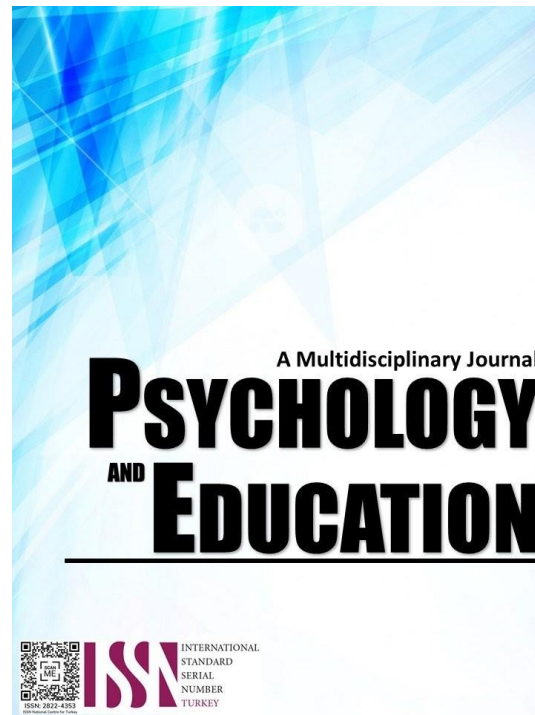


# **TAHANANG WALANG ILAW: A CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE SINGLE FATHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES IN CHILD- REARING PRACTICES**



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## Tahanang Walang Ilaw: A Case Study Exploring the Single Fathers' Lived Experiences in Child-Rearing Practices

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### Abstract

Single parenting is a difficult thing to do. And when people talk about it, the first thing that comes to mind is a single mother. Masculinity is a term that is linked with men that corners their feelings in an idea that they should be strong. Only a few studies can be found that are focused on the well-being and challenges that a single father faces in child-rearing. In this study, the researchers aim to explore about the single fathers' story specifically their lived experiences; (1) explore about single fathers' experiences (2) to know the challenges faced by Single fathers (3) identify the child-rearing practices of Single fathers (4) discover the coping mechanisms that single fathers use to cope up with problems. Using a semi-structured interview guide, 3 participants will be interviewed for data gathering and using Thematic Analysis (TA) the study interprets the following: (1) the experiences of the participants shows that most of the Single fathers go through grief and self-neglect. The pressure of providing for their children also causes them to have sacrificial love for their children to the point of overworking for them and forgetting about the well-being of oneself (2) providing the children's need, sharing custody and time management is the most effective way for the participants to take care of their children (3) challenges such as financial, emotional well-being and lack of experience on being a single father are the most common trials that the participants faced (4) the coping mechanisms varies from person to person but the participants of the study cope up with challenges by means of alcoholism, social support and turning to God.

**Keywords:** *experiences, child-rearing practices, single fathers, co-parenting, psychosocial well-being*

### Introduction

There is no doubt that single parenting is hard. However, understanding single parents' experiences and challenges will help us help more of them. Thus, according to Zapata (2020), the role of fathers has evolved, and the public now recognizes their value as breadwinners but also as caregivers. In addition to cultural beliefs, single fathers have social, psychological, and financial challenges as they care for their children and support their healthy and adaptive growth. Research reveals that single-parent households are more dysfunctional than married ones. Several factors contribute to this susceptibility, such as poor support systems and resources (Grozđanić, 2000, as cited in Sepek & Visnjic Jevtic, 2019). Single-parent families encounter evolving problems, and they are more likely to endure times of reduced well-being than coupled-parent families. In most countries, lower socioeconomic well-being corresponds with higher percentages of single parenthood, and single parents confront more challenges in securing their own and their family's well-being (Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018).

Furthermore, single-parent children are more likely to have emotional and behavioral health issues like anger and high-risk behaviors than those with married parents (Casey, 2023). Research has linked these issues to single-parent family factors, including parental stress, breakups, witnessing conflict, losing social networks, shifting residences, and socioeconomic obstacles. Thus, promoting a child's physical and psychological growth is difficult. Most mothers raise their children, while dads help with finances (Rakotomanana et al., 2021). The Department of Health and the University of the Philippines-National Institute of Health found that the Philippines has 15 million single parents, with 95% of them mothers and 5% single fathers, or more than one million (World Health Organization, as cited in Senate of the Philippines, 2021). Thus, the 2020 American Community Survey by the US Census Bureau (as stated in Lending Tree, 2022) found that 76.3% of parents with partners actively raise their children. Additionally, 23.7% of parents are single, with 19.1% being single mothers and 4.6% being single fathers (Davis, 2022). US single fathers increased from 1.7 million in 1990 to 3.3 million in 2020 (Shipe et al., 2022). Approximately 320 million children, or 14% of the global child population of 2.3 billion, live in single-parent households, predominantly headed by mothers (Chamie, 2016). Due to the lack of data on single fathers, this study explores their predicament.

Family management involves addressing financial, psychological, and social issues in various family systems (Ramos & Tus, 2020). Single parents face a variety of stresses, which are a blend of psychological, physical, and emotional anxieties (Farnacio & Reyes, 2021). Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado (2018) state that single parents and their children lack household companion resources. Without a second income source, single-parent households struggle to make ends meet and are more vulnerable to temporary unemployment. Single parents without a second caregiver, even tag-team parenting, may face higher work-family conflict. Having no spouse at home limits care, income, time, and flexibility. Single parents faced many challenges raising their children, yet society saw them as failures and blamed them for child poverty, school failure, criminality, and other concerns (Zuckerman, 2020). Filipino culture seems to reject single parenting techniques that burden single parents (Ramos & Tus, 2020). In addition to financial issues, single-parent families have less adult time for domestic and parenting duties (Ramos & Tus, 2020). While both single mothers and fathers try to support and nurture their children, Baršić and Jevtic (2019) discovered significant disparities in parenting styles. However, past research has focused on

single moms' jobs, social obstacles, familial disputes, parenting styles, daily routines, parenting issues, access to services, and support networks. Few studies have studied single fathers' experiences (Brown, 2019).

In addition, according to one in ten parents, the most difficult aspect of single parenting is being misunderstood by society, which manifests in negative attitudes and stereotypes toward single parents (Raboteg-Saric & Pecnik, 2009, as cited in Baršić & Jevtic, 2019). In addition, single mothers and fathers confront distinct challenges as single parents, but research suggests that single fathers are more susceptible to gender stereotypes. Prejudice is one of the obstacles a solitary father must overcome. Parental incompetence, such as "fathers don't know how to deal with their child" or "fathers can't even change diapers," is a common bias against disapproving fathers (Baršić & Jevtic, 2019).

Moreover, the purpose of this study is to investigate the single fathers' experiences, child-rearing practices, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Establishing this kind of research which focuses on the experiences of single fathers in child rearing can be beneficial. First, it addresses the data shortage regarding this area of study. Second, the readers can learn and be informed about the lives of single fathers in the Philippines. Additionally, this study will benefit single fathers in the Philippines because their voices will be heard, particularly by local government agencies and mental health organizations that can open doors for services and psychosocial intervention programs that can help single fathers and their children's well-being. Lastly, since this research study is focusing on the experiences of single fathers in the field of child-rearing which can contribute to valuable insights in the literature in several ways. Such as, studying their child-rearing practices can help researchers and society understand how men can effectively nurture and raise children, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of gender roles in parenting. This can also provide insights into how different parenting styles and approaches impact child development which can help inform best practices for parenting and support the well-being of children and the single father.

### Research Questions

This study explores the single fathers' experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and child-rearing practices. In particular, these sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of single fathers?
2. What are the child-rearing practices that single fathers do on raising their children?
3. What are the challenges faced by single fathers?
4. What are the coping mechanisms of single fathers?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what psychosocial program can be proposed?

## Methodology

### Research Design

The research design utilized in this qualitative research is a multiple-case study. A multiple-case research study uses two or more cases, or replications between the instances, to analyze the same phenomenon. It is a qualitative method to observe the specific situations of participants, including their live experiences or even the problems they encountered. Moreover, case studies can also be used to gain information via semi-structured interviews, where participants provide their answers and other details and a response to a question concerning case characterization results in a case study (Creswell, 2016). A multiple-case design, according to Cresswell (2013), investigates a real-life multiple-bounded system through extensive, in-depth data collection involving numerous sources of information. It involves examining two or more situations, including cross-analysis of the occurrences or phenomena, and comparing the facts from various cases to draw conclusions that can be applied to other circumstances (Priya, 2020). Thus, employing cross-analysis and further study of the research issue and theoretical evolution will enable the researcher to grasp the differences and similarities in information management of the single fathers, process between the three multiple-cases analyzed by employing a multiple-case design (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007 as cited in Brink, 2018).

By employing the case study approach, researchers may investigate a specific uniqueness to discover a phenomenon that would not be seen otherwise. By having the participants describe their real experiences; the researchers can better understand the phenomenon and identify the crucial components of such experiences (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Crawford, 2016).

### Participants

The participants of the study were three single fathers, ages from 29 to 41 years old and a single fathers from 3 to 6 years; and who are separated from their partners, have shared custody, and are caring for their child/children while managing their work.

*Kuya D* who is a radiology technician who lives in Bocaue. He is 29 years old and has been a single father for approximately 5 (five) years. The relationship between him and the mother of her only daughter who is his ex-girlfriend, did not go well, for it is by surprise that they had the child. Because his partner is too young and has been studying at that time, she decided to stop the relationship that they have and left with their daughter in the latter year of 2021. Despite all this, *Kuya D* managed to get along with daughter very well and also built communication between his ex-partner through the help of the church and his family that supports him. He and his former spouse currently sharing custody of S\*\*\*\*\* and is supporting her financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Tito No is a 41-year-old single father of three years. He has two daughters, aged 10 and 13. His ex-wife was an OFW, and it took him by surprise when his ex-wife, who was about to go home, went home to another man's home. It was a separation he was not prepared for. He has been working in trucking for months and is currently working as a helper on any construction site he can work on as an extra. He has been struggling financially, balancing work and caring for his daughters. Despite all the challenges he's been facing for the past few years, he managed to face them all with the help of his family. After all the grief over the separation, he started to focus his attention and life on his daughters for their future.

*Johnny* is 39 years old and has been a single father for 6 years. He has two daughters, ages 11 to 7 years old. He is a barangay councilor in Bolacan, Bocaue, and a baker who is managing a small business. He is also a member of a solo parent group in his barangay and at the same time a member of Tau Gamma. He stated that the separation of him and his ex-partner was purely a mutual decision. He is sharing custody with his ex-partner in terms of financial, physical, and emotional support he can give to his children. He doesn't have a consistent and fixed schedule when it comes to taking care of his children since most of his time is allotted to working. As a consequence, there are times that it causes misunderstanding between him and his ex-partner. Thus, because of this circumstances Johnny doesn't have a strong emotional bond with his children as he stated.

### Instruments

The approval of the data collection strategy and tool by the research panelists and professor ensured that consent was obtained and ethical standards were followed. The participants selected and given permission to participate based on informed consent were asked to give their full consent under the supervision of the professor and panelists. Strict security measures were put in place to protect data confidentiality. The researchers kept the information gathered about the participants throughout the research for study record-keeping purposes and then discarded it once the research report was completed. The participants' names and other personally identifiable information were kept secure and separate from the study data. Except in cases where the researcher was required by law to report specific incidents, participants' data was kept strictly confidential. The study's findings could be published in an article or presented in a presentation, but no information identifying the participants would be included.

The study employed an organized, step-by-step methodology to collect reliable data. The researcher selected participants who complied with the study's requirements. Before the interview process and recording the conversation, the participants were asked for permission, and the confidentiality of the information that was given was guaranteed. In accordance with the interview protocol, a series of questions were posed to the participants during the interview to better understand their perspectives. These questions primarily focused on the issues and problems they encountered, their lived experiences, and their child-rearing practices. The freedom to express one's ideas in accordance with one's own beliefs, attitude, and level of self-awareness was granted to the participants. A face-to-face interview was used in gathering the data. After the interview process, the recorded audio was more closely examined to make sure the information was converted into text and matched the theme. The researchers were able to learn more about the challenges and methods used by single fathers in Bulacan for raising their children.

This study used a semi-structured interview guide that had been rigorously validated by subject-matter experts to ensure accuracy. To narrow the study's four primary themes, the researchers developed an interview guide with specific questions. The investigations primarily focused on the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and child-rearing practices of single fathers. It is also critical to emphasize that participants could provide clarification or express concerns about these questions.

### Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis, it is a powerful and flexible technique for qualitative analysis. Hence, it uses data on real experiences to look for meaningful patterns. Using thematic analysis begins with the textual data, wherein it aims to classify the meanings found in the data into themes or patterns (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Additionally, as stated by Alase (2017), one of the purposes of thematic analysis was to create fundamental codes and themes that would encompass and connect all of the data. Notable challenges in this research included the individual's experiences, psychological health, and coping strategies. More narrowly defined sub-themes and a streamlined report with these sub-themes were also produced as a result of the process. These techniques ensured that the data was trustworthy, accurate, and inevitable.

### Ethical Considerations

The research panelists' and professor's approval of the data collection strategy and tool guarantees that consent has been obtained and that ethical standards will be properly followed. Under the direction of the professor and panelists, a participant who will be selected and will be given approval to participate based on informed permission was asked to give their full consent.

As soon as the consent form is presented, the procedure for data collection will be followed. The study's objectives will be explained to the participants in reference to their voluntary participation in it, and they will be made aware that they might leave at any time. They will be given guarantees that all information gathered throughout the study's design will be used only for academic and research endeavors, under the code name, and without taking the participant's identities into consideration. Also, confidentiality will be discussed. Republic Act 10173 requires that any personally identifiable information voluntarily provided by participants be kept confidential and not used in a way that is against the Data Privacy Act.

## Results and Discussion

This section outlines the resulting themes and categories gathered from the one on one interview. This section also includes the participants' and researchers' interpretations of their experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. The following sections are organized based on the identified study cases.

### Case 1: Kuya D.

Kuya D is a 29-year-old radiology technician who is a single father to a 7 year old girl named S\*\*\*\*\*. His girlfriend decided to end the relationship in 2021 because of stress because, at that time, she was currently studying. His daughter was 3 years old when her mother left Kuya D. The early years of being a single parent were tough for him considering that they were in a pandemic at that time and not all the time her daughter could go out. Kuya D was able to cope with his problems by attending his local church. He is sharing custody with his ex-girlfriend and is dedicated to giving the best that he can to give her daughter a better life. The interview was conducted on July 26 and August 12, 2023.

Kuya D's lived experiences focus more on finding new hope despite the challenges that he faced as a single father. It is also shown in the table above that Kuya D found his new purpose when he attended his local church, and it helped him get through his dark moments. It is also mentioned that he did everything that he could so that his daughter could live a happy life, so he tried to reconnect with his ex-girlfriend and made a connection for better custody for their children. This shows that communication is a vital part of sharing custody for single parents. Kuya D's experiences revolve around attending church with his daughter and managing his time well so that his profession will not hinder him from being a good father to his daughter.

Table 1. *Thematic analysis of Kuya D. Experiences*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abandonment</li> <li>Filial Devotion</li> <li>Temporal Fulfillment</li> </ul>
Co-Parental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crucial Miscommunication</li> <li>Shared Responsibilities</li> </ul>
Sexual Desire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innocence</li> <li>Lustful Relationship</li> </ul>

As Kuya D. stated:

*"Kasi nonsense yung work ko kung masisira yung relationship namin ng anak ko."* (My work will be nonsense if it will destroy my relationship with my daughter

In conclusion, this effort and experience are out of his eagerness to give her daughter a better life. Evangelista (2022) and his fellow researchers mentioned in their study that single fathers earn more than a single mother but are also more prone to stress and anxiety. This is not the case for Kuya D. He mentioned in the interview that all of it will be worthless if he loses his relationship with his daughter. Hence, finances are a problem that he always faces. But finances are not all for Kuya D. What's important to him is how his daughter will grow. He values his child more than the finances that he earns, and that is why he invests time and effort in her. Also, it is seen in the table that the reason behind Kuya D being a single father is because of the lustful connection he had with his ex-girlfriend. This risky behavior resulted in an unprepared pregnancy. As Kuya D also said:

*"Dati addict din ako sa porn. Naranasan ko dati nanonood kami nung ex ko nanonood kaming dalawa sabay pa."* (I used to be addicted to porn too. I had an experience when we were watching when my ex was watching together.)

A study of Pathmendra (2023) said in his study that exposure to pornography increases a person's sexual behavior. In this case, their exposure to pornography results to them being sexually active which then results in an unprepared child. Kuya D then struggled because of being inexperienced to being a father. Clueless of what to expect, and the pressure given to him by being left alone, it causes Kuya D to grieve in the early years of being a single father.

Table 2. *Thematic analysis of Kuya D. Child-Rearing Practices*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spiritual Development</li> <li>Relationship Enrichment</li> </ul>
Social Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrative Wisdom</li> <li>Parental Upbringing</li> </ul>
Parental Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values Propagation</li> <li>Affectionate Boundaries</li> </ul>



Kuya D obviously struggles with parenting, and he is clueless at first on how to raise a child, especially since he is raising a girl. So he seeks help from others in raising his child. But despite being clueless, it is shown in the table below how important quality time is for Kuya D.

*“Every Sunday after service, kapag hindi naman busy, lalabas kami niyan. Pupunta kami sa mall, kakain kami sa labas. Favorite naming tambayan ni S\*\*\*\*\* dunkin donut, jan sa may bayan . . . more on kain or gala”* (If I'm not busy, after our Sunday service, we will go out. We will go to a mall, we will go outside. Our favorite spot is in dunkin donut in town ... more on eating or going out)

He always makes time to bring his daughter to church to build up her faith and make time for her. Kuya D.'s daughter was well-raised with the assistance of those in his vicinity, particularly his mother and the senior members of his church. A comparable notion to that of Smith (2020) is evident in Kuya D.'s responses. This clarifies the significance and influence of religious belief on an individual's approach to parenthood. The data demonstrate how one's level of self-belief can influence his parental approach and the manner in which he intends to impart that belief to his children. Kuya D's faith ultimately strengthens his affection for his daughter, resulting in greater concern for her. Additionally, Palkovitz (2019) asserts that spending quality time with children strengthens the father-child bond. We can see from this data that Kuya D and his daughter's relationship strengthens and expands as a result of the increased quantity of time they spend together.

There were a lot of challenges that he faced, especially being a single father in a pandemic. But the table above shows how hard it is for him in the early years of being a single father. Hence, the first year of being a single father is the hardest part because he needed to do things on his own and things that he doesn't usually do. Not to mention that Kuya D is also struggling to provide for his daughter. And the hardest part is that he has to face all of these things alone.

**Table 3. Thematic analysis of Kuya D. Challenges**

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Parental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Strain Resilience</li> <li>• Parenting Difficulties</li> </ul>
Cycle of Generational Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inherited Parenting</li> <li>• Self-Sacrifice</li> </ul>

*“... dati easy easy ka lang eh. Parang mas pinili kong maging mature, mag step out sa comfort zone ko. Sa work, sa buhay lahat ng aspect . . . dati naisip ko nga mag-abroad pero naisip ko na wala na nga yung mommy niya, aalis pa ako? . . . dati nahihya ako magsalita pero kailangan mong labanan eh syempre para kay S\*\*\*\*\* kasi iimpart mo din sa kanya eh . . . Inaayos ko parin naman talaga yung sarili ko kumbaga work in progress parin ako at ginagawa ko yon para sa kaniya”* (... before i just go with the flow. But after having a child I chose to be mature enough, step out of my comfort zone. In my work and all the aspects of my life ... before I thought of going abroad but I realized, my child's mother already left and I will go also? ... before i am shy to speak in front of people but i conquer that fear because of S\*\*\*\*\* because that is what you will impart to her ... I am still working on myself, like i'm still a work in progress but everything that i do, i do it for her”

This statement shows how much a father is willing to sacrifice for his child. All the pride, shyness, youthful life, etc. He gave it all up for the sake of his child, to the point that nothing is left for him. Single custodial fathers are prone to being disconnected from their children by being away or emotionally absent (Bronte-Tinkew, 2010). These things are being experienced day by day by people around the world. And in the data above, it shows that Kuya D is trying to provide for her daughter and avoiding being disconnected from her. His answers talk a lot about stepping out of his comfort zone. He left his life of stagnancy and chose to be a better father and a better person for the sake of his only daughter.

Kuya D's faith sustains him during difficult times. He effectively handled his breakup by attending his local church a few months later, when his girlfriend had already begun a relationship with another man; this experience drastically changed him. His rehabilitation process accelerated as a result of both his faith and the support network within the church.

**Table 4. Thematic Analysis of Kuya D. Coping Mechanisms**

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Holistic Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christ-Centered Fatherhood</li> <li>• Self-Care</li> <li>• Parenting Revitalization</li> </ul>

As Kuya D stated:

*“... naranasan ko ‘di si Lord yung center ng life ko, talagang ang dami kong pagkakamali ang daming mistakes na nagawa sa life ko. Lagi naman kasing may challenges part naman ng life yon pero pag mataas yung love niya kay Lord mas may peace eh”* (... I've experienced before, the Lord is not the center of my life. I committed a lot of mistakes and failures in my life. I know that there will always be challenges, it's a part of our life but if you love the Lord greatly, there is peace)

Furthermore, Faith transforms not only his approach to parenthood but also his character. The book entitled "Living As If: How Positive Faith Can Change Your Life", explores the transformative potential of positive faith on an individual's behavior, intentions, and everyday life (Miller, 2020). Kuya D's coping mechanism therefore centers on his religious devotion and encounters with God. In summary, the support of the church community and one's faith can assist a single father in managing the difficulties he encounters while also enhancing his approach to parenthood.

Also, Kuya D manages his time well so that he might be able to spend more time with her daughter. This was shown on the table above that despite a busy schedule, Kuya D managed to still have time for her daughter by means of going out and eating together somewhere.

## Case 2: Tito No

Tito No, age 41, has been a single father for three years. The interview was conducted at 12:00 p.m on July 10, July 24, and August 8 in three parts. A typical father who was initially reluctant to share his experiences, but after the following sessions, he does it with great enthusiasm and is eager to share his significant experiences as a single father. Tito No was able to explain his experiences, obstacles, and coping strategies.

Tito No shared about how his lived experiences affected him as a single father and the themes that emerged in the lived experiences are Adjustment, Parental Self-Efficacy, and Intimate Reconnection.

Table 5. *Thematic Analysis of Tito No's Lived Experiences*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Adjustment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptability</li> <li>• Devastating Grief</li> </ul>
Parental Self-Efficacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Devotion</li> <li>• Unheard Doubt</li> </ul>
Intimate Reconnection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Romantic Interest</li> <li>• Desires</li> </ul>

Adjustment, Tito No stated that:

*"Ayon nga pagkalipas ng halos ilang buwan kong 'di pagtigil uminom parang isang araw nagising nalang ako na kailangan kong ayusin yung buhay ko para sa mga anak ko. Sinubukan kong unti unting tanggapin yung nagawa nya sakin tapos ayon nagfocus ako sa mga anak ko, ayun lang."* (After almost a few months of not stopping drinking, it was like one day I woke up and realized that I had to fix my life for my children. I tried, little by little, to accept what she did to me, and then I focused on my children. That's all.)

According to the study of Pew Research (2013), there are numerous ways to parenthood by oneself, such as divorce, separation, widowhood, and starting one's own family. Fathers' responsibilities have evolved. In addition to being breadwinners, the public now acknowledges their significance as caregivers. Whether by choice or by circumstance, you are a member of a community that presents its own set of challenges and requirements if you are a single father. You will encounter difficulties, but you will also have the ability to influence your children positively by developing a deep bond with them and relying on your positive parental abilities to overcome challenges, as stated by Zapata (2020). The experiences of Tito No enlighten on how certain single fathers respond to separation, with particular emphasis on the underlying cause of the separation. Our culture considers single fathers to be strong and unmoved, just as males who display emotion are considered weak. It is critical to recognize that males, like women, are fallible beings with feelings. They have the right to experience sadness and to shed tears when feeling sadness. One of the primary reasons why the majority of single fathers conceal their emotions is because of societal expectations regarding expressions of emotion among males. However, it is evident from Tito No's experiences as a new single father at that time that it had physical and emotional consequences for him.

The second theme, Parental Self-Efficacy, demonstrates how he provides for his daughters despite having no idea how to properly raise them and having self-doubts as a single parent. According to a study by Denov et al. (2023), single fathers may struggle to nurture their child's development because they are unprepared for the challenges of parenthood. This demonstrates that single fathers, whose single duty within the family is to provide for the children, are unprepared to nurture them. They may experience self-doubt as a single father attempting to balance their familial responsibilities as a provider and nurturer. Regarding the third theme, which involves Intimate Reconnection, Tito No remains optimistic that he will discover someone who will not only love him but also provide for his sexual requirements and aid him in life. As Tito No mentions:

*"Oo, may mga pagkakataon na ganyan. Nag ibang bansa yung dati kong asawa tapos iniwan nya nga kami kaya ayon medyo hinahanap-hanap ko sya lalo na ngayon ayan gaya nga ng nasabi ko meron akong kinakasama ngayon dahil nga syempre ilang taon din akong walang kinakasama kumbaga nasasabik ako sa mga ganong bagay dahil namimiss ko yung may lumalambing sakin."* (Yes, there are times like that. My ex-wife went abroad to work and then she left us, so I'm missing it a bit, especially now that, like I said, I'm with someone now because, of course, I haven't been with anyone for a few years, so I'm excited about things like that because I miss being caressed by someone.)

Research indicates that fathers' other relationships influence their parenting. Support networks increase the likelihood of success for

single parents who are custodial mothers, according to research (Edin & Lein, 1997; Stack, 1974; Surdarkasa, 1997, as cited in Hamer and Marchioro, 2004). Through these support networks, significant others offer both material and emotional assistance (Hamer and Marchioro, 2004). Single parents find it less challenging to fulfill their parental duties and the responsibilities associated with child rearing when they have a significant other. Several studies indicate that men are faster to move on than women. Some statistics (such as self-reported surveys), according to Paul Hokemeyer, PhD, indicate that males recover from breakups more quickly than women (Finlay, 2023). Nevertheless, some data indicate that males struggle more and require more time to move on than women. In fact, many male participants who had separated from their relationships more than a year prior experienced PRG (post-relationship grieving) at the time of the study, according to the findings of the researchers. Men are either lacking in emotion or more prone to substance abuse, violence, or alcoholism; they are also less likely to experience personal growth (Times of India, 2019). Determining how quickly individuals recover from separation and develop romantic interest in a romantic partnership is a challenging task. However, in the case of Tito No, who struggled with alcohol abuse and sorrow over the separation, it took him over a year to find someone who could assist him in life once more.

In his capacity as a sole parent entrusted with the raising of his daughters, Tito No harbors numerous aspirations for their education while simultaneously struggling with the challenges of nurturing them, particularly in the context of co-parenting.

Table 6. Thematic Analysis of Tito No’s Child-Rearing Practices

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Single Parenting Journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Love Bound Parenting</li><li>• Trait Cultivation</li><li>• Emotionally Intelligent Parenting</li><li>• Fostering Resilience</li></ul>

The theme that emerged from this is Single Parenting Journey, as Tito No stated:

*“Tinuturuan ko sila na matutong makisama, matutong gumawa ng mga gawing bahay lalo na kapag nasa ibang bahay sila. Importante kasi para sakin na alam nila yung mga ganyang bagay lalo na at may mga pagkakataon na wala ako kasi nagtatrabaho ako eh kung nasa ibang bahay sila dapat alam nila kung paano makisama.”*(I teach them to learn to get along and to do housework, especially when they are in another house. It's important for me that they know about things like that, especially when there are times when I'm not there because I'm working, so if they're in another house, they should know how to get along. Like that, Marga (the eldest child) is currently in Makati at my sister's house, and I told her to get along with them there.)

Zoromski (2018) asserts that in addition to imparting value education to their children, fathers must model and emphasize confidence, resiliency, respect, and compassion. By demonstrating these fundamental abilities, one can instruct children on how to engage in social interactions with those in their immediate environment. Exemplifying and modeling the expected values and interactions of one's children is an essential component of the paternal role. Predominantly, fathers must exhibit compassion and regard for others in the presence of their children so that they may acquire these virtues through direct observation. Each father desires for his children to acquire virtuous qualities and values that will endure and be cherished as they mature. As Tito No indicated, it is essential for him to cultivate in them such qualities. In spite of the fact that single fathers are occupied with work and parental responsibilities, their engagement in the development of their children will yield favorable results for their well-being. This is supported by the Children's Bureau's finding that authoritative parenting, characterized by affectionate guidance and clearly defined expectations and boundaries, enhances the emotional, academic, social, and behavioral outcomes of children. Tito No also mentioned:

*“Hindi ko naman masasabi na sobrang nakakaapekto kaya lang kasi dahil nga hiwalay na kami hindi maiiwasan na may maririnig yung mga anak ko galing sa side ko at ng nanay nila. Sa ngayon kasi napapansin ko na parang lumalayo yung loob nila sa nanay nila kasi dati malapit yung loob nila sa nanay nila eh spoiled din kasi yung mga anak ko kaya ayon nagiging tamad sila. Madalas napapansin ko hindi sila kumikilos sa bahay siguro kasi dahil wala na yung mama nila para ituro yung mga ganong bagay kaya ako itinuturo ko talaga sakanila kumilos at makisama sa abot ng makakaya ko kasi para sakanila rin naman yung mga yon.”*

(I can't say that it is very affecting because we are separated. It is inevitable that my children will hear something from my side and their mother's side. Right now, I notice that their hearts seem to be moving away from their mother because they used to be close to her, but my children are also spoiled, so they are becoming lazy. I often notice that they don't behave at home, maybe because their mom is no longer there to teach them those things, so I really teach them to behave and get along as much as I can because those things are also for them.)

Dowan Law Offices (2019) posits that parental separation can result in significant challenges for a child, including strained communication with adults, repressed expression of emotions, and hostility towards others. Child custody and separation will invariably have an impact on your children, which may be positive or negative, depending on the circumstances and your approach to the situation. It is critical that they have the utmost comprehension of the situation that is developing between their parents. While it is inevitable that errors will occur, it is essential to differentiate the conduct of your child from the child themselves. Hearing their thoughts and emotions could assist you both in overcoming obstacles. Affection is a method of growth that can contribute to the well-being and development of your infant (Stiles, 2022). Constantly strive to understand and listen to your children, notwithstanding the adverse



consequences of separation, and foster positive relationships that promote their development and well-being.

Table 7. *Thematic Analysis of Tito No's Challenges*

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Parenting Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single Father Apprehension</li> <li>• Balancing Struggles</li> <li>• Unfulfilled Needs</li> </ul>

Tito No faced multiple challenges while adjusting to the role of a single father and juggling the responsibilities of balancing and raising his daughters by himself. These challenges are detailed in the theme Parenting Resilience. Certainly, juggling the roles of provider, single father, and caregiver while also bearing the responsibility of nurturing one's children is not an easy job. As stated by Chiu et al. (2018), fathers who are single parents must juggle two responsibilities: providing primary care and working. This can be a source of tension for them, as they may not be accustomed to being the only parent. As emphasized by Kudenga (2017), providing essential provisions, nurturing, and assistance for a child's educational progress and overall growth is a critical responsibility of parents during child rearing. As Tito No said:

*"Dahil nga naging single father ako, nandon yung takot ko na baka hindi ko magampanan ng maayos yung responsibilidad ko bilang ama nila. Na baka hindi ko sila mapalaki ng tama o maayos kasi may mga pagkakataon na hindi ko naman sila laging kasama para magabayan at makita kung paano sila lumalaki.*

*...natatakot akong hindi ko naibigay bilang ama nila yung mga pangangailangan nila sa buhay."*

(Because I became a single father, I was afraid that I might not be able to properly fulfill my responsibility as their father. I might not be able to raise them correctly or properly because there are times when I am not always with them to guide them and see how they grow.

*...I'm afraid I didn't give them their needs in life as their father.)*

*"Nahihirapan ako kasi syempre ako na nga yung nagtatrabaho kasi kailangan talaga sya tapos sa pag-aalaga ng mga anak ko. Hindi ko sya masyadong nababalanse kasi kailangan kong kumayod para sa kanila."*

(I'm having a hard time because, of course, I'm the one working because I really need it and taking care of my children. I can't balance it very much because I have to work hard for them.)

Hence, men have the capacity to ensure the social, physical, and emotional welfare of their offspring to an equivalent extent as mothers. Custodial fathers have the ability to effectively involve their children in various typical responsibilities related to mothers, including housework, child rearing, and nurturing, according to research by DeMaris and Greif (1992, as cited in Hamer and Marchioro, 2004). Men can essentially serve as both "fathers" and "mothers" to their offspring. Heath and Orthner (1999, as cited in Hamer and Marchioro, 2004) found that less than half of males who were single parents considered themselves to be exceptionally proficient at juggling work and family responsibilities. The difficulties single fathers encounter may induce anxiety as they contemplate their inability to provide for the requirements of their children and the manner in which they will raise them, as Tito No mentioned:

*"Para akong nadedepress kapag hindi ko nabibigay yung mga pangangailangan ng mga anak ko. Sobrang gusto kong ibigay sakanila lahat kaya lang sa hiram ng buhay, ang hiram kumayod at ang hiram ibigay sa mga anak ko yung mga pangangailangan nila."*

(I feel depressed when I can't meet my children's needs. I really want to give them everything, but because of the hardships of life and the struggle to earn money, it is really hard for me to provide for my children's needs.)

It is difficult for a parent to be unable to provide for their children's necessities. As the sole provider of care and support for your child, your responsibilities have an adverse effect on them. Cherry (2022), asserts that single parents face an elevated vulnerability to encountering financial hardships, which exhibit a strong correlation with their psychological well-being.

Table 8. *Thematic Analysis of Tito No's Coping Mechanisms*

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Adaptive Coping Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcoholism Dependency</li> <li>• Familial Resilience</li> <li>• Wisdom Integration</li> </ul>

Providing for their children's needs while confronting multiple challenges is difficult thing to do if they do not possess coping mechanisms. Tito No has a lot of ways of coping in his situation. When attempting to adjust to his new role as a single father and suffering emotional distress as a result of his separation, Tito No resorted to an unhealthy coping mechanism in the form of excessive alcohol consumption. He discovered the most gratifying aspect of his role as a single father, came to recognize his family as his primary source of support, and reached a realization as he transitioned from adjusting to his single fatherhood to embracing it. Tito No resorted to alcohol consumption from the moment his ex-wife abandoned them until he encountered challenges, family-related doubts, and

numerous other situations. As Tito No said:

*“Wala eh parang yung pag iinom yung naging sandalan ko talaga kasi pansamantala kong nakakalimutan lahat. Simula noong iniwan kami ng mama nila hanggang ngayon. Pag iinom lang talaga yung nagagawa ko. Kapag namomroblema ako kapag hindi ko maibigay mga pangangailangan nila, mag iinom ako kahit na alam kong wala namang magagawa yon para sa mga anak ko.”*

(There is nothing I can do; drinking is the only thing I can really lean on to temporarily forget everything. Ever since their mother left us, until now drinking alcohol is the only thing I can do. When I have a problem and I can't provide for their needs, I will drink even though I know it won't do anything for my children.)

Regardless of the difficulties and challenges he faced in the beginning, Tito No always turned to alcohol as a comfort and assistance system, allowing him to momentarily set aside his concerns. The interviewee also said that:

*“Para akong nadepress sa lahat ng nangyari, meron noon araw-araw akong nag iinom talaga tapos may kanta akong pinapakinggan araw-araw din yon. Lasing kung lasing talaga kasi hindi ko matanggap kaya lang ayon meron akong mga anak. Kailangan ko silang maitaguyod kaya nalampasan ko yung ganong pangyayari sa buhay ko.”*

(I feel like I was depressed because of everything that happened. I used to drink every day, and I have this one song that I listen to every single day. I was wasted because I couldn't accept it, but I have children. The idea and need to support them are one of the reasons why I overcame that incident in my life.)

The fact that Tito No's experiences had a negative effect on him in some way shows how separation, the idea of being a single father, and the weight of responsibility all affected him psychologically. The difficulties single parents encounter in raising their children independently are well documented. Single parents are expected to provide for all their children's needs, which increases stress (Wight et al., 2010, as cited in Melhado, 2017). Despite hardships, watching your children happy is the most rewarding part of being a single father. According to Lemay et al. (2010, as cited in Melhado, 2017), fathers who completely engage in their children's upbringing show dedication and responsibility. After adjusting to being a single parent, it was found that fully embracing it could benefit their children. According to Beerman (2016, as referenced in Stearns, 2019), most parents say, “I just want my kids to be happy”.

A support system is one of the most essential resources a single father can possess throughout this challenging period. Tito No has been in charge of his family since the beginning, regardless of the fact that he is presently undergoing the process of accepting and adjusting to it. In addition, it was disclosed that having a significant other to rely on can assist them in overcoming the difficulty of raising their children by themselves, particularly if they are the only provider for the family. As Tito No stated:

*“Noong mga panahon kasi na iniwan kami ng nanay nila kinailangan ko ng taong mag aalaga sa mga anak ko pansamantala kasi ilang linggo o buwan din akong hindi makakauwi kasi nagdedeliver kami ng mga produkto eh hindi pa naman kami tuluyang nagkakasundo noon ng nanay nila tungkol sa co-parenting mabuti nalang andyan sila ate para umalalay. Kahit naman hanggang ngayon kapag nagkakasama kami, inaano ano nila yung mga anak ko. Tsaka meron nga akong kinakasama ngayon, naging katuwang ko na rin sya kahit paano sa pagpapalaki ng mga anak ko.”*

(During the times when their mother left us, I needed someone to take care of my children for a while because I would not be able to go home for several weeks or months because we were delivering products. I was not on good terms with my ex-wife, and we weren't able to talk about co-parenting. It's good that my family is there to support me. Even now, when we are together, they discipline my children. Besides, I do have a partner now; she has been my partner in raising my children somehow.)

Hofferth et al. (2010), as cited in Melhado (2017), found that social support is necessary for the transition from non-caretaker to caretaker status among single parents, specifically single fathers. Society has traditionally held the belief that single fathers are incapable of providing adequate care for their children. However, this perception is beginning to shift as an increasing number of single fathers demonstrate that they are capable of nurturing their children to the same extent as mothers. Furthermore, there is a growing shift in societal attitudes away from the notion that fathers are incapable of providing for their children as an increasing number of fathers assume the primary provider role (Flood, 2012, as cited in Melhado, 2017).

Parental involvement is without a doubt an essential component of familial support; fathers ought to be considered equally engaged in their children's welfare as mothers (Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, & Pruett, 2005, as cited in Naidoo, 2014). Furthermore, the aforementioned challenges, including those associated with childrearing and being the solitary provider, compelled the single father to assume every responsibility. From initially grappling with the challenges of being a single father and harboring self-doubt regarding his ability to provide for his children, he gradually comes to terms with the situation and makes every effort to interact with and spend time with them, which will have a positive impact on their overall welfare.

### Case 3: Johnny

Johnny, a barangay councilor in barangay Bolacan, Bocaue, is 39 years old. Johnny has been a single father for 6 years with his two daughters, ages 11 to 7 years old. Johnny is sharing custody with his ex-partner and stated that he doesn't have a chance to be with his children because of his busy schedule. Johnny is eager to share his experience as a single father, especially all of the hard times he experienced over those 6 years and how he managed to cope. The interview session was held on October 8th and 9th to clearly identify

the living experience of a single father like Johnny.

Table 9. Thematic Analysis of Johnny's Experiences

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Parental Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineffective Communication</li> <li>• Emotional Strain</li> </ul>
Parental Distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Parental guilt</li> </ul>
Father's Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Identity</li> <li>• Parental Prioritization</li> </ul>

Johnny talked about his experience becoming a single father from the beginning till the present and how it affects his welfare and well-being, as well as the themes that emerged in his experiences, namely Parental Conflict, Parental Distress and Father's Commitment.

Parental Conflict, Johnny stated that:

*"...marami kaming bagay na di pinagkakasunduan kaya halos apat na taon na din kaming di nag-uusap."*

(...we don't agree on many things. That's why it's been almost 4 years that we haven't talked with each other.)

If mothers and fathers decide to raise their children with the help of each other, there is shared custody or co-parenting. Co-parenting is described as "a shared activity undertaken by those adults responsible for the care and upbringing of children." (McLeod et., 2019). Lack of communication and well-established agreement between the mother and the father co-parenting might affect the child-rearing of both parents. As stated in the study by Dyer et al. (2018), mother's and father's quantity of contact with each other and their coparenting relationship have greatly correlated with each other. But in the case of Johnny, he and his ex-partner don't have enough communication for the sake of their children, resulting in them experiencing poor co-parenting that is more likely to result in poorer child-rearing.

His situation highlighted the importance of establishing an agreement between both parents in order for them to have a good co-parenting relationship for the sake of their children's upbringing. Fostering good communication is highly important, especially for those parents sharing custody of their children. The second is Psychological Distress, as Johnny mentioned that it's really a painful experience knowing that you are not a complete family anymore. You just keep all of the memories of when everything was still not changing. This only suggests the aftermath of separation, not only for the child but also for the parents themselves. They may experience extensive sadness and loneliness as Johnny mentioned:

*"Syempre mahirap... kasi ikaw ang mag-aasikaso nung mga bata... sa mga pangangailangan nila ganon tapos malungkot din pag naiisip ko na di kami kumpleto."*

(Of course it's hard... because you're the one who will take care of the children... their needs and then it's also sad when I think that we're not complete anymore.)

The study by Rusten et al. (2019) shows that there is an increase in mental health issues among fathers who are not residing with their children. As in the case of Johnny, who shows extensive negative feelings because of what happened to his family. Johnny's experience only suggests that fathers who experience this kind of situation might affect their psychological well-being. In fact, one of the drawbacks of co-parenting, single fathers tend to feel feelings of isolation or guilt over being absent when their children spend days or weeks with their mother (Bergnehr & Henriksson, 2022). In addition, the participant mentioned that he is not able to always spend time with his children because of his work, which causes him to feel guilty about himself as a father. He stated that:

*"Responsibility siguro may pagkukulang ako dun kasi madalas di ko sila nakakasama dahil sa trabaho... minsan ko lang sila nabibigyan ng oras."*

(Maybe I'm neglecting my responsibility to them because I am often not with them because of work... I'm not often able to give them time.)

Single fathers who are not to give their responsibility display a higher rate of psychological distress and lower parental role satisfaction (Rusten et al., 2019). Subsequently, this experience of Johnny only exhibits that the situation of those single fathers who feel that they can't fully fulfill their responsibilities affects their own satisfaction with their parental role. The third experience mentioned is Father's Commitment wherein Johnny stated that:

*"...binibigay ko talaga yung makakaya ko sa pag-aalaga sa kanila. Yung full time na oras na kaya 'kong ibigay sa kanila ibinibigay ko, minsan pinapasyal ko ganon."*

(...I really give my best to take good care of them. I give the full time that I can give to them, sometimes I take them to go somewhere.)

Johnny's experience only highlighted that he wants to make up the lost time that he can't spend with his children. That's why he gives his whole time to them whenever he has a chance. As stated in Jones (2021), in order to find further inspiration and drive to carry on,

single fathers also learned resilience and centered themselves on their children. In other words, single fathers tend to focus on their children and make time for them. He also mentioned that:

*“Kinokonsidera ko din yung kalagayan ng mother ko ... may sakit, cancer patient kasi naga-undergo pa sya ng pagpapagaling tapos inaalaan ko din yung mga anak ko. Sa ngayon wala pa, wala pang balak mag pamilya ulit...”*

(I'm considering the case of my mother's condition because she had cancer, and she was still undergoing treatment plus I'm also taking care of my children. For now I don't have any plans for having a family again...)

Considering that single fathers tend to focus more on their child's well-being and fulfilling their duties as a father, they tend to disregard their other needs, such as having an intimate relationship after their failed relationship with the mother of their children. As observed in the case of Johnny, he is not considering intimate relationships since he is focusing on his children, himself, and, at the same time, his mother, who is a cancer patient at the moment.

Table 10. *Thematic Analysis of Johnny's Child-Rearing Practices*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Paternal Affection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paternal Love</li> <li>• Parental Autonomy</li> </ul>
Strength Utilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Perception</li> <li>• Parental Separation</li> </ul>
Disconnected Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Attunement</li> <li>• Work-Life Balance</li> </ul>

There are a lot of factors contributing to the child-rearing of an individual. Thus, there's also a different factor when it comes to the effect of it on the children. Moreover, it is different on the side of the single father. As Johnny mentioned in Paternal Affection, Strength Utilization, and Disconnected Relationship. There are a plethora of studies stating that growing up in a single-parent household is associated with the negative psychological impact of it on the children (Dagupan & Garin, 2022; Bernardi et al., 2018; Casey, 2023). But then, as stated in the study by Abing (2018), for single parents, children's well-being comes first in all situations; hence, their children provide them with the drive to live and work. Single fathers tend to show great love and care for their children. Commensurate with the statement of Johnny:

*“Istilo? siguro maalalahanin, syempre caring and andun na din yung pagmamahal sa mga bata.”*

([parenting] style? maybe caring and of course there is love too for my children).

In the study of Arboleda (2022), it was demonstrated that single fathers can provide their children with the care, warmth, and affection that they require in the same way that single mothers and dual households can. According to Johnny, being transparent with your child is very necessary, especially showing affection to them. In the theme Paternal Affection, he also mentioned how he disciplined his children by choosing the right words for them while at the same time making sure that his children were able to comprehend that their actions were wrong.

On the situation of Johnny it's important to have fortitude, as he stated:

*“...syempre pinapakita ko sa kanila na kahit hiwalay kami ng mommy nila nandun pa rin yung kailangan maging masaya pa rin para di nila masyadong maramdaman na broken family sila pero syempre habang lumalaki yung mga bata nasa isip na nila yun, di mo maiiwasan pumasok sa isip nila...”*

(...I show to them that even though me, and their mother were separated, I still have to be happy so that they don't feel like they are in a broken family too much but of course as the children grow up, you can't avoid that they are gonna think of it...)

As single fathers, being emotionally present for their children is vital since the emotional stability of single fathers can affect their child's well-being. Thus, having fortitude is necessary, especially in situations like Johnny's. As mentioned in the study by Dagupan and Garin (2022), the emotional stability of single fathers can affect their children's wellbeing. Furthermore, having emotional stability is vital, especially in the case of a single father, where a broken family has an impact on each of the individuals who are part of the family. Those impacts, especially on the children, are associated with the negative side. According to the study of Bernardi and Mortelmans (2018), having only one parent has increased the likelihood of the children having social, emotional, and cognitive issues. Hence, showing emotional stability in the children is necessary, especially in this kind of circumstance. In the case of Johnny, it is not easy to utilize a parenting style or even observe a well-established child-rearing style because he is not with his children very often. As a consequence, he mentioned:

*“Hindi ko alam, kung may ganon [family problem] sa side ng mommy nila if meron, kasi totally wala na 'kong alam dahil di naman sila nagsasabi sa akin.”*

(I don't have any idea about it [family problem] on their mother's side if there's any, because I totally don't know since they are not

saying something about it.)

A well-built relationship between a parent and the children is crucial, especially in order for the children to be able to open up to their parents, but in the case of Johnny, the father-child relationship is not that clear, and he doesn't have constant and deep communication with them, resulting in him having no idea regarding the difficulties of his children.

Table 11. *Thematic Analysis of Johnny's Challenges*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Parental Love Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Self-Esteem</li> <li>• Father's Compassion</li> </ul>
Burdened Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role Strain</li> <li>• Parental Involvement</li> </ul>
Parenting Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Altruism</li> <li>• Parental Conflict</li> </ul>

Raising a child is indeed neither simple nor an easy task, especially with the additional challenges associated with being a single father that can affect their psychological well-being. Johnny described the challenges encountered by him, which are presented in the following themes: Parental Love Reevaluation, Burdened Responsibilities, and Parenting Stress.

Furthermore, the situation of Johnny represents the challenges of being a single father which resulted in him experiencing an emotional challenge. As he mentioned:

*"Siguro yung pinakamalaking takot ko ay yung ipadama sa akin ng mga bata na yung pagmamahal ay unti-unting nababawasan kasi syempre di ko sila madalas kasama dahil madalas nasa trabaho ako."*

(The biggest fear that I have is that the kids will make me feel that their love for me is gradually diminishing because of course I'm not with them often because of my work.)

Single fathers typically have a strong bond with their children, but in the case of a single father who's most of his time allotted for working to provide for their family can cause fear of possibilities that their child's love decreasing which can stem from a concern that the physical separation from their child might influence this bond negatively, wherein this kind of fear can highly impact them emotionally. Thus, single fathers should maintain open and regular communication with their children. Moreover, even though Johnny has infrequent communication with his children, it is notable that, like the other single fathers, they tend to give more focus and concentrate on their child's health, as he stated:

*"...ayun yung part na pinakamahirap yung nagkakasakit sila yung nahihirapan sila yung parang gusto mo sayo na lang mapunta yung sakit na nararamdaman nila."*

(The hardest thing for me when they get sick, it's so hard that you are going to see your children suffering from the sickness that you are just wishing that you can get those pain.)

Considering that single fathers tend to give more focus to their children, it is a great challenge for them if the topic is all about the welfare of their child. It is noteworthy that single fathers always prioritize their children, giving them all the attention they need, especially at times when they need it the most. The study by Bernabo and Turchi (2020) shows that the majority of single fathers were actively involved in providing their children with both financial and emotional support. But on the other hand, if the father is not able to give and fulfill their own duties as a parent, it can impact their parental role satisfaction. As Johnny mentioned:

*"Syempre masakit, hindi mo kayang ibigay yung pang ano mo sa mga anak mo yung dapat na obligasyon ng isang magulang."*

(Of course it's painful that you can't give your children the supposed responsibility of a parent.)

According to Arboleda and Singson (2022), despite the hardships and challenges of being a single father, they reported feelings of joy, and they characterized their involvement in child care as "a good feeling" experience. Which explains why Johnny feels anguish whenever he knows that he can't fulfill his own duties and responsibilities as a father.

It is noteworthy that there's an impact on the single father if he is not able to fulfill his responsibility as the father of his child. Consequently, based on the article by Cherry (2022), single parents are at high risk of facing financial struggles that are highly correlated with their psychological well-being. Thus, single fathers find it a great challenge to get the financial support that they can give to their children, but in the case of Johnny, he stated that he is able to give support to his children and fulfill what they need with the help of his ex-partner.

The last significant challenge as a Single Father encountered is brought by Parenting Stress. As Johnny mentioned:

*"Oo nahihirapan kasi halos wala kaming [ex-partner] pinag-uusapan. Gustuhin ko man magkaroon kami ng contact para sa mga bata wala na rin."*



(Yes it's hard because we [ex-partner] barely talk about anything. I would like to have contact with her for the sake of our kids but there's nothing.)

As noted in the lived experience of Johnny, it is really challenging for single fathers who are sharing custody with their ex-partner to have well-established communication and agreement with each other for the sake of their children. Furthermore, according to Dyer et al. (2018), mothers and father's quantity of contact with each other and their co-parenting relationship have greatly correlated with each other. Thus, still having communication with both parents who are co-parenting is necessary in this kind of situation.

Table 12. *Thematic Analysis of Johnny's Coping Mechanisms*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes</i>
Paternal Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Satisfaction</li> <li>• Parental Investment</li> </ul>
Supportive Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Identity</li> <li>• Social Support</li> <li>• Optimistic Faith</li> </ul>
Amidst the Struggles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational Rejuvenation</li> <li>• Bearable Stressed</li> </ul>

Johnny discussed his experiences, child-rearing practice, and also the challenges as a single father sharing custody with his ex-partner, and he is able to cope with his situation because of the following themes: Paternal Happiness, Supportive Networks, and Amidst the Struggles. Subsequently, being a single father brought a different breed of challenges to them; thus, establishing a coping mechanism to be able to face those kinds of circumstances is crucial. One notable motivation to continue as a single father is the Paternal Happiness, as he stated:

*"...syempre pag makikita mo yung sigla at lumalaki silang masaya, malusog at di sakitin ayun yung pinakamasayang part."*

(Seeing them become energetic and grow up happy, healthy and not having any sickness is the happiest part.)

Seeing their child become positive in life despite the situation they are in, especially in the situation where they are not a complete family, indeed brings them a great deal of happiness and fulfillment. A parent's primary concern is often the happiness and well-being of their child, and when they observe their child thriving, displaying a positive outlook on life, or achieving personal goals, it can be a source of immense joy and satisfaction. Single fathers, like all parents, often find deep fulfillment in the positive development and happiness of their children, which also gives them motivation to continue even when they are struggling with their situation. Moreover, having a different role outside of the fatherhood is also a big help to them. As Johnny mentioned:

*"E sa adhikain naman ng tau gamma in case na nangangailangan yung isang kapatid namin talaga tinutulungan pero sa part ko di pa naman nangyayari yun na ako yung kailangan tulungan nila dahil sa sitwasyon ko."*

(In the objective of Tau Gamma, if there's a case that one of our brothers needs help our brotherhood really helps them but in my case, it never happened that I'm the one who needs help because of my situation)

In the case of Johnny, one of his possible supportive groups is the brotherhood to which he belonged, wherein this kind of support group is actually helpful, especially if he encounters an unbearable situation. Hence, Johnny also belonged to a group for solo parents in his barangay, though he is not able to mention it in the statement. Additionally, he mentioned that:

*"Siguro yung social support system na meron ako e yung mga kaibigan na talagang sumusuporta saakin."*

(Maybe the social support system that I have is my friends who really support me.)

It is indeed vital to have a supportive network as a single father, especially for their well-being and their child's welfare. In fact, according to Bernardi and Mortelmans (2018), the burden of being a single parent is increased by the lack of social support from the social network. Thus, having a well-established support network is crucial. Hence, it is also observable that most of the single fathers resort to relying on their families or their friends, especially if they are facing difficulties, but it is also noted that most of them stayed resilient and depended on their faith in the Lord. Generally speaking, having supportive networks is not only the vital thing needed when it comes to facing uncertainty; rest is also a crucial thing. In the theme Amidst the Struggles, Johnny stated:

*"Ayun pag sunday naglalaro laro ng basketball, ayun na pinaka pahinga ko or activity para sa sarili ko."*

(If it's sunday, I play basketball and that's my way to rest and my only activity for myself.)

Not only revolving yourself in fatherhood alone, but having physical activities or at least rest is a crucial factor for the well-being of the single father. Taking care of their well-being is a necessary thing, considering that their well-being can affect their child's well-being too. But in the case of Johnny, there are times that even on Sundays he can't rest because of his work. As a single father who has two jobs, it is sometimes difficult in his situation to have even just one day of rest. Additionally, he stated that:

*“Di naman ako masyadong stress dahil alam ‘ko namang kapag ka nasa mommy nila sila maayos yung pangangalaga nya sa kanila. Kapag ka andito naman sa bahay at di ko sila maasikaso andito naman si mama so tiwala naman ako.”*

(I didn't feel too stressed because I know my kids are well taken care of by their mom. If they are in our house and I'm unable to attend to them, my mom is there to take care of them.)

It is stated in the study of Shipe et al. (2022) that single fathers' capacity to raise and provide for their children financially produce difficulties wherein single fathers claim that this dual responsibility puts a lot of stress on them. But knowing that their children are in good condition is contributing to a positive outcome to the Single Fathers well-being. On the other hand, experiencing uncertainty especially when it comes to the welfare of the children of the Single Father also has a negative impact on their well-being.

The following table shows the cross-case analysis of Kuya D., and Tito No.

**Table 13. Cross-case analysis of the emerged themes of Kuya D., and Tito No**

<i>Statement of the Problem</i>	<i>Case of Kuya D</i>	<i>Case of Tito No</i>	<i>Analysis based on the statements of Kuya D and Tito No</i>
What are the lived experiences of single fathers?	Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abandonment</li> <li>Filial Devotion</li> <li>Temporal Fulfillment</li> </ul> Co-Parental Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crucial Miscommunication</li> <li>Shared Responsibilities</li> </ul> Sexual Desire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innocence</li> <li>Lustful Relationship</li> </ul>	Adjustment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adaptability</li> <li>Devastating Grief</li> </ul> Parental Self-Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental Devotion</li> <li>Unheard Doubt</li> </ul> Intimate Reconnection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Romantic Interest</li> <li>Desires</li> </ul>	The statements of both individuals illuminated how they dealt with and came to terms with the absence of their previous partners. This emphasizes the significance of having partners considering the welfare of their children and adapting to their unfamiliar responsibilities as single fathers, regardless of the emotional distress caused by their own separation.
What are the child-rearing practices that single fathers do on raising their children?	Empathy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spiritual Development</li> <li>Relationship Enrichment</li> </ul> Social Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrative Wisdom</li> </ul> Parental Upbringing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental Influence</li> <li>Values Propagation</li> <li>Affectionate Boundaries</li> </ul>	Single Parenting Journey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Love Bound Parenting</li> <li>Trait Cultivation</li> <li>Emotionally Intelligent Parenting</li> <li>Fostering Resilience</li> </ul>	Parenting styles differ in both circumstances; Kuya D. desired to strengthen his child's faith in God, whereas Tito No desired for his children to acquire good values. However, both statements illustrate how single fathers, despite their work and other parental obligations, desire for their children to develop good qualities.
What are the challenges faced by the single fathers?	Parental Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic Strain</li> <li>Resilience</li> </ul> Parenting Difficulties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cycle of Generational Patterns               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inherited Parenting</li> <li>Self-Sacrifice</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Parenting Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Single Father Apprehension</li> <li>Balancing Struggles</li> <li>Unfulfilled Needs</li> </ul>	Both of their responses emphasize how they face financial difficulties and work diligently to provide for their children. It illustrates their challenges in raising their children by themselves because they believe they are incapable of doing so, as well as their difficulties juggling work and responsibilities as single fathers while searching for assistance in caring for their children while they are at work.
	Holistic Parenting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christ-Centered Fatherhood</li> </ul>	Adaptive Coping Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alcoholism Dependency</li> </ul>	In confronting the difficulties that life presents, the coping mechanisms in the two cases are distinctive.

What are the coping mechanisms of single fathers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Care</li> <li>• Parenting Revitalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familial Resilience</li> <li>• Wisdom Integration</li> </ul>	Kuya D gave his life to Christ with the conviction that He would provide guidance as he navigated the challenges of being a single parent. However, Tito No developed a detrimental coping mechanism in the form of alcoholism. However, regardless of their diverse coping mechanisms, their responses highlight the significance of support systems for single fathers, as the mere thought of having someone to lean on gives them some comfort and confidence to strive hard and maintain a good relationship with their children.
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The table below shows the cross-case analysis of Kuya D., Tito No, and Johnny

Table 14. *Cross-case analysis of the emerged themes of Kuya D., Tito No, and Johnny*

<i>Statement of the Problem</i>	<i>Analysis based on the statements of Kuya D., and Tito No</i>	<i>Case of Johnny</i>	<i>Analysis based on the Statements of Kuya D., Tito No, and Johnny</i>
What are the lived experiences of single fathers?	The statements of both individuals illuminated how they dealt with and came to terms with the absence of their previous partners. This emphasizes the significance of having partners considering the welfare of their children and adapting to their unfamiliar responsibilities as single fathers, regardless of the emotional distress caused by their own separation.	Parental Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineffective Communication</li> <li>• Emotional Strain</li> </ul> Parental Distress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Parental guilt</li> </ul> Father's Commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Identity</li> <li>• Parental Prioritization</li> </ul>	This shows the challenges that the three single fathers encountered due to their separation. This action serves to illustrate that, in spite of not having enough time for their children, and not having their ex partners, the single father's primary concern remains the welfare of their children.
What are the child-rearing practices that single fathers do on raising their children?	Parenting styles differ in both circumstances; Kuya D. desired to strengthen his child's faith in God, whereas Tito No desired for his children to acquire good values. However, both statements illustrate how single fathers, despite their work and other parental obligations, desire for their children to develop good qualities.	Paternal Affection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paternal Love</li> <li>• Parental Autonomy</li> </ul> Strength Utilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Perception</li> <li>• Parental Separation</li> </ul> Disconnected Relationship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Attunement</li> <li>• Work-Life Balance</li> </ul>	Johnny spends not much time with his children due to the demands of his schedule. The statements of all three single fathers indicate that they all wish for their children to develop strong moral principles, despite the fact that they have limited time to do so due to the difficulties they encounter in balancing work and parental obligations..
What are the challenges faced by the single fathers?	Both of their responses emphasize how they face financial difficulties and work diligently to provide for their children. It illustrates their challenges in raising their children by themselves because they believe they are incapable of doing so, as well as their difficulties juggling work and	Parental Love Reevaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental Self-Esteem</li> <li>• Father's Compassion</li> </ul> Burdened Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role Strain</li> </ul>	These three individuals who were single fathers continued to face and conquer challenges in their role as single fathers. Three of them learned the ability to acknowledge the reality of separation and confront their concerns regarding the potential

	responsibilities as single fathers while searching for assistance in caring for their children while they are at work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parental Involvement</li><li>• Parenting Stress</li><li>• Parental Altruism</li></ul> Parental Conflict	consequences for their children's development as a result of limited time together, financial hardships, and the responsibility of providing for their needs and nurturing them as they mature. As a result, they are constantly concerned with their children's welfare and desire to spend more time with them.
What are the coping mechanisms of single fathers?	In confronting the difficulties that life presents, the coping mechanisms in the two cases are distinctive. Kuya D gave his life to Christ with the conviction that He would provide guidance as he navigated the challenges of being a single parent. However, Tito No developed a detrimental coping mechanism in the form of alcoholism. However, regardless of their diverse coping mechanisms, their responses highlight the significance of support systems for single fathers, as the mere thought of having someone to lean on gives them some comfort and confidence to strive hard and maintain a good relationship with their children.	Paternal Happiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parental Satisfaction</li><li>• Parental Investment</li></ul> Supportive Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Identity</li><li>• Social Support</li><li>• Optimistic Faith</li></ul> Amidst the Struggles <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recreational Rejuvenation</li><li>• Bearable Stressed</li></ul>	Johnny has many responsibilities besides being a single father, which has assisted him in coping with the situation to a certain degree. Both Kuya D. and Johnny placed their trust in God, having faith that He would accompany them on their journey and placing their faith in Him. Moreover, the presence of support systems, which include family and friends, proved to be immensely beneficial in overcoming the challenges that they encountered, as they were assured of always having a support system to lean upon.

The previous table shows the above emerged themes on cross-case analysis amongst Kuya D., Tito No, and Johnny. Based on the experiences by the three single fathers the themes are classified into three which are Managing Emotional Resilience and Overcoming Separation, Balancing Work and Parenting Responsibilities, and Child-Centric Parenting. These fathers demonstrate exceptional emotional resilience as they navigate a complicated array of emotions following their separation and personal development, all the while having doubts about their capacity to provide sufficient support for their children. Indeed, it is the paternal responsibility to fulfill the responsibilities of both parent and child, extending both financial and emotional assistance. The transition to single fatherhood can be challenging due to the fact that single parents appear to face greater obstacles in the absence of a dependable significant other (Collado & Arpon, 2021). Loneliness, sadness, despair, frustration, sleep deprivation, familial distress, an absence of identity, and a lack of confidence are all challenges faced by single parents (Jackson et al., as cited in Gupta & Kashyap, 2020).

Moreover, effectively managing the responsibilities of both job and fatherhood is an ongoing challenge that requires resourceful approaches and an unwavering dedication to attaining an optimal balance between work and parental responsibilities. As the sole provider and caregiver, a single father has a duty to provide for their children, even at the expense of their own welfare. Work and child care are significantly more difficult to juggle in a single- parent household, resulting in increased tension and health issues (Bernadi & Mortelmans, 2018). Their utmost priority is the well-being, security, and growth of their children, which frequently requires them to make substantial personal investments in accordance with their child-centric parenting mindset. Their experiences provide a moving illustration of the unwavering commitment and resolve that single fathers display strongly, thereby emphasizing the necessity of acknowledging and providing assistance for the distinct obstacles they encounter within the community. In spite of the difficulties and obstacles associated with single-parenting, participants in the study by Arboleda and Singson (2022) reported experiencing happiness and described their involvement in child care as "a good feeling."

Furthermore, the experiences and difficulties of these single fathers have been carefully classified into three discrete coping mechanisms in their narratives. The primary focus of the first category is "Coping through Alcoholism," which sheds light on the experiences of a single father who resorted to using alcohol as a coping mechanism for the difficulties of life. Within the second category, "Discovering Strength and Solace in Faith," two individual single fathers are presented as having faithfully placed their faith in God, where they encountered peace, direction, and spiritual fortitude during each step of their journeys. However, the transformative capacity of positive faith is illuminated in greater detail in the book "Living As If: How Positive Faith Can Change Your Life" (2020), written by William R. Miller. This demonstrates the profound influence that faith can have on an individual's conduct, goals, and everyday life. Finally, for single fathers facing challenges, the third category, "Strength in Support Systems," emphasizes the profound

significance of supportive relationships. Hofferth et al. (2010) conducted a study that is cited by Melhado (2017) and underscores the critical significance of social support during the transition from non-caretaker to caretaker status, with a specific focus on single fathers. By means of these consistently constructed themes, the researchers acquire profound understandings of the complex approaches that individual fathers employ to manage the challenges and hardships they encounter in life; each selects a unique course of action to confront their specific situations.

## Conclusion

This study emphasized the interesting stories behind the life of single fathers which is rarely studied. It also focuses more on the lived experiences, challenges, child-rearing practices and coping mechanisms of single fathers. The following are derived from the data collected during the interview process: Fathers are seen as natural providers, prioritizing their children's well-being over self-care. This tendency, labeled as altruism, involves consistently caring for others while neglecting personal needs. Single fathers often prioritize work and caregiving, sacrificing self-care due to limited time and a strong focus on their children's welfare.

Feeling lonely and sad in response to change or loss is normal. Single fathers may cope differently, but using alcohol as a coping mechanism can have negative consequences for both them and their children. Acknowledging and seeking support to process these emotions is crucial to avoid further distress.

Facing challenges, single fathers develop resilience – the ability to cope with life's difficulties. Despite enduring life-changing obstacles, data reveals that many single fathers experience personal growth. Confronting challenges equips them with problem-solving skills, adaptability, and effective prioritization. These skills not only enhance parenting abilities but also contribute to overall personal growth.

Many single fathers avoid new relationships due to past experiences and attachment insecurity, fearing abandonment or intimacy. Their reluctance is also influenced by a lack of time, as they prioritize providing and caring for their children over pursuing a romantic partner.

Financial strain is a major issue for single fathers sharing custody, leading to limited time with their children due to work commitments. Balancing the need for financial support with being present for their kids poses a significant burden, especially in fostering crucial relationships, like with their daughters. Faith is a significant factor and foundation on a single father's parenting style and overall well-being. This behavior is often seen in individuals who find solace, support, and guidance in their faith when facing adversity.

A supportive community, comprising friends, family, neighbors, and single-parent support groups, fosters a stable and nurturing environment for both the father and child. This collective strength enhances the single father's confidence and competence in parenting.

The following recommendations are made in consideration of the study's results and conclusion:

The researchers propose that single fathers strike a balance between caregiving for others and self-care, emphasizing the positive aspects of moderate self-focus. They advocate for allocating dedicated time amid busy schedules for rest, self-care, and hobbies, recognizing the significance of self-care in fostering positive adult management.

Rather than resorting to alcohol, the researchers suggest alternative coping mechanisms such as counseling, social support, exercise, hobbies, and creative outlets to help single fathers navigate the challenges they face. These strategies are seen as effective in managing stress and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Developing a healthy coping strategy is emphasized as a means for single fathers to enhance their parenting and personal growth. Acknowledging the inevitable challenges in a single father's life, the recommendation encourages finding constructive ways to cope with sadness or loneliness. Positive coping styles are highlighted as fostering greater self-efficacy compared to unhealthy coping styles.

Therapy and counseling are recommended to assist single fathers in overcoming attachment insecurity. Additionally, self-reflection and establishing healthy boundaries in future relationships are identified as pivotal steps in overcoming this state.

Single fathers are advised to create a schedule that balances work commitments with childcare responsibilities. The advantages of such scheduling include improved productivity, better work-life balance, effective workload management, and the cultivation of discipline.

Participation in a religious community is suggested as a positive influence on lifestyle, beliefs, and attitudes for single fathers. Joining a church community is seen as a source of growth in faith and personal development, with the support of like-minded individuals within the church.

In order to enhance well-being, single fathers are encouraged to be part of communities, social groups, or circles of friends where they can freely express their feelings. Seeking support from church groups, associations, or friends is emphasized as instrumental in overcoming life's challenges, ultimately improving both parental and child competency in parenting.

The researchers recommend future studies on the desires of single fathers for relationships, the lived experiences of single mothers, and the experiences of children in broken households.

A proposed program is suggested for study participants to assist them in building effective relationships with their children and



managing their parenting roles. The program aims to provide guidance on child-rearing practices and addressing the needs of their children.

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