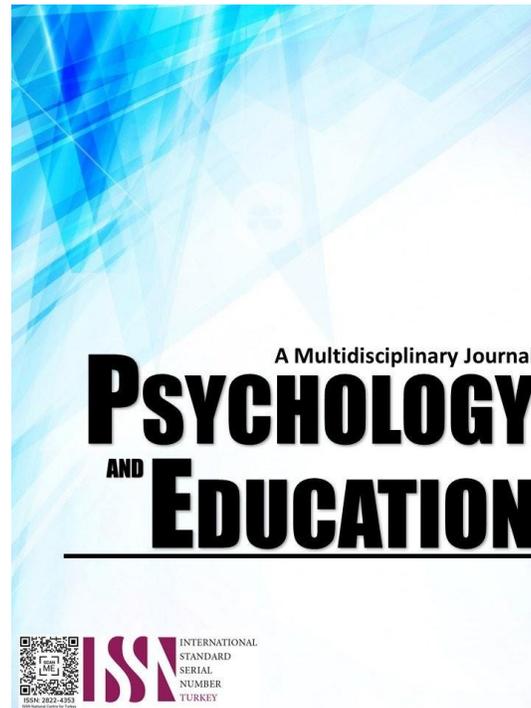


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Navigating Parenthood Alone: Unveiling Parenting Style, Parental Stress, Challenges and Coping Strategies of Solo Fathers

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the parenting styles, parenting stress, challenges and coping mechanisms among selected solo fathers in the Philippines. Information was gathered through an initial survey questionnaire distributed to twenty solo fathers, ultimately resulting in twelve final respondents. The selection of participants utilized snowball sampling techniques, enabling an in-depth examination of the experiences of those solo fathers actively involved in raising their children as the sole parent. Participants were chosen based on specific criteria: (1) Solo Fathers, individuals assuming primary caregiving responsibility without a partner, whether divorced, separated, widowed, or never married; (2) Age range between 25 and 55 years; (3) Participants must have children. Data gathering procedure involved quantitative measures using validated instruments like the Parenting Style Inventory (PSI), categorizing styles into Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved, and the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) to assess stress levels. Qualitative insights were captured through a carefully crafted interview protocol exploring solo fathers' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Results from the analysis revealed two significant subjects: challenges experienced among solo fathers, encompassing role fulfillment and obligations, with two sub-themes under role fulfillment—discipline and care. Coping strategies emerged with two main themes: (1) coping strategies for authoritative parenting styles, including direct-seeking help and indirect-seeking help, and (2) coping strategies for authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, which involved accepting responsibility and seeking support. By delving into the unique experiences of solo fathers, the research contributes to the university's mission by addressing the diverse challenges faced by individuals assuming the role of the sole parent. Moreover, this research resonates with the university's commitment to environmental stewardship and social holiness by providing insights on the challenges confronted by solo fathers contributing to the broader realm of psychology, fostering a holistic approach to academic and societal engagement while actively contributing to the transformation of society.

Keywords: *solo-father, parenting style, parenting stress, challenges, coping strategies*

Introduction

Solo fathers, those who assume the role of primary caregivers for their children without a partner, navigate a unique and challenging journey in the realm of parenting (Naidoo, 2015). Single-parent households are on the increase in our society and especially single-father households where fathers are fulfilling the role of both parents in rearing their children. Understanding their experiences is essential, as it sheds light on the intricate interplay of parental stress and parenting styles. According to Esbensen (2000), non-traditional families, including single-parent households, are now prevalent in society. However, even within single-parent family structures, there has been a notable increase in single-father households. Additionally, scholars have concluded that raising children is neither simple nor easy, and when combined with factors such as financial strain and the challenge of parenting alone, the task becomes even more difficult (Coles, 2002, 2009; Gibson-Davis, 2008; Roy, 1999; Waldfogel et al., 2010).

Parenting styles, as conceptualized by Baumrind (1978), play a pivotal role in shaping the development and outcomes of children (O. F. García et al., 2018; Gimenez-Serrano et al., 2022). These styles are categorized based on the balance between demandingness and responsiveness, with three primary classifications—authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by high control but low warmth, authoritative parenting combines both control and warmth, and permissive parenting entails high warmth but low control. Love and Thomas (2014) highlight three main parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. These distinct parenting styles reflect the approaches parents employ in raising and guiding their children, influencing their emotional and behavioral outcomes (Rizvi & Najam, 2015). Parental stress, on the other hand, is a recognized phenomenon in the realm of parenting, encompassing the challenges, demands, and responsibilities experienced by parents while raising their children. Originating from a perceived mismatch between the demands of parenting and available resources, parental stress is considered an external stressor impacting overall well-being and parenting practices (Deater-Deckard & Panneton, 2017; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017). The transition to parenthood, particularly during early childhood, intensifies caregiving demands, leading to heightened stress levels among parents. This stress has the potential to negatively impact children's psychological well-being, contributing to the development of behavioral and emotional issues (Liu & Wang, 2015). In relation to solo fathers, those primary caregivers without a partner, navigate a distinct parenting journey shaped by various circumstances. Whether arising from relationship breakdowns, the loss of a spouse, or intentional choices, solo fathers face challenges during the transition to single parenthood, often accompanied by extreme stress and feelings of inadequacy (Diesta, 2018). Jones et al. (2022) highlight the dual experience of social approval and stigma faced by solo fathers, emphasizing the relevance of exploring how societal attitudes impact their parental stress and parenting styles.

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As psychology undergraduate students, the objectives of conducting this study aimed to examine the demographic characteristics, predominant parenting styles, level of parental stress, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms employed by solo fathers to provide an understanding of the experiences and dynamics of solo fatherhood so that findings from this study may contribute to the existing body of knowledge in this field and informed supportive interventions tailored to the needs of solo fathers as they navigate parenthood alone.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics and background information of the selected solo fathers in terms of the following:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. educational background;
 - 1.3. occupation;
 - 1.4. number of children;
 - 1.5. length of time as a solo father; and
 - 1.6. relationship status?
2. What are the predominant parenting styles exhibited by solo fathers, as assessed by the Parenting Style Inventory?
3. What is the level of parental stress experienced by solo fathers, as measured by the Parental Stress Scale?
4. What are the challenges solo fathers encountered, and what were their coping mechanisms employed?

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed an explanatory mixed-methods research design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The research unfolded in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data to explore parental stress and parenting styles among solo fathers. During the qualitative phase, interviews were conducted to provide contextual insights and explanations for the initial quantitative findings to enhance the overall understanding of solo fathers' experiences.

Participants

The research focused on solo fathers in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija, during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The sampling frame employed a snowball sampling technique, suitable for accessing hard-to-reach populations like solo fathers. Initial participants were identified through established connections, initiating a chain referral approach for participant recruitment.

Instruments

This study employed validated instruments to delve into parenting styles and parental stress among solo fathers by using the following:

The Parenting Style Inventory (PSI) serves as a valuable tool, drawing from Baumrind's influential theory, offering a nuanced exploration of parenting styles. Its application extends beyond our study, with researchers in the field of parenthood consistently relying on its categorization into Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved styles. The PSI has been widely used in research and has demonstrated good reliability and validity. Reliability is typically assessed using measures like Cronbach's alpha, which indicates the internal consistency of the scale. Validity is supported by the theoretical framework of Baumrind's parenting styles and by comparing the results of the PSI with other measures of parenting styles or with observed parenting behaviors. Overall, the PSI is considered a reliable and valid tool for assessing parenting styles. Where scoring involves looking at the responses to specific statements to determine the predominant parenting style. Authoritarian style: High scores on statements 1, 3, and 9. Authoritative style: High scores on statements 2, 5, and 8. Permissive style: High scores on statements 3 and 7. Uninvolved style: High scores on statements 4 and 10. Establishing its robustness not only in our study on solo fathers but also in capturing the intricacies of parenting approaches across various research endeavors in the realm of parenthood.

Similarly, the Parental Stress Scale (PSS), developed by Berry and Jones in 1995, holds significance beyond the scope of our study. Researchers exploring the complexities of parenting stress consistently turn to the PSS for its efficacy in assessing stress levels experienced by parents, including solo fathers. This scale's utility extends to its series of statements, each meticulously designed to reflect different facets of parenting-related stress. Crucially, the PSS has undergone thorough psychometric scrutiny, ensuring its reliability and validity. Whereas reliability refers to the consistency of the scale, which can be assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Validity

refers to the extent to which the scale measures what it intends to measure. The PSS has been shown to have good construct validity, meaning that it measures the intended construct of parental stress effectively. For its scoring parental stress score, reverse score items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18 as follows: (1=5), (2=4), (3=3), (4=2), (5=1). Then, sum all the item scores. Parental stress scores range from 18 to 90, with lower scores indicating lower levels of parental stress. As a result, this standardized tool not only contributes to our quantitative understanding of the interplay between parenting styles and stress among solo fathers but also finds application in broader studies investigating the multifaceted nature of stress in the realm of parenthood.

Complementing the quantitative measures, an interview protocol was crafted to capture qualitative insights. While not standardized, the interview questions were carefully designed to explore solo fathers' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in depth. This multi-pronged approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative tools, enriched the study's depth and breadth in relation to exploration of the diverse aspects of solo fatherhood.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through the Parenting Style Inventory and Parental Stress Scale were analyzed using statistical methods such as descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Meanwhile, the qualitative data obtained through interviews underwent content analysis to identify patterns and themes, allowing for an exploration of the challenges faced by solo fathers and an examination of the coping mechanisms they employ to navigate these challenges while parenting alone. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings was conducted through a process of data triangulation, enhancing the study's validity and reliability.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

The selected solo fathers exhibit diverse demographic characteristics and background information, providing information of their profiles.

Table 1. *Profile of the Participants (Total 20)*

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Age Range of Respondent		
25-30 years old	4	20.00
31-35 years old	4	20.00
36-40 years old	4	20.00
41-45 years old	3	15.00
46-50 years old	2	10.00
51-55 years old	3	15.00
Educational Attainment		
Elementary	1	5.00
High School	9	45.00
Vocational	2	10.00
College	8	40.00
Graduate School	0	0.00
Occupation		
Professional	1	5.00
Administrative Worker	1	5.00
Sales Worker	4	20.00
Transport and Communication	3	15.00
Unemployed	1	5.00
Others	10	50.00
Number of Children		
1 Child	5	25.00
2 Children	8	40.00
3 Children	5	25.00
4 Children	2	10.00
Length of Time as Solo Father		
1-5 years	10	50.00
6-10 years	6	30.00
11-15 years	3	15.00
16-20 years	0	0.00
21-25 years	1	5.00
Marital Status		
Married but separated	11	55.00
Separated (Not Married at all)	9	45.00

The age distribution among respondents varies. The majority, representing 40% of the total respondents, fall within the range of 31 to 40 years old. Other significant age groups include those aged 25 to 30 years old and 51 to 55 years old, each comprising 20% of the

respondents. The educational background of respondents demonstrates diversity. The highest proportion, at 45%, have completed high school. College graduates closely follow at 40%. Vocational graduates and those with an elementary education represent 10% and 5% of respondents, respectively. In terms of occupation, respondents are engaged in a range of professions. 50% are involved in various "Other" jobs, such as tricycle driving or welding. Sales workers and those in transport and communication account for 20% and 15% of respondents, respectively. Additionally, 5% of respondents are professional or administrative workers, while an equal percentage are unemployed. Family size among respondents varies. 40% have two children, while 25% have either one or three children. Moreover, 10% of respondents have four children. The duration of being a solo father also varies. 50% have been in this role for 1 to 5 years, 30% for 6 to 10 years, and 15% for 11 to 15 years. A smaller proportion of respondents have been solo fathers for longer periods, with 5% for 21 to 25 years and none for 16 to 20 years. Finally, regarding marital status, the majority of respondents (55%) are married but separated, while 45% are separated and were not married at all.

Predominant parenting styles exhibited by solo fathers, as assessed by the Parenting Style Inventory

According to Baumrind's influential parenting model, parenting can be understood as a combination of various parenting practices (Smetana, 2017). Originally, parenting styles were described as authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. However, they have since been reconceptualized in terms of two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness. This reconceptualization has led to the identification of a fourth style, known as rejecting-neglecting (Maccoby, 1992).

Table 2. *Parenting Styles as Assessed by the Parenting Style Inventory*

<i>Parenting Style</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Authoritative	8	40%
Authoritarian	2	10%
Permissive	2	10%
Uninvolved	8	40%
Total	20	100.00%

Table 2 presents data on the parenting styles of 20 participants as assessed by the Parenting Style Inventory. Parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping children's development and behavior, making this data significant for understanding the dynamics within families. Firstly, the most prominent parenting style observed among the participants is the Authoritative style, with 8 participants, constituting 40% of the sample. Authoritative parents are characterized by their warmth, responsiveness, and clear expectations, fostering a supportive environment while maintaining reasonable boundaries. This style is often associated with positive child outcomes, including higher self-esteem, academic success, and emotional well-being.

Meanwhile, the Authoritarian and Permissive parenting styles are less prevalent within the sample, each observed in 2 cases, representing 10% of the total sample for each style. Authoritarian parents are known for their strict rules, high demands, and low levels of warmth, often resorting to punishment as a means of discipline. While this style may yield immediate compliance, it can also lead to negative outcomes such as rebellion, resentment, and decreased self-esteem. On the other hand, Permissive parents exhibit high levels of warmth and responsiveness but impose few demands or limitations on their children's behavior. This lax approach to parenting can result in children lacking self-discipline, struggling with authority figures, and experiencing difficulties in social settings where rules and boundaries are essential.

Lastly, an equal number of participants, also 8, exhibit the Uninvolved parenting style, also comprising 40% of the sample. Uninvolved parents typically display low levels of responsiveness and involvement in their children's lives, often resulting in neglectful or indifferent parenting. Children raised in such environments may struggle with emotional regulation, academic performance, and forming secure attachments.

Level of parental stress experienced by solo fathers, as measured by the Parental Stress Scale

Being a parent, whether single or not, is a simultaneously rewarding and stressful experience. According to Deater-Deckard (2004), the stress that comes with parenthood can be described as "a series of processes that result in negative psychological and physical reactions as a result of trying to adapt to the demands of being a parent." Furthermore, being responsible for the welfare and growth of children is demanding and can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially if parents have limited control over the everyday stressors of life (Deater-Deckard, 2004b). Findings from our study also reveals the following parental stress experienced by solo fathers, as measured by the Parental Stress Scale.

Table 3. *Initial Respondents: Parental Stress among solo fathers*

<i>Parental Stress Scale</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Low-Stress Level	8	40.00%
High-Stress Level	12	60.00%
Total	20	100.00%

Table 3 presents data on parental stress levels among solo fathers, as assessed by the Parental Stress Scale. The table indicates that out of the total 20 initial respondents, 8 solo fathers reported experiencing a low level of stress, constituting 40% of the sample. Conversely, the majority of solo fathers, comprising 12 respondents or 60% of the sample, reported experiencing a high level of stress. This data

reveals high stress levels among solo fathers, indicating the challenges they may face in managing their parental responsibilities without the support of a partner. Moreover, the data from Table 3 reveals an interesting possible association between parenting styles and stress levels among solo fathers. All 8 participants who reported an Uninvolved parenting style also displayed low stress levels, while the remaining parenting styles—Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive—were found to have high stress levels, as assessed by the Parental Stress Scale. This suggests that only these three parenting styles led to elevated stress levels among the participants, highlighting the potential impact of parenting approaches on the psychological well-being of solo fathers.

Only the 12 fathers with high stress levels were invited for the interview phase. The purpose of this phase was to explore the challenges faced by solo fathers and how they cope with them. By specifically focusing on this subgroup, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of navigating parenthood alone through unveiling parenting style, parental stress, challenges and coping strategies of solo Fathers.

Challenges solo fathers encounter and coping mechanisms used.

According to Lestari and Amaliana (2020), solo fathers play a dual role in providing discipline and care for their children. As single parents, fathers take on the responsibilities of caregivers, motivators, mentors, study companions, and disciplinarians for their children (Fernández-Lozano, 2019) which was also revealed during the content analysis of our qualitative phase.

Table 4. *Content Analysis of challenges solo fathers encounter (N=12)*

<i>Authoritative Parenting Style</i>			
	Discipline	Care	Obligation
Role Fulfillment	8	3	0
<i>Authoritarian and Permissive</i>			
	Discipline	Care	Obligation
Role Fulfillment	0	0	4

Table 4 presents a content analysis of challenges encountered by solo fathers, categorizing them based on their employed parenting styles: Authoritative and Authoritarian/Permissive. The findings reveal distinct differences in the challenges faced by solo fathers depending on their parenting approaches.

For solo fathers adhering to the Authoritative Parenting Style, the primary challenges center around Discipline, with 8 out of 12 participants reporting difficulties in this area. This likely encompasses struggles in setting boundaries, managing behavior, and resolving conflicts with their children. Additionally, a subset of these fathers, 3 out of 12, express challenges related to Care responsibilities, indicating difficulties in providing emotional support and managing daily caregiving routines. Interestingly, none of the participants in this group report challenges concerning Obligation Role Fulfillment, suggesting a lesser emphasis on external societal or familial expectations. Based on the themes identified in the content analysis, solo fathers, particularly those who embrace the Authoritative Parenting Style, play challenging roles in their children's lives that encompass both discipline and care. When it comes to discipline, solo fathers have a significant influence on instilling character values and behaviors in their children. Havell (2008) discusses this role in "Increasing child compliance: Fathers flying solo," highlighting the various aspects involved in disciplining children as a solo father, such as imparting religious values, promoting discipline, and fostering independence. This shows that solo fathers actively participate in shaping their children's moral and behavioral development, aligning with the expectations of the Authoritative Parenting Style, which emphasizes clear expectations, guidance, warmth, and responsiveness. Furthermore, in terms of care, solo fathers experience a shift in their familial roles, especially in cases of divorce or being unmarried. They transition from being providers to taking on caregiving responsibilities traditionally associated with mothers. Lestari and Amaliana (2020) state that solo fathers become caregivers, motivators, mentors, study companions, and reinforcements of child discipline within their families. This highlights their commitment to providing emotional support, guidance, and nurturing to their children, indicating a departure from traditional gender roles and embracing a more inclusive approach to parenting that aligns with the principles of the Authoritative Parenting Style. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data among solo fathers, particularly those who embody the Authoritative Parenting Style, play crucial roles in disciplining and caring for their children as they demonstrate adaptability and commitment by providing support and guidance to foster their children's development and well-being.

In contrast, for solo fathers employing Authoritarian or Permissive parenting styles, the challenges primarily revolve around Obligation Role Fulfillment, with all 4 participants in this category indicating difficulties in meeting societal or familial obligations. These challenges may include financial responsibilities, providing for their children's needs, or fulfilling societal expectations of parenting roles. Notably, none of the participants in this group mention challenges related to Discipline or Care, indicating a potential difference in parenting priorities or perceptions of these aspects compared to those employing the Authoritative style. Within the framework of Authoritarian and Permissive parenting styles, solo fathers undertake significant obligations and roles, which challenge conventional masculine norms. As highlighted by Wilson (2010), solo fathers are tasked with caring for their children alone, constituting a departure from the dynamics typically present when the mother is also involved. This concept of "Solo Care" represents a distinct dimension of father involvement, emphasizing the unique responsibilities shouldered by solo fathers in nurturing and supporting their children's development in the absence of a maternal figure. The data from our study shows how their chosen parenting style possibly influences the challenges they face, with distinct emphasis on different aspects of parenting responsibilities.

Table 5. *Coping Mechanisms employed by solo fathers (N=12)*

<i>Authoritative Parenting Style</i>		
Coping	Indirect Seeking Support	Direct Seeking Support
Total number of coded items	5	3
<i>Authoritarian and Permissive</i>		
Coping	Accepting Responsibilities	Seeking Support
Total number of coded items	2	2

Table 5 presents the coping mechanisms employed by solo fathers, categorized according to their parenting styles: Authoritative and Authoritarian/Permissive. The data highlights differences in coping strategies utilized by solo fathers based on their parenting approaches.

For solo fathers adhering to the Authoritative Parenting Style, the predominant coping mechanisms involved seeking support, both indirectly and directly. As revealed from their interview responses specifically, 5 out of the total respondents in this category employed indirect seeking support methods, which include seeking advice or guidance from friends, family, without directly asking for assistance. Additionally, 3 solo fathers in this group utilized direct seeking support strategies, indicating a proactive approach to seeking help and resources to manage their parenting challenges effectively. Within the context of the Authoritative Parenting Style, solo fathers employ various coping strategies to address the unique challenges they face. When it comes to seeking support directly, 3 solo fathers utilize this approach, actively reaching out to their family, partners, and friends for assistance when encountering difficulties. This direct seeking of support aligns with the perspective of McLanahan, Wedemeyer, and Adalberg (1981), who define support as reassurance of love, care, and esteem, as well as being part of a network of communication and mutual obligation. Furthermore, during times of stress and crises, extended family members are likely to provide valuable resources to support the family, as suggested by Duri (Dowd, 1997), highlighting the importance of direct support-seeking behavior among solo fathers adhering to the Authoritative Parenting Style. In terms of seeking support indirectly, 5 solo fathers in this category engage in activities such as drinking alcohol and playing games. This indirect seeking of support is described by Fiadzo and Osei (2018) as a coping strategy employed by some single parents to forget their problems in life. By engaging in activities like drinking alcohol or playing online games, solo fathers attempt to temporarily escape from stressors and difficulties they face in their roles as single parents. This suggests that while some solo fathers seek direct support from their social networks, others resort to indirect coping mechanisms to manage the challenges associated with single parenthood within the framework of the Authoritative Parenting Style.

On the other hand, for solo fathers employing Authoritarian or Permissive parenting styles, the coping mechanisms differ. Here, the predominant coping strategy is accepting responsibilities, with 2 respondents indicating this approach. This revealed from their interview responses acknowledging and taking ownership of their parenting duties and obligations without seeking external support. Additionally, an equal number of participants in this group, 2, employed seeking support as a coping mechanism, suggesting a willingness to reach out for assistance or advice when needed. Within the framework of Authoritarian and Permissive Parenting Styles, solo fathers employ specific coping strategies to navigate the challenges they encounter. These coping mechanisms reflect a combination of accepting responsibilities and seeking support to effectively manage their parenting roles and provide a stable environment for their children. One coping strategy observed among solo fathers adhering to Authoritarian and Permissive Parenting Styles is Accepting Responsibilities. This coping mechanism involves solo fathers recognizing and embracing the additional responsibilities they face as the sole parent. As highlighted by Shorey and Pereira (2022), solo parenting brings about various challenges and emotional issues for children and adolescents. In response, solo fathers may feel compelled to take on additional responsibilities to compensate for the absence of the other parent and to create a stable and nurturing environment for their children. This acceptance of responsibilities demonstrates solo fathers' commitment to providing for their children's needs and ensuring their well-being within the Authoritarian and Permissive Parenting Styles. Furthermore, Seeking Support emerges as another coping strategy employed by solo fathers within this parenting style. Solo fathers draw upon advice and assistance from their family, partners, and friends to navigate the complexities of parenthood as a single father. As noted by Coles (2002), men, in general, may exhibit a desire for autonomy; however, many single fathers rely on their families of origin as a primary support network for child-related responsibilities and care. Seeking support allows solo fathers to access resources and guidance that can aid them in their parenting journey and help them develop more adaptive and effective parenting strategies within the Authoritarian and Permissive Parenting Styles.

Conclusion

Our exploration into parenting styles among solo fathers, substantiated by data from our study, delves into the intricate dynamics that shape their unique experiences and challenges. Drawing on Baumrind's (1978) classification, the tripartite framework of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles provides a foundational understanding of the balance between demandingness and responsiveness. Our findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the significant impact of these parenting styles on children's emotional and behavioral outcomes (Rizvi & Najam, 2015). Simultaneously, we recognize parental stress as a pervasive external stressor, stemming from the perceived mismatch between parenting demands and available resources (Deater-Deckard & Panneton, 2017; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017). The interplay of parenting styles and stress is particularly pronounced during the transition to parenthood for solo fathers, who grapple with challenges arising from relationship breakdowns, loss, or intentional choices (Diesta, 2018). The demographic profile of solo fathers, as unveiled in our study, presents a diverse panorama of ages, educational backgrounds,

occupations, and relationship statuses. The majority falling within the 36-40 age bracket and experiencing separation while still legally married underscores the complexity of their situations. High school graduates constitute a substantial portion, reflecting the varied educational attainment within this demographic. Occupationally, solo fathers engage in diverse roles, ranging from tricycle driving to welding and sales, highlighting the breadth of experiences within this group. The prevalence of the Authoritative parenting style suggests a commonality in prioritizing support and communication, although variations signify the diversity in parenting approaches.

The data from the Parenting Style Inventory provides insights into the predominant parenting styles exhibited by the 20 assessed solo fathers. The most common style observed is Authoritative, which accounts for 40% of the participants. This finding suggests that a significant portion of solo fathers employ an authoritative approach characterized by clear expectations, warmth, and responsiveness. Interestingly, an equal percentage of solo fathers (40%) exhibit an Uninvolved parenting style, indicating a substantial proportion of fathers who may be less engaged or involved in their children's lives. Additionally, a smaller percentage of solo fathers (10% each) display Authoritarian and Permissive parenting styles, which are characterized by different degrees of control and warmth in their interactions with their children. This distribution highlights the diversity of parenting approaches among solo fathers and emphasizes the importance of understanding how these styles may impact parent-child relationships and child outcomes within this population. The analysis of parental stress levels further reveals significant findings regarding the stress experienced by solo fathers. Sixty percent of the participants report high levels of stress, while the remaining 40% report low stress levels. Notably, all solo fathers who exhibit an Uninvolved parenting style also report low stress levels. This observation suggests a potential correlation between parenting styles and stress levels, with uninvolved fathers possibly experiencing lower stress due to their less engaged approach to parenting. However, further research is needed to explore the underlying factors contributing to this relationship and its implications for solo fathers' well-being and family dynamics. Examining the challenges faced by solo fathers, those employing the Authoritative Parenting Style primarily encounter difficulties related to discipline and care responsibilities. This finding aligns with the characteristics of the authoritative style, which emphasizes setting clear expectations and providing emotional support while maintaining appropriate boundaries. In contrast, solo fathers adhering to Authoritarian and Permissive styles mainly struggle with fulfilling societal or familial obligations. These challenges may stem from the more controlling or permissive nature of these parenting styles, which could affect the fathers' ability to meet external expectations and obligations. Overall, the data highlights the nuanced relationship between parenting styles, parental stress levels, and the challenges encountered by solo fathers, emphasizing the need for tailored support and interventions to address the diverse needs of this population.

Lastly, solo fathers presented differences in coping mechanisms employed, as categorized by their parenting styles. Among solo fathers adhering to the Authoritative Parenting Style, seeking support emerges as the predominant coping mechanism, with 5 respondents employing indirect methods and 3 utilizing direct approaches. Indirect support-seeking behaviors include seeking advice or guidance from friends and family without directly asking for assistance, while direct support-seeking involves actively reaching out to their social networks for help and resources. This finding aligns with research highlighting the importance of social support in mitigating stress and managing parenting challenges. Additionally, indirect coping mechanisms such as engaging in activities like drinking alcohol or playing games are employed by some solo fathers in this group as a means to temporarily escape stressors. In contrast, solo fathers adopting Authoritarian or Permissive parenting styles primarily utilize accepting responsibilities and seeking support as coping mechanisms. Accepting responsibilities involves acknowledging and embracing the additional duties of sole parenthood, while seeking support entails reaching out for assistance or advice from their social networks. These coping strategies reflect a recognition of the challenges inherent in solo fatherhood and a proactive approach to managing them.

Given the observed patterns between parenting styles and stress levels among solo fathers, it's essential to provide targeted support and interventions tailored to the specific needs of each parenting style. For solo fathers exhibiting an Authoritative parenting style, programs that reinforce positive communication skills and provide access to social support networks could be beneficial. These programs could offer guidance on effective communication strategies and facilitate connections with other solo fathers facing similar challenges. Conversely, for solo fathers employing Authoritarian or Permissive parenting styles, interventions focusing on stress management techniques and coping strategies may be more effective. These interventions could include mindfulness-based stress reduction programs or cognitive-behavioral therapy to help solo fathers recognize and address stressors effectively.

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by solo fathers, particularly those related to discipline, care responsibilities, and fulfilling societal obligations, it's crucial to provide support systems. Community-based programs that offer practical assistance, such as parenting workshops, financial counseling, and access to childcare services, can help alleviate some of the burdens faced by solo fathers. Additionally, peer support groups and mentorship programs can provide invaluable emotional support and guidance, allowing solo fathers to share experiences, exchange advice, and develop coping strategies together as they navigate parenthood alone so that they feel less isolated and more empowered in their parenting journey. By fostering connections with other solo fathers facing similar challenges, these support groups can create a sense of belonging and solidarity, reinforcing the notion that solo fatherhood is a shared experience rather than an individual struggle. Through mutual encouragement and collective problem-solving, solo fathers can gain insights, resilience, and a renewed sense of confidence in their abilities to overcome obstacles and thrive in their parental roles.

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