted to contribute in this study.

It is hoped that this research made a contribution to the understanding of the lived experiences of single parents in Cebu City, and that its findings and recommendations can serve as a basis for future research projects and assist in addressing the predicament of the participants.

It is also hoped that the experiences of the participants could be used to revisit, enhance and formulate policies in the implementing rules and procedures of RA 8972, and its designated government agencies, private sectors, and NGOs can help the participants in creating programs and projects in addressing their daily challenges.

A more comprehensive and impactful solo parent legislation in their social protection in the City of Cebu. Lobbying the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Cebu City Ordinance No. 2556 in the Sangguniang Panglungsod enables us to extend the much more needed financial needs of the solo parents, especially since the city is transitioning from the pandemic to the new normal routines. The passage of the IRR reinforces commitment to the constitutional provision under Article 2 Section 12, 1987 Constitution in which the State recognizes the sanctity of family life and protect and strengthen the family as a basic autonomous social institution. Sustainable Livelihood for solo parents is another area of study for future researches as solo parents who opted to engage in small business should be given adequate attention. Discussed in this study, financial management is a challenge to most solo parents in providing the essential needs in their family.

An in-depth study for future research could embark on, the perseverance of the solo parents as they juggled a role of a financial manager, home counselor and managing their time to meet ends needs. The willingness to sacrifice and endure all challenges, regardless of its nature.

Social Stigma has been one of the challenges felt by the participants. Discrimination has no space borders as it arises from individuals associated with the beliefs and norms they belong. Lastly, solo parents are self-empowered and willing determination to espouse responsibility despite their struggles is another humbled area for future studies.

The study was able to explore the circumstances leading them to become solo parents as stipulated in RA 8972 Section 03- provides criterion and definition one becomes a solo parent, their unique circumstances shared one common denominator it is through death, de facto separation and left to them to care for are sole reasons why they become solo parents. The participants were not isolated in the stung of society's stigma, for these reasons they fuel themselves with faith and positivity as a reflection of parental competence by building a support system among their peers and family.

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**ORCID iD**

Milphene C. Pinatil: ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3162-9704

Dr. Rommel T. Gimarangan: ORCID ID: 0009-0009-8815-9617

May G. Limbaga: ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9257-9800

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