

## **TRAVAILS OF WOMEN SOLO PARENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the study was to explore and understand the travails of women solo parents in the Children's Joy Foundation, Inc. Indangan, Buhangin, Davao City, using the qualitative phenomenological inquiry with the researchers made, validated by experts interview guide questions to seven informants and eight focus group discussion (FGD) participants to know their life experiences, coping mechanisms and their aspirations in the future. Results generated five themes, namely: The life experiences as solo parents, the unstoppable commitment to a happy marriage, the Aftermath of a Happy Marriage, the coping mechanisms of women solo parents, and women solo parents aspirations in life.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Travails, women solo parents, Children's Joy Foundation, Davao City*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Travails are the pains, laborious work of solo women solo parents which refer to the poor life, unhappiness, distress, depression, health problems, lack of life management skills and self-esteem. (Brunks, Mcintosh, and Gridley, 2009) The laborious pains of these solo parents become an issue. A social legislation on the Republic Act numbered 8972 and Senate Bill 1439, Legarda (2010) which is "the solo parent's welfare Act of 2010" which implemented. So, there is a non-government organization which has been serving this type of clientele,

like the Children's Joy Foundation, Inc. Founded by FDR Pastor Apollo C. Quiboloy last June 15, 1998, duly registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission licensed and accredited by the (DSWD) Department of social Welfare and Development. The sixty percent sources of funds were derived from the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and the forty percent came from sponsors and donors. The goal is to provide for three million children in residential services and community based programs to harness their potentials in community and nation building. However, as a practicing licensed social work, I know that there were less studies on power relations, therefor there was a need for gender advocacies on feminist perspectives to make the voices of these less privilege women solo parents be heard, thus, this research study was conducted.

#### *Research Questions:*

The Following were questions ask during the interview and focus group discussion of the chosen participants of the study.

1. What are the life experiences of the women solo parents?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of the women solo parents?
3. What ere their aspirations as women solo parents?

## **METHOD**

### *Research Design*

The qualitative research is utilized for exploring and understanding the meaning on individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of

data (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, phenomenological is used in this research because it is based on the lived experiences of women solo parents.

### *Participants*

Purposive sampling using the qualitative phenomenological inquiry with the researchers made validated by experts interview guides questions to seven informants and eight focus group discussion (FGD) participants

### *Instruments*

The study used an interview guide to determine the experiences of women solo parents. I used informed consent form with introductory script detailing specifically to the participants the purpose of the study and why they are invited to take part of the study. Participants were also informed that their involvement is voluntary and confidential, and their identification would be anonymous. In addition, the interviews were conducted in areas free from distractions, at the times and locations that is utmost suitable to the participants.

The communication with the participants after the conduct of IDI and FGD shall remain to continue as part of the process of reviewing the transcriptions. Audio materials are subject for review to ensure that nothing is omitted in the recording or in writing. This is to ensure that all the data to be gathered and presented will be accurate, provide substantive information and be used as the evidences of significant findings and extensive analysis and interpretation. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it undergone validation by the panel of experts.

### *Data Analysis*

The jotted notes that were obtained from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method emphasized pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns or themes within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **THEME 1 THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF THE WOMEN SOLO PARENTS**

The study revealed that majority of the women solo parents experienced the beauty of the romantic love and courtships affection. They experienced companionship; they went on dates, night life, field trips, attended parties, fiestas, and met friends. They planned for their good future, success in life as promised by their boyfriend. They shared brief moments for romantic love like being caged in the loving arms of her boyfriend. There were nights for heavenly places where lovers got drunk, white love meant never having to say "I'm sorry" They became best friends, more than friends and lovers, because of the promises and sweet caresses of their boyfriends, they understood each other. They sang together, ate and laughed together. They had talked about romantic things together with the sweet memories in their hearts and minds. How romantic and sweet they were while looking each other into one direction, full of promises of commitment and dedication that they would live happily married together with their children.

## THEME 2 THE UNSTOPPABLE COMMITMENT TO A HAPPY MARRIAGE

The happy marriage that expect was broken due the third party involvement, and this was unexpected. The woman solo parent's acceptance, patience, understanding and love for their husbands were the great cause of keeping their families intact. The women solo parents did their best although, they felt the intense emotional pains in their lives daily routine, still being the key happiness and solidarity in their families and homes, they had done their best to protect the image of their families not to be dysfunctional. This was confirmed by Gilligan (1982) theory that was true to these women which spoke about the morality of development that women were more caring than me. These women solo parents felt the importance and value of themselves having worth and with dignity whatever problems they had encountered, they were still commitment and dedicated in rearing their children and continually loving their husbands and children.

These solo parents were hopeful; they had strong faith to God. They were assertive in volunteering themselves in the foundation. Because of their commitments and dedications their children were given scholarships which helped them to live through. They planned to go the family court but they were reluctant because of shame, physical incapacitations and their lack of skills and management, being a "women " they remained loving to their husband and children for the reasons of their unstoppable commitment for a happy marriage.

## THEME 3 THE AFTERMATH OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE

The women solo parents all started with a happy family but because of the unusual power relations, the male dominance and physical abuse, the family experience disengagement and calling out of love between husband and wife there was miscommunications (Medina, 2010). The couple had conflict that turned to verbal abuse, while the

children came each year and grew. The demand of supply also increased. However, the income of the father being the breadwinner decreased. The family had suffered financial hardships that often caused the quarrels between the husband and the wife. This was confirmed by Benokraitis (2010) who cite that arguments and misunderstanding were the root causes of separation. They felt the crisis of not being able to supply the basic needs

Based on the researcher's interview and focus discussion to the women solo parents on the unstoppable commitment to a Happy Marriage the following was composed researcher.

*Pag-ibig ko sayo ay tunay na tunay  
My love for you is really true  
Huwag mag alinlangan sa puso ko hirang  
Don't hesitate mu love my sweetheart  
Kapantay ng Pag-ibig ko ay langit lamang  
My love for you is heavenly  
Dapat mong tantuin Pag-ibig ko'y sayo lang  
Always think that my love is for you only.*

*Lumuha man ako  
Although I cried  
At saktan ang puso ko  
And hurt me heartily  
Babaliwalain ko  
I will never mind it  
'Dahil sa pas-ibig ko sayo  
Because my love for you only.*

*Daramdamin ko  
I was sorrowful  
Ang paglisan mo  
When you left me  
Kaya't alalahanin mo  
So always remember that*

*May naghihintay sayo*  
*There is someone always waiting for you*  
*Tapat na pag-ibig ko*  
*My true love for you*  
*Ang tanging alay ko sayo*  
*Is what I offered you*  
*Sana'y ingatan mo*  
*Wish you will take care*  
*Yari ng pag-ibig ko*  
*Of my love for you*

*Saan dako man ang mundo*  
*Whenever in this world*

*Pag-ibig ko'y kasama mo*  
*My love is always with you*  
*Kaya't alalahanin mo*  
*So always remember that*  
*May nagmamahal sayo.*  
*There is someone always loving you*

The family like nutritious foods to be served to their children, what decent clothes their children were going to wear, what beautiful shoe their children will put on this aggravated after couple's separation. They experienced many sacrifices; women were physically, psychologically and socially biased. They had done the dual roles of a father and the mother to their siblings. They suffered hardships, heartaches, depressions and love self-esteem. Olson (2009) stressed that single parents experienced varied difficulties and these were mostly felt in the areas of parenting, financial management, child rearing and time management, Furthermore, the women solo parent's experienced psycho-emotional problems after couple's separation of the wife battering and domestic violence directed against them and their children. There was neglect and abandonment by the husband and fathers to their children; plus the economic abuse of the fathers by not supporting the basic needs of the family, most especially of their

children thus these women decided to be separated from their husband. The family Code of the Philippines (Republic Act 8533) 1987 and the Violence against Women and children has explicitly stated of this law and the rights of women and children.

After the researcher's interview and focus group discussions to the women solo parents on the aftermath of a Happy marriage the researcher was able to write the following call,

Mahal busy ka pa ba?  
My love are you till busy?  
Pwede na bas a "dial line"  
Would it be possible for me in your dial line  
Kung sakali ng pwede na ko  
If it would be possible for me  
Na sa linya ay lumagay  
To be in your line  
Sapagkat ikaw mahal  
Because my love  
Alisin mo ang "party line"  
Please remove your "party line"

Mahirap ang may "party line"  
*It is difficult to have a "party line"*  
*Sa puso mo mahal*  
*In your heart my love*  
*Baka sa linya ng pag-ibig*  
*Someone might be in your life*  
*Mayroong makisali*  
*There is someone to play with you*  
*'And please Do not limit the call?*

*Ng puso kung nagmamahal*  
*Of my heart always loving you*  
*Alam mo ba'ng ang puso ko'y*  
*Do you know that my heart*



*Katulad din ng cellphone at telephone  
Is like a cellphone and telephone  
Kapag umibig ay "busy na"  
When I fall in love am always busy  
Kapag tumitibok may "dial tone"*

*Ang paghinga ng malalim  
For a deep breathing  
Sa problemang suson-suson  
On a deep rooted problems  
Ay long distance ang kapara  
Is like a long distance*

*Maraming koneksyon  
With many "connections"*

*Baka sabihin mong  
You might say my love  
Na dial ko ay "wromg number"  
That I dialed a wrong number  
Hinding-hindi mamahali  
I will not be mistaken*

*Ang puso kong nagmamahal  
That my heart is loving you  
Ikaw yata mahal  
For you my love is  
Sa mahimbing kong damdamin  
My heartwarming feelings  
Ang return call ay nasaan  
Where is your return call  
Narito ko at "always waiting"  
I am here "always waiting"*

*Mahal busy ka pa ba?  
Idial mo sa 143 "Ilove you"*

*Ng puso mong minamahal  
At kung ibabalik mo ang tawag  
Sa akin naman  
Subukin mong double zero  
At 00 mong nakalaan*

*Love are you still busy?  
Please dial 143 "I love you"  
Of your loving heart  
And if you return your  
Call to me  
Try double zero and yes*

However, among the 15 participants, all were able to cope up with their problems. They volunteered themselves in the Children's Joy Foundation, Inc. to avail of the scholarships for their children to augment their meager income for the education for their children and for their economic

Sustainability, because of their strong faith to God, they changed their lifestyle, became resilient and empowered survivors of domestic violence, through the support of the Founding President and Social Workers therein the Foundation their dilemmas were changed to a peaceful lifestyle.

#### THEME 4 THE COPING MECHANISMS OF WOMEN SOLO PARENTS

Most of the participants journeyed with their children after the couple's separation, taking up the role of the father and mother to their children. Whenever they felt lonely, they thought of their children who were their strength and wealth. Their children were their consolation in life. They felt happy if their kids were hugging them while they were telling happy stories. Their children were the reasons of their existence. It was because of their children that made them to strive for life.

One of the participants said that because she was specially challenged her husband left her all his promises were broken but she just felt good through prayers and meditations. She had overcome the loneliness intense emotional pains. She kept herself busy by taking care of their children. This was according to Jeneys (2002) that raising children in a single parents family was preferable to raising children when two parents were continually fighting Leon (2003) cited that most children who experienced parental separation adjusted well and did not exhibit severe to enduring behavior problems.

#### THEME 5 WOMEN SOLO PARENTS ASPIRATION IN LIFE

The women solo parents' lifestyle was changed to being empowered, resilient and advocates. Two of the participants aspired to become professionals and permanent employees. Results revealed that majority of the participants aspired that their children would be able to finish their studies. One aspired that her daughters would know God better and be closer to her. One also aspired to age gracefully and stays young at heart; while one aspired to have grandchildren.

However, only one among the 15 participants aspired to become famous businesswoman of gold. The women solo parents became hopeful, resourceful and had strong faith in God. They had positive outlook in life that they created high expectations to themselves and their children. They were empowered and resilient, the picture of feminism and strengths perspective were completed. The women solo parents aspired for the best of themselves and their children in the future. This findings were confirmed by the "Ethic of care and Social justice" Gilligan theory (1982) that the morality of development that women were more concerned with care relationships and connection with other people than males. When I asked the women solo parents if they wanted to be reconciled with their husbands, they answered a big NO because they are now FB meaning faded beauty what for? We are already menopause.

## IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results that solo women parents have experienced a lot of struggles both emotionally and financially, the government of the Philippines may need to enhance and expand the Social legislations on R.A. 8972 "The Solo parents welfare act of 2010" and the Senate bill 1439 ( Legarda, 2010) to support and benefits to solo parents.

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