Two Moms in a Home: Lived Experiences of Children with Same-Sex Parents

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Abstract This qualitative study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the experiences of children whose parents are of the same sex. The interview conducted to five (5) children and five (5) family members yielded significant and interesting revelations as to children's lived experiences. The majority of the children view their families as happy families—atypical family headed by responsible parents. In terms of the primary participants' feelings about their current parents, two extreme feelings—positive and negative feelings—were revealed. Moreover, children believed that they have intimate relationships with both parents and appear that each family member understands one another and the family setup in general. Children's major challenges are related to their social lives, biological fathers and their relatives, and about the current parents, and the family structure itself. Lastly, factors as to why children are satisfied and dissatisfied with their "two moms", advantages and disadvantages of having same-sex parents, and their learning's and realizations were also reported. Practitioners in the counseling profession, most specifically guidance counselors, are hoped to derive inputs from this study on identifying areas where same-sex parented families can be better supported, particularly the children. Likewise, this could also serve as a benchmark in developing a guidance program intended for children raised by same-sex parents.

Keywords Family · Family structure · Same-sex parents · Children Parenting

1 Introduction

Family serves as an integral part of one's growth and development. As a matter of fact, a number of studies have highlighted the importance and role of the family in different domains of life particularly among adolescents such as occupational

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aspirations (Eccles, Jodl, Malanchuk, Michael, & Sameroff, 2001), promotion of substance use (Jimenes-Iglesias, Garcia-Moya, Moreno, & Rivera, 2013), and aggression (Farrell & Pugh, 2012). The constant changes in the society made a great impact on everyone which excuses no one, not even the basic unit of its own—the family. The family should be abreast of different changes in order to survive the different challenges and demands that the society has to offer. With this, it will be able to serve its purpose and eventually help the society in general to become as effective and as productive as possible.

In addition, the changes in roles and responsibilities (Madlambayan, 2013) and family structure (Alderson & Boon, 2009; Rawsthorne, 2009) of the family members are just few of the major changes they need to face. Same-sex parented families in which both women or both men living together under one roof with the biological children of one half of the couple is another imperative and controversial transformation that needs to be addressed in this modern time. Most, if not all, of this family setup is composed of the biological children of one half of the couple from their previous heterosexual relationship (Gregory & Ray, 2001). The saddest part is that they are not fully acknowledged and accepted in different countries most especially in the Philippines (Punay, 2014).

In this non-traditional family structure, a number of concerns, issues, and challenges have been raised by members of the family who are very much affected in a variety of ways. Alderson and Boon (2009) reported that some of the challenges experienced by this kind of relationship are *homophobia*, *heterosexism*, and *economic disadvantage*. On the other hand, *enhanced emotional intimacy (e.g., enhanced sexual satisfaction), greater freedom and autonomy (e.g., greater sexual freedom),* and *more equal sharing of responsibilities* are the benefits that one can get out of this relationship. They also added that children in same-sex parented families may experience problems and advantages from being raised by the said parents. However, the researchers failed to identify these problems and advantages of being children of same-sex parented families. Furthermore, children from heterosexual families may experience *breakdown of relationships* between them and their biological mothers' new partners (Rawsthorne, 2009). As for the parents of these families, they are very much concerned with the unending prejudice and bullying that their children are experiencing. This drastic change in the lives of the children may be traumatic and leave a great impact on family relationships (De Vaus & Gray as cited in Rawsthorne, 2009).

Other researchers attempted to compare the experiences of children raised by same-sex parents and those who were raised by opposite-sex parents. Linville and O'Neil (n.d.) reported that various aspects such as emotional functioning, sexual orientation, stigmatisation, gender role behavior, behavioral adjustment, gender identity, learning, and grade point averages (GPAs) do not differ between the said groups. In some aspects, these results were supported by Crounch, Davis, McNair, Power, and Waters (2014), where no significant difference was found between same-sex attracted parents and opposite-sex attracted parents in terms of children's health and well-being. However, the experiences of the former in terms of stigmas related to parents' relationships have been highly evident. With this, children may

be affected as well in terms of their mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, Shechter, Schechter, Slone, and Lobel (2011) cross-examined children's adjustment (internalizing and externalizing behaviors), social behavior (aggressive behavior, prosocial-antisocial behavior, and loneliness) and perceived competence (cognitive competence, physical competence, maternal acceptance and peer acceptance) among four family types: single lesbian mother, two-mother lesbian families, single heterosexual mothers and two-parent heterosexual mothers. It was reported that no difference was found among the children's perceived competence across four family types. However, in terms of the main participants' externalizing behaviors (aggression and disruptive behaviors), a higher level was reported among children with single mothers. On the other hand, children with lesbian mothers reported lower levels of antisocial behavior and less feeling of loneliness as compared with children of heterosexual families. In fact, children in families headed by lesbian mothers reported less feeling of loneliness.

Furthermore, it is imperative to check the feelings, perspectives, and ideas of the family members regarding the family where they belong. In a lesbian-parented family, Brown et al. (2006) asked children as to how they define and describe their family. Surprising and interesting answers were gathered as they answered this simple yet meaningful question from the researcher. Some of them described family as "*idealized version of two loving and caring parents*", "*the one you see more often*", and "*normal family*". Various factors that contribute on how children defined their family were identified as follows: *social contact, biological geneal-ogy, frequency of contact, family pets, and functional roles of being cared for and being loved, supported and respected by, and knowing and trusting friends or family*. It is important to note that children's failure to publicly introduce their family attribute to the fear of being bullied and teased and of homophobia. Surprisingly, children (aged 13–16) approaching the teenage years or the adolescence stage felt more awkward often as they deal with their parents' homosexuality. Another research revealed that children born from heterosexual family reacted positively with their mothers' sexual orientation (Burston, Golding, Golombok, Perry, & Setvens, 2003). This may be attributed to the children's negative idea about their heterosexual family. They cannot help themselves, however, from thinking what other people might say against them most especially toward their mothers who are actually attracted to the same sex. Bos, Deck, Gartell, Peyser, and Rodas (2012) surveyed adolescents with lesbian mothers in terms of their academic experiences, extracurricular activities, future goals, family interactions, role models, health problems, and overall being. When asked about their feelings toward their mothers, adolescents made use of the following words: *smart, loving, caring, fun, beautiful, powerful, and enjoy life*. They believed that their mothers become good models for them. One of the participants reiterated that his mothers *have wonderful character and strong sense of values* that he would try to imitate. Similarly, another participant revealed his desire to be like his parents someday once he reached the perfect time to have a family of his own. Some of them even admire their mothers for being *hardworking, accomplished, principled, wise, supportive, and helpful*. It was reported as well how much they appreciate their mothers since they taught

them to become open to/accepting of others. However, the foregoing positive feedback did not hide the feelings of some adolescents in the study who are not actually in favor with them. Some of them had misunderstandings with their mothers and described the mothers as *irrational*. Interestingly, most of the adolescents in the study did not hide the truth about their family setup from their friends. They are comfortable bringing their friends at home and inform them about their parents. The various perspectives of children toward their family and parents may be attributed to a number of factors. Gilbert (2003) pointed out that the combination of three major factors, namely *personal experiences*, *family forms we encounter or observe,* and *attitudes we hold* contribute to one's perception about family. One's perspectives need to be considered as they might influence individuals throughout their lives specifically in terms of decision making, interpersonal interaction, individual and family development, and relationships both inside and outside the family.

Despite the uniqueness of this family type, many still believe that it is not one's sexual orientation or parental sexual orientation nor the structure of the family itself qualified a person from being a responsible parent that might lead to a productive and functional family. Regnerus (2012) concluded that in being effective and good parents, one should not consider parents' sexual orientation. He believed, however, that families having same-sex parents might affect the reality of family experiences. Patterson, Russell, and Wainright (2004) firmly believed that it is the adolescent–parent relationships that really matters and not the family structure in terms of the adolescents' adjustments in different domains such as psychological well-being, self-esteem, anxiety, school outcomes, school connectedness, and grade point average (GPA). They also compared school and personal adjustment of offspring in families headed by opposite-sex and to those families headed by same-sex parents. They noted that these two groups did not differ significantly in terms of the adolescents' school and personal adjustment. In a more recent study conducted by Patterson and Wainright (2007), the comparison between adolescents living with same-sex parents from those who have opposite-sex parents in psychological adjustment (which includes depressive symptoms, anxiety, and, self-esteem), romantic attractions and behaviors, school adjustment were found with no difference. Even so, adolescents with same-sex parents were reported to be more connected at school than those living with opposite-sex parents. Other than this, they did not find anymore significant relationship between family type and other variables. The researchers even emphasized that the quality of adolescents' relationship with parents, and not the family type, was regarded as an important predictor of adolescents' psychological adjustment, substance use, school outcomes, family, and peer relations. Those adolescents who have positive relationships toward their parents reported of having higher self-esteem, fewer depressive symptoms, less use of alcohols and tobacco, less delinquent behavior, and more likely to have more friends in school. However, findings from Balen and Bos (2008) contradicted these findings as they examined stigmatisation, psychological adjustment, and proactive factors among children in planned lesbian families. They have reported that children who have lesbian or gay parents experienced stigmatisation, such as rejection

from peers and other people. This stigmatisation was associated with lower level of psychological well-being. Findings showed that the parent–child relationship did not actually moderate the negative association between stigmatisation and psychological adjustment, namely self-esteem, emotional symptoms, and hyperactivity. Even so, children's contact with other children who happened to have the same family structure moderates the relationship between stigmatisation and self-esteem. It was further emphasized that rejection or stigmatisation could be the result of lower levels of social acceptance of homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and same-sex families. With this, stigmatisation may be more pronounced in other countries like the Philippines which are more conservative and not yet ready to welcome them with arms wide open.

To date, it is difficult to obtain accurate information on the experiences of children living with same-sex parents primarily because of fear of discrimination, prejudice, and violence. Likewise, they are not open with their sexual orientation as other people may not welcome them in the world they live in. Another reason for this is that they continue the pattern of living closeted/secretive lives. This kind of family setup is also unusual as compared to the traditional and ordinary families in the Philippines. It is also interesting to know how adolescents aged 10–22 (Collins, Coy, & Laursen, 1998) handle this kind of family setup given the fact that they are in the transition from childhood to adulthood. This critical stage of their lives also entails dramatic changes that are emotional, physical, and psychological in nature (Feldman, 2005). Furthermore, the contradiction and gap with the foregoing results, concerns, issues, and challenges led to the conceptualization of the present study about the experiences of children living with same-sex parents. It is now high time to unveil their experiences as they are the ones greatly affected by this family setup. This would also contribute to the existing body of knowledge and fill the major gap in the literature. It is hoped that through the help of the present study, other people will be enlightened regarding their experiences which, in turn, would help them to understand and eventually accept them.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the experiences of children living with same-sex parents was the main objective of the present study. Moreover, specific objectives set for in the present study were to: (1) explore children's perception on their current family setup and their parents; (2) describe the relationship of children with their parents; (3) identify the challenges of children living with same-sex parents; (4) determine the factors associated with children's satisfaction and dissatisfaction toward their parents; (5) identify the advantages and disadvantages of living with same-sex parents; and (6) identify the learning and realizations of children living with same-sex parents.

The limitations of the present study were the age range and number of participants in which only five adolescents aged 12–19 took part in the study. For this reason, the findings of the research cannot be generalized with other children of this family type and those in a different age group. Although the present study provides valuable insights on the lived experiences of children living with same-sex parents, follow-up research on this topic must be undertaken since the present study focuses on families headed by women same-sex couples. Also, the objectives of the present

study would have been better served if parents' sexual orientation and children's sexual orientation were taken into consideration. Finally, research instruments such as psychological tests were not utilized to measure other variables imperative to understand the lived experiences of the participants in the study.

2 Method

2.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative study that utilized the phenomenological method to describe the experiences of children living with same-sex parents. This type of research further explains and puts meaning on the incidents in the lives of the participants (Adanza, Bermudo, & Rasonabe, 2009). To further acquire imperative and in-depth details of the participants' experiences, case study method was employed. This method is very much applicable since a small size of participants took part in the study. Lastly, triangulation method was utilized to increase trust on the validity of the participants' statements and/or to the gathered data. This method requires significant others and served as another source of information to meet the objectives of the study.

2.2 Participants

To identify the participants in the present study, the snowball sampling technique was used as a strategy. This technique is usually done by many researchers if the participants are hard to locate or are limited to a very small subgroup of the population. According to Best and Kahn (2006), this sampling is "*used to find subjects of interest from those who are most likely to be able to identify them* (p. 19)." The participants of the present study were children living with same-sex parents and were drawn through a referral from the researcher's friends, colleagues, students, and relatives. There were five participants who qualified for the study based on the set inclusion criteria: (1) the child is living with the same-sex parents for at least one (1) year; (2) he/she is 12 years old and above at the time of data collection; and (3) the child was born in the previous heterosexual relationship of one partner and is now being raised in the new, same-sex parented family of one of the biological parents.

The demographic profile of the main participants along with other information needed to acquire substantial analysis of the data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Primary participants' demographic profile

	Wilma	Ivan	Sai	Kim	Mitch
Age	12	16	19	14	12
Sex	F	M	F	F	F
Highest educational attainment	Grade 7 (high school)	4th year (high school)	3rd year college	Grade 9 (high school)	Grade 7 (high school)
Number of siblings	3	3	Only child	8	Only child
Birth order	Youngest	Eldest	Only child	2nd to the eldest	Only child
Length of years living with same-sex parents	12 years (since birth)	16 years (since birth)	19 years (since birth)	5 years	12 years (since birth)

2.3 Data Collection

As part of the researcher's preparation before, during, and after the personal encounter with the participants, the following steps were taken religiously: (1) experts' validation of the interview guide; (2) scouting for participants; (3) rapport building, personal encounter, and interview with the participants; (4) transcription of the interview; and (5) verification of data.

2.4 Data Analysis

To further unearth and analyze the data gathered based on the reported experiences of children living with same-sex parents, case study and phenomenological analyses were applied. For the former, participants and significant others' answers from the given set of questions were presented following the sequence of the objectives of the study. Through this, the researcher was able to see in detail the participants' experiences along with other information necessary in understanding their experiences. On the other hand, to analyze the acquired phenomenological data from the interview, guidelines from Hycner's (1985) phenomenological analysis of interview data were adopted: (1) transcription; (2) bracketing and the phenomenological reduction; (3) listening to the interview as a sense of a whole; (4) delineating units of general meaning; (5) delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question; (6) determining the categories; (7) training independent judges to verify the appropriateness of units in relation to their categories; (8) eliminating redundancies; (9) clustering units of relevant meaning; and (10) outlining the framework

3   Findings and Discussion

The primary objective of this research is to provide a comprehensive overview of the experiences of children living with same-sex parents. Evidently, the interview conducted among the children and family members yielded significant and interesting revelations that in turn shed light on their lived experiences.

3.1   Perception of Family Setup and with Parents

Children seem to have different views when asked to unveil their perception on their family and parents who are of the same sex. Some of them described their families as *happy*, *headed by responsible parents,* and *typical*. Despite the difference in family structure as compared to the traditional family (Corpus, Dela Cruz, & Tabotabo, 2011), they still believed that their family is a source of happiness though, sometimes, problems do occur within the family. This seems to agree with the finding that children in families headed by lesbian mothers reported less feelings of loneliness (Shechter, Schechter, Slone, & Lobel, 2011). The same-sex parents appear to be responsible enough as they provide for the needs of the family. Aside from the parents' sexual orientation, participants believed that their families are just like other families with heterosexual parents. This description of family was also noted in another study in which children explained that their parents are just like other heterosexual parents (Gregory & Ray, 2001). Also, one of the family members believed that her daughter does not see the feminine side of her partner and all family members do not treat her partner the way he really is. The limitations that the parents set for their children, the time they spend with them, and the arguments that persist in the family led the children to describe their families as a family with authoritarian parents, family with busy parents, and a chaotic family. Their views regarding their families such as 'normal' family and better family as compared with the previous family appear to agree with the previous studies (Brown et al., 2006; Burston et al., 2003). According to Burston et al. (2003), this comparison may be attributed to the child's negative idea about his previous family or heterosexual family.

   Further, positive and negative feelings emerged when asked to describe children's feelings about their current parents. In terms of positive feelings, some of the children accepted their parents and got used to the family setup. One of them proudly confides how loving her parents are. Looking at the negative feelings, it was reported that some of the participants are still longing for the presence of the real father. The relationships of their parents seem to not be totally approved by some of them. One of the participants reported how sad and embarrassed she is about her mother's partner. This was also the observation of one family member on her sister (Kim) and added that she wanted to fix everything in the family. The participants' sadness and embarrassment about their mothers' partners are more

likely to agree with the study of Brown et al. (2006) where children (aged 13–16) approaching the teenage years or the adolescence stage felt more awkward often as they deal with their parents' homosexuality. The participants' various perceptions regarding their family and parents may be associated with their real-life experiences. Gilbert (2003) pointed out that the combination of three major factors, namely *personal experiences*, *family forms we encounter or observe,* and *attitudes we hold* contribute to one's perception about family. Positive experiences are more likely linked to positive feedback while negative feedbacks are basically rooted in negative experiences. The people that children with same-sex parents dealt with (Gregory & Ray, 2001) and the place they live in also served as contributing factors in terms of their experiences that may further affect their perspectives in life (Rawsthorne, 2009). Previous studies concluded that the positive relationship with their parents (Darling, et al., as cited in Bos et al., 2012), social contact, frequency of contact, functional roles of being cared for and being loved, the support and respect they gain are imperative elements to have a more favorable adolescent outcome (Brown et al., 2006). Since children's parents in the study were all women, it is interesting to know how children view and react to their family when parents are both men. In the Philippine setting, it seems that same-sex male parents are harder to locate and are limited in number. A family headed by both male parents might reveal additional insights regarding their experiences particularly their parenting styles, coping mechanisms, and sharing of roles and responsibilities. Likewise, children of this family type might also share something about their experiences that may or may not be related to the foregoing factors. Moreover, only one male child participated in the study. This participant revealed controversial and interesting experiences as a member of a family with same-sex (both female) parents. The findings of the current study would have been more prolific if additional male participants are included. It is highly recommended to conduct a follow-up study where other influential factors may be present such as participants' sexual orientation, age, and culture.

3.2 Relationship with Parents

The majority of the participants claimed that their parents are performing their roles and responsibilities as parents. Despite the nature of family structure, family members still established intimate relationship with one another as they understand them and the family setup in general. Though strict discipline is evident to both parents, children still believed that the couple tried their best to understand children's activities and development. However, one of the participants made a clear distinction with regard to her relationship with her parents. It was revealed that the biological mother tends to acknowledge her child's perspective and ideas while her partner appears to be close-minded with the child's perspective. The family members or significant others also revealed another set of insights when it comes to the main participants' relationship with their parents. According to them, children

put high regard to parents and find them as loving and caring. Interestingly, the partners of the biological mothers seem to play the role of a real father as they hold authority in the family and provide the needs of family members. As parents, their authority has been acknowledged by the children which sometimes led to parenting and relationship conflict probably because of parents' strict discipline and being close-minded with the children's perspectives. The distinction between the biological mothers and their partners may be related to what Alampay and Jocson (2011) have concluded regarding the difference between mothers' and fathers' parenting attributions and attitudes. Accordingly, Filipino mothers have acquired more modern views in childrearing than fathers do. As the primary caregivers, the mothers are more exposed to the modern childrearing information that might be seen in the media, reading materials, and seminars conducted in the school or community. With this, the mothers are more open-minded and more likely to acknowledge their children's ideas and perspectives similar to what the biological mothers in the study have been doing. In addition, the foregoing findings might also indicate that parent–child relationship, and not one's sexual orientation, would make one as a responsible parent (Regnerus, 2012; Patterson & Wainright, 2007; Patterson, Russell, & Wainright, 2004). However, the conflict they experienced within the family particularly toward the mother's partner may be associated with what Rawsthorne (2009) has noted. Accordingly, children from heterosexual family may experience *breakdown of relationship* between them and the biological mothers' new partner. The transition from having heterosexual parents to same-sex parents may bring about traumatic experiences and leave great impact on family relationships (De Vaus & Gray, 2003 as cited in Rawsthorne, 2009). Parent-child conflicts or misunderstandings are more likely to happen as individuals move into and through the transition from childhood to adulthood. The said conflicts may be due to adolescents' abilities to rationalize things as well as their demands to be treated as adults (Berk, 2001). Another possible explanation of the foregoing experiences is the *Ecological Systems Theory* of Uri Bronfenbrenner (1994) which further explains the importance of environment and the impact of family relationships to one's development. The innermost layer or the microsystem which includes the family allows to influence a child in both direct and indirect ways. The behaviors of the family members might affect those of others (Berk, 2001). Having said that, children's relationships with their parents mirror the way they were treated by other people particularly their parents. In this regard, school guidance counselors may conduct counseling sessions to check children's current conditions and the impact of this in different areas of their lives. If deemed necessary, parents should be involved for the best interest of their children. A program that caters to individuals with this family setup might be established to serve as a support group which could also be of help in attending to the needs of the children along with their parents.

3.3   Challenges Encountered for Having Same-Sex Parents

Children's various challenges in different aspects of life for having same-sex parents such as challenges on the child's social life, child's biological father and his relatives, parent-child relationship, current parents and family structure, personal values, and parents' inability to have children of their own were revealed. Some of the children reported being teased by others primarily because of their parents' sexual orientation. Out of curiosity, other people threw many questions to the children and more likely put them in a dilemma. These problems are really not that new in this kind of setup. In fact, bullying or teasing and the difficult questions that need to be answered by the children become the primary concerns of homosexual parents and the children themselves (Gregory & Ray, 2001). In this family setup, the children are not only the ones who encountered negative incidents such as discrimination (UNDP & USAID, 2014) but also the parents themselves. In the Philippine setting, female homosexuals experienced discrimination particularly in the workplace (Camesa, 1995). Considerably, some of the participants, and as confirmed by other family members, look after their real father. Children are more likely to look forward to the presence of the real father as they attain awareness of the difference of their own family to others. Two of the participants were restricted to get close to their real father and relatives. This restriction might be attributed to their (mothers' partners) fears of losing their children. Since they also interact with other people, children cannot help but to compare their own family with others to the point that they envied other children for having traditional families. Surprisingly, one participant was not able to hide her desire to have younger siblings. But since parents are of the same sex, she is very much aware that having younger siblings will be impossible. It is important to note how children find ways to personally adjust to their family setup which sometimes led them to sacrifice their own values. It seems that children need to give up their own interest for the sake of their family. Filipino children are expected to observe their obligations to their families whereby some Filipino values like *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) and *hiya* (shame) are incorporated (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). Furthermore, misunderstandings occur within the family, and the children are affected with this. One of the participants mentioned that she feels ashamed of her mother's partner primarily because of his behavior and treatment toward the family members. This misunderstanding toward the parents is also evident in the previous research (Bos et al., 2012). The conflict they experienced within the family particularly toward the mother's partner may be associated with what Rawsthorne (2009) has noted. Accordingly, children from heterosexual family may experience *breakdown of relationship* between them and the biological mothers' new partner. The transition from having heterosexual parents to same-sex parents may bring about traumatic experiences and leave great impact on family relationships (De Vaus & Gray, 2003 as cited in Rawsthorne, 2009). More so, the reported challenges of children from heterosexual family and currently living with same-sex parents might contribute to the body of knowledge since previous research failed to report this (Alderson & Boon, 2009).

3.4 Factors that Led to the Children's Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Toward Current Parents

Another aspect in the lives of children with same-sex parents that calls for attention are the factors associated with their satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction toward their parents. The children themselves and the family members firmly believed that the quality time for the family and being responsible parents are the primary factors of the main participants' satisfaction toward their parents. Some of them reported that their parents never failed to exert an effort to understand the children and express unconditional love and care. It is important to note that the biological mother's happiness made one of the participants satisfied with his parents. One participant was brave enough to admit that he is gay. His parents' acceptance of his identity made him more satisfied with them. To be satisfied with the family, parents' sexual orientation does not really matter but rather their relationship with one another (Regnerus, 2012; Patterson & Wainright, 2007; Patterson, Russell, & Wainright, 2004). Same-sex parents are said to be as competent, nurturing, and loving as their heterosexual counterparts (Patterson, 2009 as cited in Pooley & Titlestad, 2014). Previous researchers also pointed out how satisfied children in a same-sex parented family as they are true with their roles and responsibilities as parents (Bos et al., 2012). Parents' equal sharing of responsibilities may also be a contributing factor in becoming responsible parents (Alderson & Boon, 2009).

Further, it was reported that parents' strict discipline, mother's partner behavior, limited knowledge about the child, and insensitive parents are the main factors why children are dissatisfied with their current parents. Other reported factors are divided time and attention toward the child, and irresponsible parents. On the other hand, family members only identified two main factors that led to children's dissatisfaction: limited knowledge about the real father and conflict in the family. Basically, parents hold the authority in the family. However, this need to be exercised with extra care as it might affect children in different ways. Failure to find ways to know their children more might be one reason why children are not satisfied with their parents at present. The Relationships Australia Queensland (2011) emphasized the importance of parents' role in securing love and care toward their children. It was noted that parents must exert an extra effort like reading parenting literature as it might be of help in understanding the development of their children. Also, the way parents discipline their children must be considered most especially in teaching them *mabuting asal* or positive social behavior. In the study conducted by De Leon (2012), *mabuting asal* or positive social behavior includes being (1) *polite and respectful especially to adults,* (2) *obedient,* (3) *caring toward their siblings*, (4) *helpful*, and (5) *generous*. To teach and discipline children regarding this, three types of methods were identified, namely physical, verbal, and cognitive methods. Although parents are very much aware that the first one is critical and must be used sparingly, it seems that physical method which includes spanking has been part of the Filipino culture as parents tried their best to become responsible. Many Filipino children of today experience physical punishment that

includes pinching and beating (Nakamura & Sanapo, 2011). Likewise, Filipino parents opted to embrace authoritarian attitude in childrearing in which parents have the authority in the family while their children should obey and conform to them (Alampay & Jocson, 2011). These might be attributed to one parent in the present study wherein she cannot help herself but to let her children experience corporal punishment in the process of teaching and discipline them. As the head of the family, the parents still have the final say as to what to do in the family even though sometimes they are not sensitive enough to the feelings and perspectives of their children. Steinberg (2001) pointed out that one possible reason of parent-child conflict is the adolescents' desire to be emotionally detached from parents as it is needed in searching for their own identity. Further, it seems that one of the participants is not satisfied with the information she got about her real father. Although this is just an observation of the biological mother, this is something that needs to be considered. Because of the complexity of the situation, the mother admitted that she did not give complete information about the biological father as it might ignite problems in the family. Since conflicts do arise within the family, the researcher of this study firmly believes that it is high time to call for a conference or an activity among parents to further discuss the nature and the developmental tasks of adolescents. Through this, the reported concerns related to conflicts or misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about children's development will be addressed.

3.5   Advantages and Disadvantages of Living with Same-Sex Parents

As another type of family, same-sex parented family has its own advantages and disadvantages. Two distinct advantages of having same-sex parents were reported by the family members and the children themselves: parent-child mutual understanding and responsible parents. In terms of the disadvantages of living with same-sex parents, children and significant others identified a number of points. Participants reported that parents' inability to have children of their own, parent's strict discipline and divided time with mother's partner are the primary disadvantages of having parents who are of the same sex. On the other hand, family members reported four (4) disadvantages: stigma from other people, parents' conflict, non-traditional family structure, and mother's partner misconduct. Previous studies reiterated that what matters most in a family is the relationship of each other and not the family structure itself (Regnerus, 2012; Patterson & Wainright, 2007; Patterson, Russell, & Wainright, 2004). For those family members whose relationship to parents are intact seem to be more satisfied than the ones who did not actually establish good or healthy relationship with each family member. This may be the reason why children in a same-sex parented family find their situation beneficial and/or not beneficial. Also, the stigma that children are experiencing because of family setup might contribute to their psychological being

(Balen & Bos, 2008) thus make them more vulnerable and realized the disadvantage of a member of same-sex parented family.

3.6   Learning and Realizations in Being Children of Same-Sex Parents

Finally, it is interesting to note the learning and realizations of children whose parents are of the same sex. These learning and realizations are related to their values, may it be personal or toward one's family, how they regard individuals like their parents, becoming assertive with one's rights, and to not imitate parents' relationship. As the primary carrier and transmitter of values (Palispis, 2005), the family along with the parents inculcate different values that may be helpful in children's growth and development. It is interesting to note how children learned to value their family despite its uniqueness in structure. Also, their parents' values are more likely contagious since children tend to adopt them and apply in daily living. However, one of the participants is determined not to be like her parents and learned to become assertive with her rights. Mother's partner failure to establish a good image and healthy relationship with the child might be one reason for having this realization. Also, the negative experiences that the child had contributed to this realization.

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