

# Making Their Voices Heard: The Experiences of Children Born Outside of Marriage

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**Abstract:** This qualitative-phenomenological study investigated the experiences of children born outside of marriage. The Snowball sampling technique was utilized in selecting the 10 participants. A structured interview script was developed to gather the information. Results revealed that the challenges encountered by children born outside of marriage include discrimination, social stigma, difficulty, and abandonment. Moreover, their coping strategies included forgiveness, a positive mindset, and determination. Furthermore, for their voices to be heard, they proposed that the government may provide them with counselling, implement the No Discrimination Law, and provide free education. Finally, the significant experience that they could share included forgiveness, resentment, a sense of responsibility, and resilience.

**Keywords:** Children born outside of marriage, challenges, coping strategies, discrimination, SPAMAST

## I. INTRODUCTION

On a global scale, children born outside of marriage rate is rising every day. These children tend to suffer discrimination in public activity since they are perceived as a disgrace in the locality. They are constantly attacked with condescending remarks because some believe they are an outcome of unlawful relationships. They are even subjected to hatred by their peers because they see them as fiasco to the general atmosphere. These accumulated disparagements and disdain will have a long-term psychological impact on kids [1]. Children born outside of marriage may result from poverty, inadequate education, family breakdown, cohabitation, the non-validity of divorce, inadequate contraception, prostitution, promiscuity, slavery, or war. The bulk of this increase is among young women in the 15-20 age group. Such births occur more often in poorer social groups. The apparent increase in the incidences of nonmarital births in the country creates considerable apprehensions about the welfare of these children born out of wedlock [2].

In the Philippines, there is a 53 percent increase in children born outside of marriage, as shown by statistics in 2018. Eastern Visayas and the National Capital Region have the leading number [3]. In Davao region, more than 58.1% of live births were born out of wedlock. Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data shows that most babies born before the pandemic are born outside of wedlocks [4]. On the other hand, Davao Occidental has the lowest number of live births, about 1,430, but the number of children out of wedlock is not

specified [5]. Thus, this study was conducted to explore the experiences that children born outside of marriage in Malita, Davao Occidental. It was observed in the mapping conducted by the researchers that several children born out of marriage needed attention and listening ears. Hence, the output of this study may serve as baseline data on how to craft specific programs to address their needs, especially in terms of their education.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to discover the plights of children born outside of marriage in Malita, Davao Occidental. Specifically, this study intended to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges encountered by children born outside of marriage?
2. How do children born outside of marriage cope with these challenges?
3. What can the children born outside of marriage propose so their voices can be heard?
4. What significant experiences do children born outside of marriage have worth sharing with others?

## Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on the theory of Social Exchange developed by [6]. It is a useful framework that can better understand the phenomenon of illegitimacy and its effects on the individual's emotions. The theory proposes that people thrive in exchange with other humans to maximize benefits and reduce costs. Thus, if an individual weighs the potential benefits and risks of a social relationship and perceives it as unsuitable, the individual was terminated the relationship or avoided approaching that person altogether. Certain risks that would see an individual abandon a social relationship include money, time, and effort. Other important factors of this theory are interdependence and self-interest [7], as these are the basic foundations of social and interpersonal relationships. In this regard, a child born outside of marriage was not approached by others to start or maintain a relationship. The exchange will be deemed a negative relationship because the costs outweigh the benefits. The siblings of a child born outside of marriage, whether full-blooded or half, can also be profoundly impacted emotionally by this phenomenon. Some case studies demonstrate feelings of jealousy or distaste toward their half-sibling, often resulting in hostility and disengagement from

pursuing any kind of relationship with them. Other case studies indicate a degree of acceptance and full embrace of the child born outside marriage as part of the family. It is because, on a spectrum, they might hate their half-siblings at first due to the stigma, but they eventually see their good side [8].

This theory suggests that the significant amount of stigma circulating children born outside of marriage does not diminish regardless if a child was born into a rich or low-income family. Often families in the earlier centuries would rather pretend this person did not exist to ensure their image was not tainted rather than letting them grow up with their other full-blooded relatives [9].

This theory was very relevant to this study because of its proven contribution to the existing literature. Apart from this, the struggles and risks of becoming parents to these children were highlighted in this theory. But the, unwed or single parents still face challenges regardless of the consequence of their actions.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological study as a research design to explore the lived experiences of children born outside of marriage. Phenomenology assists researchers with understanding the importance of individuals' lived insight [10]. It is a way to deal with the subjective examination that centres on the shared characteristic of a lived insight into a specific phenomenon [11]. It is usually done through interviews to gather individuals' direct information on a circumstance or experience [12]. Likewise, the reason for the phenomenological approach is to enlighten the particular, to distinguish relevant experiences through how the people see them in a circumstance. In the human sphere, this regularly converts profound data and discernment into social occasion through inductive, subjective strategies according to the viewpoint of the participants [13].

Phenomenology was the approach method for this study because it explored the individuals' experiences of the children born outside marriage, a phenomenon which was observed to be rising at the current times.

### *Sampling Design and Technique*

The snowball sampling technique was utilized in this study which is purely based on referrals to generate a sample. Snowball sampling enabled the researchers to start with one participant, leading to another due to referrals. It is a non-probability sampling technique in which existing subjects provide referrals to recruit samples required for a research study [14]. This sampling method involved a primary data source nominating other potential data sources participating in the study.

### *Participants of the Study*

The participants of this study were ten identified children born out of marriage in Malita, Davao Occidental. The

participants were chosen based on the following criteria: 1) they were children born out of marriage; 2) 18-25 years old; 3) residents of Malita, Davao Occidental; 4) either studying or out-of-school youth; 5) and were willing to part of the study.

According to reference [15], the ideal number of participants for a phenomenological method was between 6 and 20, and these participants should be easily accessed. By this, reference [16] said that it would permit the researchers to explore deeper and fully understand the participants' experiences.

### *Research Instrument*

A structured interview script was developed as a research instrument. The interview questions were based on the research questions with added probe questions. Likewise, the open-ended questions allowed participants to express their experiences freely. The research instrument underwent validation by experts to ensure the questions were valid and within the context of the study. The average rating of the three validators was 8.5/10 or very satisfactory.

### *Research Locale*

This study was conducted in Malita, Davao Occidental. Malita is a 1st class municipality and the capital town of Davao Occidental, Philippines [17]. Malita was chosen as the research locale because the researchers lived in the area. Further, the locale of study was convenient and accessible to the researchers. With the strict travel restrictions imposed by the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF), Malita was the best area for the study.

### *Data Analysis*

The transcribed information obtained from the interviews was analyzed following the six steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up [18]. Moreover, the frequency of the responses was measured based on [19]; these are General, 50% of the total responses, Typical 21-40%, and Variant 20% below.

First, the researchers familiarized the information by getting a thorough overview. It involved transcribing audio, thoroughly reading and re-reading the texts, and taking initial notes. Second was coding which highlighted sentences or phrases and came up with shorthand labels or codes to describe the content. These codes gained a condensed overview of the main points and common meanings that recurred throughout the information [20]. Next, the researchers looked over the created codes, identified the patterns, and started coming up with themes. Themes were generally broader than codes. The researchers combined several codes into a theme. However, codes that were too vague were discarded while other codes became core ideas. Next, the researchers created themes that tell something helpful about the information that answers the study's objectives [21]. Through this, the researchers analyzed the

data and generated the final major themes of the study. Then, the researchers ensured that the emerging themes were a useful and accurate representation of the information. Once the researchers finalized the list of themes, they named and defined each theme. Defining themes involved formulating exactly what was meant by each theme and figuring out how it helped understand the information [22]. The researchers used emerging themes to provide more structured information on the participants' personal experiences. Finally, the researchers wrote up the information analysis [23]. The researchers included how the information was collected and how thematic analysis was conducted. The findings section addressed each theme. Themes are also described in the frequency of occurrences and the core ideas related to each theme.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion were based on the aim of the study, such as exploring challenges encountered by illegitimate children, their coping strategies, and insights. The frequency of the responses was based on the following measurement: General (50%), Variant (21-49%), and Typical (20% below).

Table 1. Themes and Core Ideas on the Challenges Encountered by Children Born Outside of Marriage

Theme	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Discrimination	General	being abused by parents
	Typical	being bullied
	Variant	being underestimated having inferiority complex
Social Stigma	General	considered mark of disgrace
	Typical	being discriminated
	Variant	being talked behind the back suffering the prejudice from people
Difficulty	General	experiencing hardships
	Typical	withdrawal from schooling
	Variant	suffering from extreme poverty nothing to eat
Abandonment	General	left behind by a parent
	Typical	withdrawal
	Variant	a feeling of being wronged hurt feelings

Table 1 shows the results of the challenges of children born outside of marriage. Discrimination, social stigma, difficulty, and abandonment were emerging themes. According to reference [24], the absence of married parents is related to poor academic performance. Children born outside of marriage found that the longer the time spent in a single-parent family, the less education attained at all parent income levels. The absence of married parents risks emotional and behavioral problems that compound during childhood. The impact of out-of-wedlock birth and growing up in a single-parent family on the child is significant and can be permanent.

It is confirmed by reference [25] who stressed the academic struggles and hitches of children born outside of marriage due to the non-marriage of their parents. Results revealed that participants experienced parental absence, negative views, surname confusion, economic instability, physical abuse, social disengagement, and self-harm. In this study, four themes emerged from the challenges of illegitimate children: discrimination, social stigma, difficulty, and abandonment.

1) **Discrimination:** Discrimination specifically includes children born outside of marriage's experiences, such as a lack of parental attention and care. They sometimes struggle with how their parents treat them. They cannot avoid the fact that their friends bullied and underestimated them, resulting in an inferiority complex. Children born outside of marriage are discriminated against under the law and in social attitudes. These acts of discrimination include the denial of inheritance or filiation, legal impediments to marriage; unequal distribution of social services on account of inferior status or lack of filiation; discrimination in education [26].

*I envy my classmates who have complete families. It's difficult to receive rude treatment because I do not have a father. It is very hard on my part to be treated like that. They will underestimate me.* - Tres

*I am bullied and prejudiced in school because I don't have a father.* - Hebe

*My classmates tease me that my father sunk in the soup because he is not around.)* - Dyes

2) **Social Stigma:** These are the difficulties children born outside of marriage face due to other people's perceptions of them. These bring a mark of disgrace or dishonor, which leads to discrimination in which people talk behind their backs and pass judgment on them. A social stigma is a mark of disgrace imposed on an individual by other individuals or a social group. Popular usage often refers to any negative sanction or disapproval for nonconformity. An undesirable differentness of an individual that disqualifies them from full social acceptance. It is an attribute or stereotype that departs negatively from the expectations of others [27].

*I envy my classmates who have complete families. I heard them talking my back. It's really difficult to receive rude treatment as well as discrimination.* - Tres

*When my father died, I experienced grief and hardships. I suffered from the prejudice of other people. My father has four children from his first wife, while my mother has two children from her first husband. So, my father and mother may be called "kabit" because they are married to their first partners, and I was born out of wedlock.* - Sissy

3) **Difficulty:** Problems are anywhere unless you face and solve them. Acknowledging problems and solving them is better than making them a big deal. This theme expresses the general hardships or privation faced by children born outside marriage. It was brought by extreme poverty resulting in them

stopping schooling. Previous research had demonstrated that children born outside of marriage commonly suffered stigma, a sense of belonging, damage of self-concept, difficulty in starting or maintaining a relationship, not wanting to have children of their own, feeling compassion for others in a similar situation, delinquency, etc. [28]. However, most of these children felt abandoned by their loved ones.

*My aunt is taking care of me, but she died and left me with a young child to take care of. My life is difficult because my mother is not sane, and my aunt died. - Sittie*

*When my father left us, we experienced too much hardship because my family was just a farmer. We experienced extreme poverty because we almost had nothing to eat. I even experienced not eating in a day. If only my father were here, I couldn't stop my studies, and we could eat three times a day. - Athena*

4) *Abandonment*: Abandonment issues stem from a fear of loneliness, which lead to a phobia. It depicts the disheartening reality that children born outside of marriage faced throughout their lives, in which their parents abandoned them with nothing but a sense of discouragement and regret. According to reference [29], hurt feelings among children born outside of marriage are caused by an illicit devaluation from other people, withdrawal, and the feeling of being wronged. Abandonment involved a situation of discrimination that hurt feelings.

*I envy my classmates for having a complete family. After all, only my grandparents take care of me because my mother is away to work. I needed the support and care of my parents, but they abandoned me. - Dos*

*It's very difficult, especially when I have problems and no one to turn to. I envy others because they have their parents. Apart from that, I can see that my father is happy with his other family. - Hera*

*I have a lot of questions in my life. Why do I experience these problems? Why do others have complete families? Until now still searching and wondering about my birth parents. - Uno*

Table 2. Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Strategies of Illegitimate Children to Overcome the Challenges

Theme	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Positive mindset	General	being forgiving and forgetting
	Variant	accepting the situation striving hard moving on caring less about other people
Determination	General	solid purpose in life
	Variant	work hard attain something in life have a better life
Perseverance	General	persistent
	Variant	strive hard self-reliant finish studies becoming independent

Table 2 discloses the themes and core ideas on the coping mechanisms of children born outside marriage to overcome challenges. The emerging themes were having a positive mindset, determination, and perseverance. In support, adolescents who lack healthy coping skills may also turn to avoidance. On the other hand, children who learned healthy coping skills early, especially in terms of acceptance, enjoyed some big advantages. There were two types of coping strategies. These included emotion-focused and problem-focused coping skills. Both types of skills were important for children, especially for children born outside of marriage, to learn and implement in their lives. Emotion-focused coping skills helped children born outside of marriage deal with their feelings, so they felt less stressed.

On the other hand, problem-focused coping skills involve acting to change a situation [30]. Developing strong coping skills takes time and patience. Children should be able to use coping skills on their own to deal with discomfort healthily [31]. In the case of children born outside of marriage, having a positive mindset, determination and perseverance were their coping strategies to overcome the challenges in their situations.

1) *Positive Mindset*: Positive thinking, or an optimistic attitude, is the practice of focusing on the good in any given situation. It has a big impact on physical and mental health. It doesn't mean ignoring reality or making light of problems. The first theme, positive mindset, was closely related to the experiences of children born outside of marriage, in which they practised forgetting their saddest experiences and focusing on the brighter side of life—embracing acceptance, working hard for their dreams, and moving forward in the present without regard for the opinions of others. These assisted the children born outside of marriage overcome obstacles in their lives by learning how to manage stress and respond with a positive attitude to each challenge. They grow and start moving forward in life.

In fact, without those setbacks, one could not have learned what was needed to know and develop the qualities of the character to where they are today. One of the characteristics of a superior person is that they recognize the inevitability of temporary disappointments and defeats, and they accept them as a natural part of life. They do everything possible to avoid problems, but when problems come, superior people respond with a positive attitude, learn from them, and keep moving forward in the direction of their dreams [32].

*Never surrender or give up. If you keep hatred in your heart, you cannot move forward and reach your dreams in life. Just fight! - Uno*

*We need to strive even if our family is not around so that we can reach our dreams. - Dos*

*I never minded my situation. What's important is to go or move on with life even though my parents are not around. We need to strive even if our family is not around so we can reach our dreams. - Tres*



*I just don't mind them. I care less about what they do to me so I won't be stressed.* - Hera

2) **Determination:** People fail because their determination is not strong. Determination is very important because it enables someone to persist in facing difficulties. As the second theme, this emphasized how children born outside of marriage fixed and settled their priorities to attain what they desired. Determination is vital for success in life. It keeps a person going to achieve the desired goal even when hit by setbacks and failures. It is a motivating force to dream big and high. It inspires an individual and keeps them moving even when faced with adversities. Determination makes a person stand a little firmer [33].

*I worked hard in my studies and did not resent my dad for what happened. I think that I can help my family, especially my mother, who finds ways for us to survive. I want to attain something in life. That's why I study hard.* - Uno

*I strive hard in my studies to be a consistent honor student, so my mother will no longer spend on my education.* - Hebe

*Even if my experience in life hurt, I'll just work hard to have a better life even without a father.)* - Dyes

3) **Perseverance:** Perseverance is a crucial character trait if a person wants to succeed. It denotes a determination to work hard despite any odds. It is to insist and be steadfast in getting something done. This third theme was built on the children born outside marriage coping strategies of being persistent, independent, and self-reliant in life. Despite numerous challenges, children born outside of marriage were able to pursue their education. Perseverance helped children born outside of marriage deal with their battles. Further, it is the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition [34]. The most successful people know what it is like to persevere and savor victory like these illegitimate children overcome their situations.

*I work hard even if I am still young. I just finished Grade 3 because nobody supported my education. We have to strive hard and not just depend on our parents.* - Pie

*I persevere because I know I am the only one who can solve my problems; that's why I never lose hope. I learned how to take care of a baby but did need not marry. I have to finish my studies first. I will work hard.* - Sissy

*I tried to work to help my mother and buy my necessities. I never lose hope. I always think positive. I make my situation my inspiration to finish my studies and help my mother.* - Sittie

*I work as a helper and give my little salary to my mother to buy food. We need to work hard because we have nobody to depend on except ourselves.* - Athena

Table 3. Themes and Core Ideas on the Proposals of Illegitimate Children to the Government so that their Voices can be Heard

Theme	Frequency of Responses	Core Ideas
Counselling	General	conducting counselling
	Typical	promoting the value of family
	Variant	strengthening self-confidence
No Discrimination	General	promoting equality and fairness
	Typical	implementing anti-bullying law
	Variant	observing equal treatment
Free Education	General	offering scholarship
	Typical	promoting independence
	Variant	providing allowance

Table 3 shows the emerging themes of the suggestions for children born outside of marriage to the government for them to hear their voices. As to the results, three themes emerged: counselling, no discrimination, and free education. According to Presidential Decree No. 603, known as The Child and Youth Welfare Code, a child is one of the nation's most important assets. Every effort should be exerted to promote their welfare and enhance their opportunities for a useful and happy life. All children shall be entitled to their rights regardless of legitimacy or illegitimacy, sex, social status, religion, political antecedents, and other factors. Stipulated in Art. 3. Rights of the Child, Section 5, every child has the right to an education commensurate with their abilities and the development of their skills to improve their capacity for service to themselves and fellowmen. Then Section 6 highlighted that every child has the right to protection against exploitation, improper influences, hazards, and other conditions or circumstances prejudicial to their physical, mental, emotional, social, and moral development. Finally, in Section 8, every child has the right to the state's care, assistance, and protection, particularly when their parents or guardians fail or are unable to provide them with fundamental needs for growth, development, and improvement.

4) **Counselling:** This first theme encouraged children born out of marriage to pursue academic, social, emotional, and personal development. Counselling services helped students better know themselves and find effective solutions to their daily problems. They improved themselves in all areas and be full-functioning individuals. It necessitated support such as helping them to understand themselves and their needs, to solve their problems, to make realistic decisions, improve their abilities and skills, and adjust themselves and their environment healthily. According to reference [35], counselling can help improve mood, treat mental illness, reduce medical costs, improve communication and relationships, and promote self-esteem and resilience. Many children who come to counselling know that they are suffering but understand nothing about the underlying causes, specific conditions, or how certain techniques can address presenting

problems. It is what this participant wanted the government to hear.

*To have counselling for illegitimate children to regain self-confidence and still value family.* - Uno

5) *No Discrimination.* The law discriminated against children born out of marriage. Acts of discrimination included the denial of inheritance or affiliation, legal impediments to marriage; unequal distribution of social services on account of inferior status or lack of affiliation; discrimination in education. Calling for no discrimination fosters equality, fairness, and equal treatment among children born outside marriage. Discrimination strikes at the heart of being human. It harms someone's rights, particularly the children born outside of marriage, simply because of who they were. It was harmful and perpetuated inequality. Discrimination occurs when a person cannot enjoy human or other legal rights on an equal basis with others. According to reference [36], the status of the legitimacy of a child has been an ongoing issue in which children born outside of marriage were considered *Filius nullius* or the son of nobody under the law. Their status was also different from a legitimate child. Children born outside of marriage do not share the same privilege as legitimate children because the former suffered from discrimination and wanted the government to hear their pleas.

*A program that can help illegitimate children. Equal treatment of illegitimate and legitimate children.* - Dos

*Anti-bullying law. It can boost the self-confidence of illegitimate children.* - Tres

*I hope there is a law that punishes bullies.* - Hera

*The government must propose laws prohibiting discrimination and labelling illegitimate and legitimate children.* - Pie

*A program that can help illegitimate children. Equal treatment of illegitimate and legitimate children.* -Sissy

6) *Free Education:* Children born outside of marriage from low-income families deserve an equal chance of accessing quality education just as legitimate children. Clearly, quality free education can equip all children born outside of marriage and allow them to compete fairly for life opportunities by having scholarships, allowance, and other government supports. Hence, the importance of investing in higher education cannot be overemphasized. It can affect individuals' income and the nation's progress regarding the quality of its labor force. According to reference [37], the government enacted the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Act (R.A. No. 10687) or UniFAST last May 11, 2016. It aims to allow citizens full access to quality education by providing adequate funding and increasing the participation rate in tertiary education. To adhere to its objectives, reference [38] offers qualified applicants different Students Financial Assistance Program (StuFAP), namely (a.) scholarships, (b) grant-in-aid, (c) National Student Loan

Program (NSLP), and (d) other modalities of StuFAP [39]. As what these participants cried:

*Free education to illegitimate children includes boarding houses, allowance, and tuition fees. Not all can avail of the scholarships offered at present.* - Sittie

*Program for illegitimate children to have a scholarship with an allowance until they finish their schooling.* - Athena

*Provide scholarships so parents will no longer have difficulty sending their children to school.* - Hebe

*Provision of scholarships to illegitimate children for us to study will not depend on others and help our parents.* - Dyes

Table 4. Themes and Core Ideas on the Significant Experiences the Children born outside of marriage

Theme	Frequency of Responses	Core Ideas
Forgiveness	General	forgiving
	Typical	becoming grateful
	Variant	moving forward
Resentment	General	unequal treatment between legitimate and illegitimate children
	Typical	experience bullying and discrimination
	Variant	regrets
Resilience	General	develop a sense of responsibility at a very early age
	Typical	making the bitter experience an inspiration
	Variant	never lose hope

Table 4 unveils the significant experiences of children born outside of marriage. The three major themes were forgiveness, resentment, and resilience.

1) *Forgiveness.* Forgiveness is a process that takes time, effort, and energy. Individuals do not have to hurry the process and don't have to judge it either. When one allows the process to unfold, forgiving the person would seem more complete, and it will be easier to let it go. Forgiving others isn't always easy. Forgiveness was key to moving forward in life and being grateful for a child born outside of marriage.

*Forgiveness is the key to moving forward with your life.* - Uno

*It's difficult that there is no equal treatment between illegitimate and legitimate children. I need to learn how to forgive to move on with life.* - Tres

*Even if my parents are not around, I am still grateful because I have my grandparents who supported me. I just forgive them for their lapses.* - Dos

2) *Resentment:* Resentment is a negative emotional reaction to mistreatment. There is no single cause of resentment, but most cases involve an underlying feeling of being mistreated or wronged by another person. Children born outside of

marriage were frustrated and disappointed due to unequal treatment and bullying.

*If I only had my parents around, I would never experience these in life.* - Hera

*If my father did not leave us, we wouldn't experience discrimination and bullying even from our family.* - Sittie

*If I only had my parents around, I would never experience these in life.* - Athena

3) *Resilience*: When things don't go as planned, resilience is the ability to adapt and bounce back. Resilient people do not wallow or dwell on their failures; instead, they acknowledge the situation, learn from their mistakes, and move on. Children born outside of marriage develop a sense of responsibility, gain positive experiences and are inspired to have a positive outlook at a young age. According to reference [40], resilience is typically defined as the capacity to recover from difficult life events. It is the ability to withstand adversity, bounce back, and grow despite life's downturns. It takes time, strength, and help from people around you, and you will likely experience setbacks. Resilience is the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events. Being resilient does not mean that people don't experience stress, emotional upheaval, and suffering. Some people equate resilience with mental toughness, but demonstrating resilience includes working through emotional pain and suffering.

*I develop a sense of responsibility at a very early age by caring for a baby and my younger siblings. I even answer their modules. Because of my situation, I learned to stand despite the problems I experienced.* - Pie

*Despite the challenges I experienced in life, I never get discouraged. I never lost hope, and it made me strong. I keep on fighting).* - Sissy

*Even if I didn't have a father, I did not make that a hindrance to reaching my dreams and becoming successful.* - Hebe

*If we think of our bad experiences in life, it will hinder us from reaching our dream. But we make those experiences our inspiration and bounce back from where we fall.* - Dyes

#### IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

##### Summary

Employing a qualitative phenomenological study, the researchers determined the children's experiences outside marriage. The snowball sampling technique was used to gather the participants. Ten youths born outside of marriage shared the experiences. Five were college students, and the other five were out-of-school youth. An unstructured interview questionnaire was developed as a research instrument. Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the qualitative information. Results revealed that the challenges encountered by children born outside of marriage include discrimination, social stigma, difficulty, and abandonment.

Moreover, their coping strategies included forgiveness, a positive mindset, and determination. Furthermore, for their voices to be heard, they proposed that the government may provide them with financial assistance, counselling, enforce the No Discrimination Law, and free education. Finally, the participants' significant experiences included forgiveness, resentment, and resilience.

##### Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are given.

1. Children born outside of marriage suffered discrimination, social stigma, difficulty, and abandonment. These experiences give worthless feelings, pain, and discouragement that affect their mental, emotional, spiritual, and social growth.
2. Children born outside of marriage coped with these challenges through forgiveness, a positive mindset, and determination. These help them survive the adverse consequence of the negative feedback from society.
3. Financial assistance, counselling, no discrimination law, and free education were proposed by these children born outside marriage. If these things are realized, many children born outside of marriage allowed would have a better life in the future.
4. To move on with life, these children are born outside marriage and need forgiveness, resentment, a sense of responsibility, and resilience. These illegitimate children help them create a positive outlook in life that they may use in attaining their aspirations in life.

##### Implication

The status of the legitimacy of a child has been an ongoing issue for a long time, whereby a child born outside of marriage is considered *Filius nullius* or the son of nobody under the law. Their status is also different from a legitimate child, whereby a child born outside of marriage is left with their mother's wealth and none of their father's. The impact of illegitimacy on a child born out of wedlock does not only concern society's view of them but also their rights to inherit paternal wealth or, in some cases. It affects the child's right to a name, identity, and nationality. The study's findings on the experiences of children born outside marriage give understanding and reflection of the flights of children born outside of marriage.

On the other hand, the significant experiences and coping strategies build their interpersonal relationships and overcome their inferiority complex. In this case, the considered parents may understand the situations faced by their children born and provide interventions for security, health, and opportunity.

Furthermore, the community needs to develop a deeper understanding of the situations of the children born outside of marriage. Hence, local government units may make the results of this study a reference in formulating policies for the welfare of children born outside of marriage. Likewise,

lawmakers may impose harsh punishment for those individuals who forsake children.

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