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"We Realized That Institutions Are Not Prepared": Strategies and Challenges in the Filiation Processes of Lesbian-Parent Families in Chile

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Abstract: This study examines the experiences of lesbian-parent families in Chile regarding the civil registry and the registration of their children, highlighting how heteronormative structures persist despite significant legislative advancements. Through semi-structured interviews with lesbian mothers, it explored how the policies and practices occurring at the civil registry affect their rights and legal recognition. The qualitative data analysis revealed significant barriers in the filiation processes due to outdated forms and lack of training among officials, reflecting a disconnect between progressive legislation and its practical implementation. The findings indicate that while there is growing social recognition of family diversity, lesbian-parent families face institutional discrimination, limiting their full participation in society. These barriers not only perpetuate occupational injustices but also negatively affect the emotional and social well-being of these families. This study underscores the need for legislative and administrative reforms to ensure effective inclusion and recognition of lesbian-parent families, recommending policies that update administrative processes to reflect the realities of all families adequately. The research highlights the importance of continuous education and awareness for civil registry workers, ensuring that existing laws are applied fairly and equitably.

Keywords: lesbian-parent families; civil registry; heteronormative; legislative advancements; discrimination; filiation processes; emotional well-being; institutional barriers; legislative reforms

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1. Introduction

The society is governed by a heteronormative system, which imposes heterosexuality as the only desirable form of relationship, dictating that only heterosexual interactions should be desired by all members of society (Barker 2014; Bell 2009; Warner 1991). In this context, the LGBTIQ+ community has faced historical discrimination and has led a constant struggle for equality. In Chile, Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa (2021) highlight how this heteronormative model is reflected in legislation, promoting the idea that only heterosexual couples are suitable for forming families. Morrison et al. (2020) point out that legal gaps and sociocultural ideals perpetuate the vision of traditional families and hinder the recognition of family diversity. Riquelme (2017) and Sánchez et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of a legal framework that recognizes and protects LGBTIQ+ families, arguing that without adequate legal support, these families may be at a disadvantage, which could negatively impact their social interaction and legal recognition.

The difficulties within the filiation process for LGBTIQ+ families in Chile can significantly complicate their recognition and treatment in various institutions, including the

civil registry. This challenge extends to their daily interactions and affects their dignity and access to equal rights (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa 2021; Mondaca et al. 2022; Morrison et al. 2023; Orleans 2021).

In this context, this study investigates the challenges of the filiation process faced by lesbian-parent families, both before and after the enactment of the 2022 marriage equality law. This study highlights the critical role played by institutions like the civil registry from the experiences of these families, particularly how the recognition and legal status of these families evolved with the legal changes. The way these entities interact with lesbian-parent families can significantly affect their recognition and legal status. This analysis aims to identify the institutional and legal barriers that persist to pinpoint issues and threats to improve the treatment and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ families in Chile.

1.1. Chilean Civil Registry, Filiation, and Marriage Equality

The Chilean Civil Registry is a public entity responsible for accrediting the identity of individuals and managing the official register of filiation processes. Filiation establishes a legal relationship between parents and offspring, involving the voluntary recognition of children through marriage or judicial decree. This process confers duties and rights to parents, such as providing food, education, and care (National Congress Library of Chile) (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile 2022).

Before the equal marriage law, same-sex couples faced restrictions when trying to register their children in the civil registry, often requiring legal action to obtain state recognition. Although sometimes successful, this judicial process raised questions about protecting children's rights, especially concerning their right to a family identity (Morrison et al. 2023).

In Chile, it is common practice to include two surnames when registering a child: the father's first surname and the mother's first surname, a convention based on the traditional family structure. This system is deeply ingrained in the country's legal and social norms, which can create problems for families that do not fit this binary model, such as lesbian-parent families or single-parent families. In the case of same-sex couples, the lack of legal recognition of both mothers prior to the enactment of the marriage equality law (Law 21.400) created a gap in the filiation system, making it difficult to register children with both mothers' surnames. Additionally, this heteronormative structure also presents challenges for single mothers, as Chile's bureaucratic system has traditionally expected the inclusion of a paternal figure in the records, even though the biological relationship is not always present or relevant.

These barriers reflect a system unprepared to adapt to new family configurations, creating situations of exclusion and confusion when registering children in the civil registry, a fundamental procedure for guaranteeing access to basic rights (Morrison et al. 2023; Sánchez et al. 2018).

With the approval of the Equal Marriage Law in 2021, which came into force in 2022, numerous laws were amended to ensure equality in marriage between same-sex individuals. This law changed specific gender terms, such as "husband" and "wife", to neutral terms, providing no legal differences based on gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Article 34 establishes that any reference to "father" or "mother" in the laws will apply to all parents unless the context or an express provision indicates otherwise (Law No. 21.400) (Ley nº 21.400 2021).

However, despite these legislative advances, LGBTIQ+ families still face obstacles in accessing filiation processes, highlighting the persistence of structural and legal barriers in the creation of state-recognized kinship ties (Mondaca et al. 2022; Morrison et al. 2023).

1.2. Impact of Legal and Structural Barriers on LGBTIQ+ Families

LGBTIQ+ families often face significant restrictions in their social participation and legal recognition due to a persistent heteronormative view (Libson 2012; Morrison 2022; Sánchez et al. 2018). This limitation affects their institutional recognition and ability to participate fully in society on an equal footing (Devine and Nolan 2007; Hammell 2020;

Morrison et al. 2020). Heteronormativity imposes restrictions that go beyond the legal realm, influencing the social interactions and community integration opportunities of these families (Allen and Mendez 2018; Hadden et al. 2020; Kitzinger 2014).

Moreover, discrimination and exclusion based on sexual orientation or gender identity can lead to what is called "occupational apartheid", where LGBTIQ+ families are segregated and limited in their access to services and community activities, reflecting a hierarchy of social and economic value imposed by heteronormative norms. This type of institutionalized occupational injustice highlights the need for inclusive policies that promote equity and well-being for all families, regardless of their composition. In contrast, occupational justice seeks equitable development in opportunities to participate freely in occupations (Hocking 2017; Stadnyk et al. 2009) such as parenting and child-rearing.

The impact of occupational apartheid is also observed in the limitation of the options and activities that LGBTIQ+ families can freely choose, often restricted by cultural prejudices and structural barriers (Morrison et al. 2020). The history of injustice and discrimination faced by these families underscores the importance of addressing these barriers from a human rights and social justice perspective, ensuring that all people can live and thrive without discrimination.

2. Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach, which is pertinent for exploring the narratives and lived experiences from the perspective of the people involved (Quecedo and Castaño 2002). It is situated within an interpretative paradigm that emphasizes the construction of subjectivities influenced by historical, cultural, and social contexts (Miranda and Ortiz 2020). Additionally, a human rights approach is integrated, considering the recognition and protection of rights regardless of sex, sexual orientation, identity, or gender expression, by the principles of the United Nations (Principios de Yogyakarta 2007).

The primary data collection technique is the in-depth, semi-structured interview. This technique is ideal for exploring in detail the significant experiences of the interviewees, allowing for a deep understanding of their emotions, thoughts, and life contexts (Gainza 2006). This method not only gives voice to the families, allowing them to narrate their reality and experiences, but also facilitates the understanding of how these experiences are framed within their historical and sociocultural context. The narratives collected offer a window into specific moments in the lives of individuals, constructing a temporal and spatial narrative (Quecedo and Castaño 2002).

In this way, this study analyzes how lesbian mothers experience and perceive their interactions with the civil registry during the process of registering their children and how these processes influence their life experiences and social integration. The subjects of the research are individuals who identify themselves as lesbian women who have children and are in long-term relationships.

For the selection of participants, purposive sampling was used (Creswell and Poth 2016). Three women, members of lesbian-parent families, were chosen to provide significant depth to the study based on their relevance to the research topics (Otzen and Manterola 2017). Their children were born before the equal marriage law. Initial recruitment was conducted through a call distributed via Instagram, where interested parties could leave their contact information through a link in the posted stories. Subsequently, potential participants were contacted by email to invite them to participate in the study formally, selecting the first couples who responded and met the criteria of being same-sex couples who had gone through the filiation process at the civil registry in Chile. The interviews were conducted after the legal change.

The interviews were coordinated to be conducted online or in person, depending on the availability and preference of the participants. Before each interview, an informed consent was presented that explained the details of the study and the measures to protect the identity and privacy of the participants. The description of the participants is presented in Table 1. Their names were replaced by letters in this study.

Table 1. The description of the participants.

Name	City of Residence	Original Municipality	Years in Relationship	Number of Children/Child Age
K	Santiago	Providencia	3	1/1 year
C	Santiago	Ñuñoa	12	1/2 years
P	Concepción	Concepción	10	1/1 year

Thus, this study was based on a purposive sample of three lesbian-parent families selected to share common experiences regarding the bureaucratic and legal challenges faced before and after implementing the marriage equality law in Chile. In line with qualitative methodology, the small sample size allowed for a deeper exploration of these families' experiences, enabling detailed analysis and a nuanced understanding of their situations. Small samples in qualitative studies are a key strategy to ensure a focus on individual narratives, which enriches the interpretive analysis of the data (Creswell and Poth 2016). Although the number of participants is limited, the aim was to highlight these particular experiences and generate in-depth knowledge about the systemic barriers lesbian families face in Chile. This methodology is complemented by the larger study, which includes a broader diversity of participants and family contexts.

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Analysis Plan

In this study, the analysis of narratives from lesbian-parent families was conducted using a qualitative approach (Creswell and Poth 2016), suitable for capturing the depth and richness of their particular experiences, especially regarding the filiation process in the civil registry and its implications on rights within the LGBTIQ+ community. Below is the analysis plan that was used:

a. Preparation and organization of information:

-All semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and reviewed for accuracy, forming the primary database for analysis.

b. Categorical thematic analysis:

-Following a thematic analysis approach, data were coded into preliminary categories based on research objectives and responses that emerged during the interviews.
-Categories were iteratively refined, allowing specific subthemes to emerge that reflected the challenges faced by these families and the strategies they developed in response to their situation.

c. Identification of strategies and challenges:

-Special attention was given to identifying and analyzing the strategies these families adopted to manage their everyday lives in the context of their legal and social rights.
-Challenges and barriers within the filiation process and interaction with the civil registry were emphasized, highlighting any pending issues that participants considered crucial.

d. Triangulation and validation of data:

-The identified themes were compared and triangulated with existing literature and relevant theories to verify their consistency and relevance.

e. Synthesis of findings:

-The analysis results were synthesized into a comprehensive framework that clearly articulates the experiences of lesbian-parent families concerning the civil registry and the exercise of their rights.

-Based on these findings, specific recommendations were formulated for public policies and administrative practices to improve the inclusion and legal recognition of LGBTIQ+ families in Chile.

f. Dissemination and Feedback:

-The results and recommendations will be presented at various academic forums and delivered to relevant bodies, seeking to influence the modification of policies and practices.

This analysis plan not only allowed a deep understanding of the legal and social dynamics affecting lesbian-parent families but also provided practical insights for future legislative and administrative actions that could significantly improve the quality of life and rights of the LGBTIQ+ community in Chile.

3. Results

Below are the main results grouped into categories that emerge from the analysis plan. These categories are:

1. Legal and bureaucratic challenges in the filiation of lesbian-parent families;
2. Challenges in the implementation of parental postnatal and access to benefits;
3. Resilience strategies and support networks in lesbian-parent families.

3.1. Legal and Bureaucratic Challenges in the Filiation of Lesbian-Parent Families

The formation of lesbian-parent families involves facing numerous challenges, especially in navigating legal and bureaucratic systems primarily designed for heterosexual families. These challenges manifest in various ways, from the terminology used in official documents to the treatment received by public officials.

One of the main obstacles identified is the inconsistency between current legislation and administrative practice. Despite the enactment of Law 21.400, which aims to neutralize gender in legal terminology by replacing "mother" and/or "father" with "parent", the families interviewed report that heteronormativity persists in forms and procedures. For example, before the enactment of Law 21.400, in one interview (Family K), a situation was highlighted where the civil registry enrollment form for a child still listed the options 'mother' and 'father' and had to be manually altered to fit the reality of the family.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that while the treatment by public officials is generally appropriate, more training is needed to ensure that processes are carried out optimally. This lack of preparation is reflected in experiences such as that of the C family, where this situation occurred also before Law 21.400, and due to the rigidity of documents that only recognized the figures of 'mother' and 'father', C, the non-gestational mother, could not officially register her child. Due to the rigidity of documents that only recognized the figures of "mother" and "father", C, the non-gestational mother, could not officially register her child. However, symbolically, the child was given her surname.

This testimony illustrates the specific difficulties faced by lesbian-parent families due to the persistence of a legal and bureaucratic framework that does not adequately reflect the diversity of family structures:

> "At that time, nothing else could be done, and in fact, when they completed the registration and put 'the woman who gave birth,' that surname was automatically placed second. The girl couldn't even change it. I watched everything they did, but (. . .) I left immediately. You couldn't put it under another name, and obviously, we put my surname because it was the only symbolic way to recognize that she was my daughter."—C, paragraph 33, page 44.

This category reflects how legal and bureaucratic barriers can profoundly affect the parenting experience in lesbian-parent families, highlighting the need for ongoing reforms to ensure equity and full recognition of all family configurations in society.

The proper wording of forms in bureaucratic processes is crucial, especially in such a routine yet significant context as the registration of children in the civil registry. The lack of adaptation in forms to reflect the diversity of family structures, such as lesbian-parent

families, not only perpetuates a heteronormative framework but also creates uncertainty in a procedure that should be uniform and fair for all families. When forms do not account for realities beyond traditional ones, the process tends to rely on the interpretation and goodwill of the civil servant handling the case. This means that rather than being governed by clear and standardized principles, the success or difficulty of the process depends on the level of sensitivity and knowledge of the official regarding new legislation and rights. This situation is especially problematic, as it can lead to unequal or even discriminatory treatment, causing affected families to feel frustrated and invisible. Therefore, updating forms is not merely an administrative matter but a crucial step toward ensuring equity and respect for all families without their experience being subject to the subjectivity or discretion of individuals.

3.2. Challenges in the Implementation of Parental Postnatal and Access to Benefits

The integration of same-sex families into state and private benefit systems presents significant challenges, particularly regarding parental postnatal care and registration in health systems. These challenges arise mainly from the inadequacy of existing legal and administrative structures, which still need to be fully adapted to recognize and support family diversity.

3.2.1. Parental Postnatal Leave

In Chile, "parental postnatal leave" is a social benefit that grants parents, especially mothers, a period of paid leave after childbirth to care for their newborns. This benefit is part of the Chilean labor law framework, designed to support families during the first months of a baby's life. In the case of same-sex couples, postnatal leave becomes especially relevant following the 2022 marriage equality law, which recognizes family diversity. However, before this law, lesbian-parent families faced significant challenges in accessing this right, as the leave was generally granted to one parent, typically the mother for six months and the father for five days, though this could be transferred upon the mother's request. Thus, in same-sex families, this situation created confusion as it did not align with their family structure.

The case of family K illustrates these obstacles. Before the law, K and her partner found that, without a paternal figure, the right to leave was not recognized for the non-gestational mother. This reflected a legal gap that affected lesbian-parent families, generating uncertainty and frustration regarding the recognition of their parental rights. In the context of requesting leave and speaking with an official, family K recalls:

> "If there was no conception of the child, explain to me: why is my daughter here at this moment?" It was like a cold bucket of water, and that's when we realized that institutions, whether public or private, are not prepared to serve same-sex families."—K, paragraph 83, page 7.

However, not all experiences were negative. An interesting example is the case of family P, in which the non-gestational mother's employer decided, despite the lack of clear legislation, to grant her postnatal leave. This decision was a proactive move on the company's part, recognizing the importance of the parental role beyond the legal restrictions of the time. This case reflects how some private actors, aware of social transformations, can advance the protection of diverse families' rights even before the law acknowledges them:

> "My company decided to give me postnatal leave even though the law did not require it. It was a much-appreciated gesture because they recognized that my role as a mother was just as important."—P, paragraph 112, page 9.

These experiences of exclusion and inclusion demonstrate how a lack of legal clarity can create inequalities in accessing fundamental rights. Before the enactment of the marriage equality law, access to postnatal leave depended on individual interpretations and decisions by companies or institutions, resulting in unequal application of the right.

This highlights the importance of clear and comprehensive legislation that accounts for all family configurations and ensures equal access to rights without relying on the goodwill of private actors or the interpretation of legal gaps. Law 21.400 represents progress in this regard, but the experiences of these families underscore the need to continue improving the legal framework to ensure that all families, regardless of their composition, have equal access to the same rights.

3.2.2. Registration in the Health System

In another incident reported by K's family, their attempt to register their child as a dependent in the private health system (ISAPRE) was denied due to the rigidity of the registration forms, which, based on binary logic, only allowed for the inclusion of one mother and one father. In this case, the issue was not registering the child with the gestational mother but with the non-gestational mother, as the system did not recognize her as a parent. This situation prevented the child from being registered as a dependent of the non-gestational mother, limiting access to the corresponding healthcare services. These types of bureaucratic barriers translate into tangible discrimination for lesbian-parent families, directly affecting the well-being of their children.

> "But what we have experienced (. . .) are shortcomings, which can also be considered discrimination in civil rights, for example, in the laws. (. . .) It is very ambiguous that the figure of the father still appears when registering your daughter in kindergarten [and in everything that involves] rights to food, breastfeeding, postnatal care—all of this is still under the father's figure according to Chilean laws."—K, paragraph 76, page 11.

The situation faced by K's family underscores a widespread issue in accessing basic rights for lesbian-parent families, where outdated administrative procedures and forms can lead to exclusion and practical difficulties. This rigidity in the forms not only affects access to healthcare services but also impacts the social recognition of diverse family structures.

Compared to the civil registry case discussed earlier, where forms still have "mother" and "father" boxes, the underlying problem is that institutions have not updated their procedures to reflect the family diversity that recent laws aim to recognize. In both cases, poorly designed forms not only create confusion and discomfort but also place access to essential rights at the discretion of officials and institutions.

The experience of family P, where a private company proactively granted postnatal leave to the non-gestational mother, contrasts with K's situation. While family P benefited from the flexibility and progressive awareness of their employer, K's family encountered an institutional barrier that did not recognize their family structure. This contrast shows how the lack of clarity and adaptation in legal and administrative procedures can create inequalities based on the type of institution or company families interact with.

K's case also shows how private institutions, like public ones, can continue to perpetuate heteronormative logic by not updating their practices, even in critical areas such as healthcare. Access to adequate healthcare coverage is a fundamental right, and by restricting access to services due to a lack of legal and administrative recognition of lesbian-parent families, this right is being systematically denied.

This example further illustrates the importance of a comprehensive update to the administrative and legal framework, covering not only labor and legal aspects related to maternity and postnatal leave but also the rights of diverse families in other key systems such as healthcare. The 21.400 law marked an important step by recognizing marriage equality, but implementing this recognition across all aspects of daily life remains incomplete.

Just as with postnatal leave, where some companies decided to move ahead of the legislation, private actors can play a crucial role in advancing the rights of diverse families, but this should not depend on their goodwill. It is urgent that legislative reforms are accompanied by a complete update of procedures and policies to ensure equitable and fair access to rights for all families, regardless of their composition.

This analysis demonstrates that the lack of clarity and adaptation in administrative and legal procedures perpetuates inequalities and creates practical barriers for lesbian-parent families. The situation calls for a holistic approach that takes family diversity into account in all areas of public and private life, from civil registry enrollment to healthcare service access.

3.2.3. Discrimination Based on Laws

The lack of flexibility and adaptability of existing laws creates a systematic barrier that negatively impacts lesbian-parent families. Although laws have progressed in recognizing family diversity, their application and interpretation still rely on traditional normative frameworks that fail to encompass all family configurations. This legal barrier perpetuates the exclusion of these families, even in fundamental areas such as access to basic rights, childcare, and the legal recognition of both parents.

The case of the C family clearly illustrates how this lack of legal flexibility translates into discrimination. When seeking legal advice on accessing parental leave, they received unsatisfactory responses that revealed the unpreparedness of legal professionals to address new family realities. As C recounts:

> "A lawyer told me that postnatal leave is for the gestational mother, and I said, 'What happens in cases where there is no gestational mother, like with adoptive couples?' and the lawyer [responded]: 'I don't know what to say (. . .) all discrimination is based on the laws.'"

This testimony highlights how, despite advances in legislation, existing laws do not account for non-traditional family scenarios, leaving these families in a legal gray area.

Such situations reflect the rigidity of the legal system, which not only fails to recognize the diversity of family structures but also contributes to perpetuating discrimination. Although the enactment of Law 21.400 brought important progress in recognizing same-sex couples, its implementation remains limited in practice. The lack of a clear legal framework that considers all possible family configurations leads to unequal access to rights, largely depending on the interpretation and will of public officials or private actors.

When comparing this situation to previous cases of health system registration and access to parental leave, a common pattern emerges: while laws are formally written, they lack the necessary mechanisms to ensure their proper application across all sectors of society. In all these examples, lesbian-parent families face the uncertainty of whether their rights will be recognized or not, depending on the official they encounter or the company they work for.

This type of structural discrimination is particularly concerning because it is not based on intentional exclusion but rather on the failure of laws to adapt to new family realities. As currently drafted, the laws assume a heteronormative nuclear family model, relegating diverse families to the background. The inability of legal and administrative actors to interpret and apply the law inclusively not only limits access to fundamental rights but also reinforces the notion that only certain types of families are valid or worthy of legal protection.

The comparison with the case of P's family, whose company decided to grant parental leave to the non-gestational mother despite legal ambiguity, serves as an example of how some private actors have adopted more inclusive approaches, recognizing the role of both parents in child-rearing. However, such advances should not depend on the goodwill of companies or individuals but should be guaranteed by a robust and clear legal framework that leaves no room for discrimination.

This subcategory demonstrates that discrimination based on laws is one of the most insidious forms of exclusion, as it hides under the guise of legality and neutrality. C's testimony makes it clear that until laws are revised and adapted to include all family configurations, discrimination will continue, limiting equitable access to fundamental rights for all families.

3.3. Resilience Strategies and Support Networks in Lesbian-Parent Families

Lesbian-parent families face significant challenges in their interactions with legal and social institutions due to prevailing heteronormative structures. However, they have developed various resilience strategies to navigate these challenges more effectively, securing their rights and facilitating processes such as filiation.

3.3.1. Access to Information

Access to information emerges as one of the most important strategies for lesbian-parent families navigating a legal and bureaucratic system that often fails to consider their reality. The ability to obtain accurate information about laws and rights allows these families to demand fair treatment from public and private institutions. Many families seek legal counsel to explore alternatives and secure their filiation rights when facing barriers.

For example, Family C emphasized the importance of having a lawyer who understood the complexities of current laws and how they could be applied to their situation. As C mentions: "*After so many rejections, we sought out a lawyer. Although they didn't have clear answers for everything, they helped us better understand where the legal gaps were and how we could move forward.*" This testimony shows how the active search for information, even when legal professionals don't always have definitive solutions, becomes a tool of resilience in the face of legal uncertainty.

Furthermore, Family K shared how, after several failed attempts to register their daughter, they were forced to consult various sources of information, from lawyers to other families in the LGBTIQ+ community who had already undergone similar processes. As K explains: "*We realized that it wasn't enough to rely on what they told us in public offices. We needed to research, ask questions, and share experiences with other families to understand how to proceed in different cases.*" This collaborative approach to gathering information reflects an empowering strategy that not only strengthens the family but also builds support networks within the community.

Access to information not only impacts the resolution of legal issues but also strengthens families' confidence in defending their rights. As they learn about laws and policies, families develop a greater ability to face institutional barriers with a solid foundation of knowledge. This is crucial in a context where, as previously discussed, legal gaps and ambiguities tend to leave decisions up to officials' interpretations, creating inconsistencies and, in many cases, discrimination.

As families gather information and consult experts, they also identify gaps in laws and procedures, leading them to develop adaptive strategies. An example of this is Family P's experience. Faced with the lack of recognition of the second mother when enrolling their child in school, they sought advice from support networks within the community. This allowed them to find a solution through a flexible interpretation of the rules: "*Thanks to the information we got from other families, we knew how to proceed. They told us we could appeal directly to the school administration, and that's what we did.*" This strategy demonstrates how access to shared information within the LGBTIQ+ community helps families overcome immediate barriers while reinforcing solidarity and collective learning.

This type of resilience, based on proactive information-seeking, shows how lesbian-parent families not only react to discrimination but also anticipate legal and administrative barriers. By clearly understanding their rights, these families find creative solutions and establish support networks that allow them to navigate systems that might otherwise be structured to exclude them.

3.3.2. Use of Social Networks

Social networks have emerged as key platforms for the exchange of information and support among lesbian-parent families. Through these platforms, families share practical information about legal and administrative procedures and create solidarity networks that help them overcome institutional barriers. In a context where official channels are

often slow or inefficient, social networks have proven to be effective tools for streamlining processes and raising awareness of structural issues.

For instance, after the Marriage Equality Law, the experience of family C on Twitter, now X, shows how a simple post about delays in the delivery of birth certificates led to a series of quick responses and resolutions by the civil registry. As C recounts: "*They would ask me, 'Give me your daughter's name, the DNI, the moms' names, etc.', and they would say, 'We are going to check.' The next day, they responded, 'Your procedure is done.' So, I told everyone in the chat, 'Okay, give me your DNIs and all the stuff.' I asked them, 'Okay, one, two, three, for me and all my friends.'*" This story highlights how social media can act as a bridge between institutions and families, facilitating a process that might otherwise be slow or frustrating.

In this case, Twitter served as a direct communication channel with the institution and allowed family C to mediate between the civil registry and other families affected by the same issue. This underscores the potential of social networks to amplify voices that might otherwise be marginalized within the bureaucratic system. Additionally, this situation illustrates a form of digital empowerment, where families use their access to information and digital platforms to demand fair and equal treatment.

Another proactive example of social media use can be found in the experience of family P, who shared how their Instagram account became a space for exchanging experiences on filiation and the civil registry. By publicly sharing the details of their own process, they not only received advice and support from other families but also helped improve the interactions that others had with institutions. This exchange of information on platforms like Instagram reinforces the idea that individual experiences can have a positive collective impact, as the visibility of these situations encourages small but meaningful changes in institutional treatment.

> "Sharing our experience on Instagram helped other families better prepare to face the bureaucracy of the civil registry. I received many messages thanking us for putting our difficulties and solutions out there for others to see."—P, paragraph 67, page 10.

Through the use of these platforms, families not only find solutions to their own problems but also build a support network where cooperation and solidarity are encouraged. These kinds of digital support networks, where shared experiences lead to collective solutions, underscore the power of social media as a tool for social and personal transformation for lesbian-parent families.

In this sense, social media plays a dual role: it serves as a platform for visibility and for practical action. On one hand, it allows families to expose the barriers and discrimination they face, while on the other, it serves as a space where quick and effective solutions can be found. This contrasts with the rigidity and slowness of the legal and bureaucratic system, where the necessary reforms take time to be implemented and procedures can leave families in vulnerable situations.

In summary, the use of social media has allowed lesbian-parent families to confront the challenges involved in the legal and administrative recognition of their filiation and build a collective resistance space where shared experiences generate solutions and strengthen the bonds between families. Connecting with other families in similar situations enables social media to become an extension of traditional support networks, playing a crucial role in overcoming barriers imposed by legal and bureaucratic structures.

3.3.3. Creation of Support Networks

The interviews reveal that, beyond technology, lesbian-parent families have formed strong bonds with others within the LGBTIQ+ community and with diverse families. These support networks are essential for sharing resources and experiences and creating a more inclusive and understanding environment in the face of adversity.

Community support networks play a crucial role, as they allow families to build a solid foundation on which they can rely during times of uncertainty or discrimination. In this sense, sharing similar experiences becomes a tool for collective resilience. By pooling

together coping strategies and resources, these families create a sense of belonging and security that can be difficult to find in more traditional institutions.

For example, Family P mentions how family diversity becomes an integrating element within these networks:

> "There's no fear of saying, 'Oh, my little one won't fit in!' (. . .) It's a new cycle where there's a diversity of families; there are single moms, single dads, kids who live with their grandma; there are two moms, there are two dads, you know?"—P, paragraph 37, page 4.

This quote reflects how the initial fear of discrimination is mitigated when families find themselves in environments where diversity is the norm, not the exception. The idea of fitting in is no longer tied to a traditional family model but expands to encompass different family structures. This, in turn, reinforces a sense of collective identity and provides an emotional support space where each family can feel recognized.

These networks also play a central role in disseminating information about rights and services. The families interviewed mentioned that, in many cases, it was through these networks that they learned about their legal rights or found lawyers willing to help. By sharing experiences, they were able to anticipate discriminatory situations or navigate bureaucratic processes more efficiently. Instead of feeling alone when facing institutions that do not always recognize family diversity, families found in these networks a form of resistance against institutional barriers.

Family C, for instance, shared how their support circle not only helped them deal with legal situations but also empowered them in raising their children within an environment that validated their family structure:

> "We had a support group with other families, and thanks to that, we knew we weren't alone. There was always someone who had already gone through a similar experience, and that gave us the confidence that we'd be able to overcome any obstacle."—C, paragraph 45, page 5.

The role of support networks in creating a space for collective well-being and the exchange of experiences between lesbian-parent families highlights a key characteristic of these communities: their capacity to generate change from the ground up. The families interviewed emphasized that, through their participation in wider networks, they not only gained access to resources that facilitated their parenthood process but were also able to transform social and institutional spaces that traditionally had not recognized their existence or their needs.

Additionally, creating these networks fosters a sense of collective agency, where families support each other and actively participate in transforming their communities. These collective actions, such as organizing joint activities or making family diversity visible at public events, create a cohesive force that drives broader institutional and social changes. The fact that these networks do not limit themselves to offering emotional support but also involve concrete actions to improve the living conditions of LGBTIQ+ families demonstrates their transformative impact.

In summary, the creation of support networks among lesbian-parent families is a central strategy for overcoming the obstacles they face in their daily lives. Through mutual education, collective action, and emotional backing, these networks strengthen individual families and generate positive changes in the communities and institutions they interact with. Inclusion and diversity become the pillars sustaining these networks, creating a space where all families can thrive regardless of their composition.

4. Discussion

The discussion of the results of this research reflects findings similar to those in studies conducted by Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa (2021) and Orleans (2021), who observed that the barriers faced by diverse families are predominantly social, cultural, and institutional. These studies highlight the difficulties in accessing key processes such as

adoption, assisted reproduction, and child registration, pointing out that, although society may show greater tolerance towards same-sex parent families, it is often governmental policies and practices that perpetuate a heteronormative regime. This research shows that although civil registry officials were willing to carry out registration procedures, outdated forms represented a significant obstacle, illustrating the gap between progressive legislation and its practical implementation. When compared to other nations with more integrated systems for recognizing same-sex families, such as Spain (Calvo and Trujillo 2011) and the Netherlands (Hekma and Duyvendak 2011), Chile's framework remains constrained by its reliance on heteronormative assumptions. This comparison highlights the urgent need for reforms that align with international standards and facilitate smoother bureaucratic processes for LGBTIQ+ families.

From another perspective, occupational justice refers to the right of all individuals to participate in meaningful activities that promote their well-being without barriers or limitations imposed by their social or structural context (Munoz 2018; Pizarro et al. 2018). In this sense, "occupation" does not exclusively refer to paid work but encompasses any meaningful and productive activity that individuals undertake in their daily lives (Lawlor 2020). In the case of lesbian-parent families, parenting is considered a fundamental "occupation" as it involves activities such as caregiving, protection, education, and emotional development of children—essential activities for the health and well-being of the family.

From the perspective of occupational justice, these families have the right to fully engage in their role as parents without being hindered by legal, social, or bureaucratic barriers (Leite and Lopes 2022; Morrison et al. 2020). The difficulties they face in accessing basic services and rights, such as parental leave or registering their children in the healthcare system, constitute violations of this right. Therefore, the concept of occupational justice is relevant for analyzing how lesbian-parent families, as well as other non-conventional family structures, experience exclusion and discrimination in their everyday parenting activities due to a system that does not fully recognize or support their family structure.

This approach highlights not only the importance of legal and administrative inclusion of diverse families but also the need for an environment that allows all families to participate equitably in social and economic life without facing structural barriers that limit their rights as parents.

From this perspective, Hocking (2017) argues that occupational justice focuses on mediating and facilitating environments where participation in occupations is fair and meaningful and promotes well-being. In agreement, Stadnyk et al. (2009) suggest that occupational justice is compromised when participation in occupations is not equitable among society members and where there are groups that, in terms of opportunities, gain advantages over others. The findings of this study reveal that, despite the existence of regulations like Law 21.400 aimed at ensuring equality, the lack of adequate training among civil registry officials prevents LGBTIQ+ families from fully participating in meaningful occupations related to social participation and the care of others. This gap is manifested in the confusion between parenting and filiation from a biological perspective, further restricting opportunities for homosexual couples to become parents, a limitation supported by various laws and governmental benefits that uphold the heteronormative system (Alday-Mondaca and Lay-Lisboa 2021).

Additionally, the process of registering children from lesbian-parent families faces significant management challenges, as evidenced by the families who had to resort to complaints through social networks to receive their children's birth certificates after long periods of waiting. In contrast, it is essential to note that heterosexual families face considerably shorter waiting times for the same procedure, underscoring the persistent inequalities and situations of occupational injustice (Morrison et al. 2020). These disparities reflect how individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community are limited and marginalized by social prejudices around sexual diversity, resulting in limitations in their participation in meaningful

occupations due to the prevalence of laws that perpetuate a heteronormative society (Leite and Lopes 2022).

In addition to lesbian-parent families, single and unmarried mothers in Chile also face similar barriers when navigating the legal and bureaucratic system. These women, not fitting within the traditional family model, are affected by the same system requirements that expect the inclusion of a paternal figure in official forms. Even when there is no biological relationship or relevant paternal figure, the Chilean system has historically been rigid in its requirement for this field in the records, creating obstacles and uncomfortable situations (Argomedo 2018).

A clear example of this issue arises in the process of filiation and the registration of children in the civil registry, where single mothers often find that the absence of a father's name causes bureaucratic complications. While it is possible to register the child with only the mother's surname or even create a surname, these situations still generate confusion and, at times, the need to justify the absence of a father. This reflects how the legal and social system in Chile continues to operate under heteronormative assumptions, excluding those who do not fit this model (Maldonado 2020).

This situation parallels the experience of lesbian-parent families, who also face the lack of recognition of a second mother, especially before the implementation of the Marriage Equality Law (Law 21.400). In both cases, for single mothers and same-sex couples, the system continues to perpetuate a binary filiation structure that does not reflect the diversity of modern family configurations.

The similarities between the experiences of single mothers and lesbian-parent families underscore the need for a thorough review of filiation laws and bureaucratic procedures in Chile. This review should ensure that all families, regardless of their composition, have equal access to rights and do not face discrimination or exclusion for not adhering to a traditional family model.

Therefore, these results not only highlight the need to update and modify administrative practices and training among civil registry officials to reflect progressive laws more faithfully but also underscore the importance of a broader reform to address the cultural and structural roots of discrimination and ensure accurate equity for LGBTIQ+ families in all aspects of social and legal life.

5. Conclusions

This research provides an analysis of the narratives and experiences of lesbian-parent families, highlighting how, despite increasing social openness towards family diversity, institutional structures and practices that perpetuate a heteronormative regime persist, consequently leading to situations of occupational injustice. Our findings demonstrate the critical need to implement public policies that explicitly recognize and address the barriers these families face daily in their occupations and interactions with governmental entities.

The observed discrimination against women in lesbian-parent relationships has profound social repercussions, negatively affecting the healthy development of children and the consolidation of same-sex families recognized both by the state and society (Morrison 2022). It is essential, therefore, to increase the visibility of these facts, not only as a matter of social justice but also to challenge and transform the entrenched prejudices and norms that question their parental abilities compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

We recognize that these social issues must be addressed from an inclusive social model that considers interaction with the environment and occupation safely and equitably. We propose creating and disseminating more research that exposes the various occupational injustices and developing intervention strategies that provide support and accompaniment to diverse families. It is essential that these processes include the provision of safe spaces and that we, as health professionals, act as agents of change to promote the occupational rights of these families, avoiding reproducing or validating any form of violence towards the LGBTIQ+ community.

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgency of legislative reforms and policies that recognize and facilitate the full inclusion of lesbian-parent families in all aspects of social and legal life. By aligning Chile's practices with international standards and learning from countries that have successfully reformed their systems, we can draw valuable lessons that support the full recognition of LGBTIQ+ rights. These findings contribute to a global movement toward equality, reaffirming the need for continuous efforts to educate, research, and advocate for inclusive and just societies across all contexts.

6. Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of lesbian-parent families regarding the civil registry and legal rights, it is essential to consider certain limitations that might influence the interpretation and generalization of the results:

6.1. Sample Size and Diversity

The sample of this research, primarily focused on urban areas of Chile, was small. This may limit the generalization of the results to other regions or contexts with different cultural and socioeconomic dynamics. The experiences of lesbian-parent families may vary significantly in rural or less urbanized environments, aspects that were not explored in depth in this study.

6.2. Focus on Lesbian-Parent Families

By focusing exclusively on lesbian-parent families, the study excludes other family configurations within the LGBTIQ+ community, such as families formed by gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer parents. This limitation prevents a complete understanding of the varied experiences and challenges faced by the entire LGBTIQ+ community about legal and social processes.

6.3. Recent Legislative and Social Changes

The legal and social contexts related to LGBTIQ+ rights are constantly evolving. Some challenges identified in the study might have been mitigated or exacerbated by recent legislative or social changes, which needed to be reflected in the study due to its temporal design.

7. Directions for Further Research

These limitations underscore the importance of conducting future research that includes more extensive and representative samples of diverse family configurations within the LGBTIQ+ community. Additionally, longitudinal studies would allow for a better understanding of how legal and social dynamics affect LGBTIQ+ families over time and in response to legislative changes. Expanding the geographic and cultural diversity of the samples could also provide a more comprehensive view of the variety of experiences within the LGBTIQ+ community in different contexts.

By addressing these limitations, future research can further enrich our understanding of the experiences of LGBTIQ+ families and enhance public policies and interventions aimed at effectively supporting these families in a variety of social settings.

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