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Navigating Parenthood Alone: The Lived Experiences of Filipino Single Mothers in Child-Rearing

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Abstract

The Philippine Statistics Authority reports a rise in the population of unwed mothers in the Philippines, increasing from 54.3% in 2018 to 57% in 2020. This growth highlights ongoing issues related to mental health, financial stability, and work-life balance among single mothers. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of single mothers raising their children, focusing on the challenges faced by six participants from selected cities in Metro Manila. Using a phenomenological research design, data were collected through interviews and observations. The findings reveal several key themes: the challenges encountered, and coping strategies utilized, role of support systems and influence of others in the parenting process, and cultural and societal factors. These elements collectively shape the experiences of Filipino single mothers. The study underscores the importance of recognizing the difficulties faced by single mothers and advocates for targeted government and social work interventions to support them in overcoming the physiological and psychological challenges of single parenthood.

Keywords: *filipino single mothers, single parenthood, coping strategies*

Introduction

The Philippines is characterized by a strong religious influence; however, there has been a significant increase in the number of single mothers in recent years. According to recent data provided by government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), it is evident that the majority of single parents in the Philippines are women, accounting for approximately nine out of ten (9 out of 10), or 95 percent, of the total 15 million single parents in the country. While there is one move that can help these parents, is it enough? Republic Act No. 8972 and its extension, Republic Act No. 11861, titled: Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000, aims to provide aid to Solo Parents for their Child's upbringing. Inevitably, single mothers may experience greater difficulties in motherhood than other mothers. Many people find it to be a fulfilling lifelong effort but it can also be taxing, especially for single parents. Single mothers endure a variety of pressures and difficulties that other families may not have to deal with on a daily basis. People describe single mothers as a solo parent who is divorced from their partners, raises their child alone on their resources, and/or is responsible for supporting the child's growth. Single mothers face special difficulties because they lack a spouse to provide them with support. They claimed that they had no co-parenting relationship at all and were solely responsible for raising the children. In addition, they are concerned about a lack of financial assistance. Although single mothers may face difficulties, their resilience and perseverance are truly inspiring as they must accomplish both tasks at once to ensure the well-being of their children. When compared to people who are married, live together, or are childless, single parents have the worst work-life balance because they struggle to make ends meet while taking care of their children's needs.

According to statistics, the number of single mothers has increased significantly. The number of unwed mothers in the Philippines has risen from more than half (54.3%) in 2018 to 57% in 2020, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). Issues and dilemmas about their mental health, ability to provide for children, and work-life balance are controversial. Single mothers carry a huge burden that should be shared between two people. Therefore, in order to generally help single mothers cope with their individual and different challenges, this study must address the above issues. As per the research by Rousou, Kouta, Middleton, & Karanikola (2019), single mothers tend to be more susceptible to mental health illnesses because they lack the social and emotional support of a presumed partner and work to avoid an economic crisis. Additionally, research shows a link between single motherhood and poor mental health. Therefore, this particular problem needs to be addressed by increasing social support, as doing so may reduce the risk of developing mental health disorders. Correspondingly, financial difficulties are linked to single moms' poor mental health. To illustrate this point, Affandy (2023) concluded that the financial crisis caused single mothers to make compromises in order to meet the demands of their children. Even more than that, it has been observed that single mothers tend to change their ways and turn to less expensive options in their daily spending. This issue must be addressed so that single mothers can meet their children's needs and reduce their negative psychological impact. Beyond this, lone mothers struggle with a lack of livelihoods. For instance, Raniga, Boecker, and Mthembu (2019) reported that there is increased poverty and inequality in terms of earning a living for single mothers. In order for single mothers to rewrite their own and their families' stories, this issue must be addressed. At the same time, many single mothers struggle to find work-life balance. According to the findings of a study conducted by Cochran (2021), there are both internal and external motivations for people to set-up a balance between work and life. This issue needs to be addressed because a balanced lifestyle goes hand in hand with being practical and raising healthy children.

Children who were raised by single mothers have a variety of reasons, most commonly because of the parent's separation, death of the other parent, unplanned pregnancies, and abandonment, which can cause the other parent and the children to experience a variety of

issues, including psychological trauma, behavioral problems, poor academic performance, preferring to spend their time outside instead of staying at home and seeking care from others, and finding other ways to distract them from the situation. From the perspective of mothers, raising their children alone is a great deal of emotional and physical exhaustion, especially when they have more than one child to raise. Being a single mother means you do all the work and all the responsibilities, pay all the bills, do all the household chores, and provide for your children's wants and needs. Raising children alone is not an easy task. Sometimes people have to overcome many difficulties. Maintaining financial and economic stability is a daily struggle that single mothers face. A challenging obstacle to overcome is raising children while the cost of their basic necessities is rising. They have to work hard while being a mother, a role model to their children, and a creative and resourceful parent to ensure their children's needs.

Thus far, what we know about the aid single mothers are receiving is through the Republic Act No. 8972, entitled Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000. It is implemented to serve its own purpose, which is to provide impartial support and assistance to single parents and their children, whether they are single mothers or single fathers. Indigent families of the single parent are entitled to educational and health services, housing support, and parental leave. Additionally, as an extension of the law, Republic Act No. 11861, also known as the Expanded Single Parent Benefits Act, children are eligible for scholarships with a monthly subsidy worth P1,000. Aside from indigent families, benefits are also set for those who don't qualify as low-income. Flexibility in work arrangements is provided to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities as parents. In addition, they can enjoy 7 days of paid vacation after working for one year. Finally, separate parent ID cards will be issued to enable them to enjoy reduced prices on various medicines, food and clothing. Depending on the city of residence, some may even receive further benefits, such as dining discounts every first and fourth Sunday for Quezon City residents.

This study aims to discuss the challenges faced by single mothers in the context of raising their children. First, it is necessary to understand the challenges single mothers face in their daily lives. The experience of motherhood presents personal challenges, and single mothers in particular may experience additional difficulties. The commendable determination and resilience exhibited by single mothers are deserving of great admiration; however, it is also reasonable for them to have the profound burnout or feeling drained. One of the most formidable aspects of single parenting involves surmounting financial obstacles and navigating in limited budgetary parameters, particularly worsening during the pandemic due to the imposition of restrictions and lockdowns, which have resulted in job losses and escalated the cost of commodities. One of the struggles that single mothers face is maintaining their work/life balance, achieving a balance between work and leisure can present challenges due to the societal expectation placed on single mothers to fulfill their parental responsibilities and provide for their children. This phenomenon may cause single mothers to put in extra hours at work. When single mothers lose their jobs, they are responsible for caring for their children, leaving them with limited personal time. Being a single mother in general is really difficult, but it also has its unique advantages. In the face of countless obstacles and ongoing problems, single mothers persevere in raising and caring for their children. A prime example of extraordinary resiliency, steadfast fortitude, and unending love are single mothers. In order to provide the best possible living environment for their children, single mothers take on a variety of duties and responsibilities, demonstrating a talent for multitasking.

Various implications for single mothers, and their children will develop, remain, and worsen if the problems aren't addressed. There is no doubt that not only single mothers face difficulty raising their children. There's no doubt that it's not just single mothers who face difficulties raising children. Both their mother-child relationship and the children themselves are affected by situations and problems. Children will begin to wonder in their heads why their mother is single, why their family isn't complete, and why they are going through difficulties in life as they get older, grow up, and develop the proper attitude. Children of single parents frequently struggle with developmental issues that are related to their academic success. They tend to have lower grades and higher dropout rates than their peers from two-parent families. The contrast between their lives and those of their friends can also cause them to feel anxious, irritated, and frustrated. Compared to children from households with two parents, children of single parents are more likely to suffer from different mental conditions, make inappropriate use of alcohol, and attempt suicide. For mothers, they encounter a unique set of challenges as they take on the responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood. This is also the time when they are experiencing stress. Mothers are at risk of burnout if they are unable to cope with the stress of single parenthood. This is a common problem among single parents and often leads to increased anxiety, sadness, and physical health problems.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of single mothers in child-rearing. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the unique challenges and coping strategies that Filipino single mothers encounter while raising their children, and how do these experiences shape their identities and sense of self?
2. How do Filipino single mothers navigate social support systems, including family, friends, and community resources, to meet the emotional, financial, and practical needs of their children, and how do these support systems influence their parenting experiences?
3. What cultural and societal factors, such as gender roles, stereotypes, and stigmatization, impact the daily lives and decision-making processes of Filipino single mothers, and how do these factors affect their perceptions of motherhood and their children's well-being?

Literature Review

The Dual Nature of Single Motherhood and Its Impact on Subjective Well-Being

There is a substantial body of literature dedicated to the well-being of single mothers; however, this literature has not yet examined the subjective well-being (SWB) of single mothers. The significance of this limitation is significant, as previous research has demonstrated the existence of significant disparities between economic indicators and subjective well-being (SWB). Given the aforementioned context, this part of the research aims to examine the significance of motherhood in the lives of single mothers and assess its influence on their overall well-being. Prior scholarly investigations have offered a comprehensive yet disjointed portrayal of single motherhood. This literature makes a valuable contribution to the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding the impact of parenthood on the happiness of single women. It achieves this by providing a more comprehensive and critical analysis of this issue. Foremost, there are findings that show that despite the potential negative consequences of motherhood, the positive aspects are able to at least balance out the negative ones, taking into consideration factors such as women's educational attainment, labor market status, self-rated health, material standard of living, and unobserved characteristics that remain constant for each individual woman. In a study by Jordan (2019), single-mothers-by-choice is one example of a family lifestyle choice that is becoming more popular as an alternative to the traditional nuclear family, which is made up of a wife, a husband, and their children. Single mothers-by-choice are women who give birth to or adopt children and raise them on their own, without a co-parent, outside of a committed relationship (like marriage or a parenting arrangement). Additionally, a study by Pouni, Berg, and Perrson (2022) stated that the conventional family is frequently characterized as a heterosexual relationship between married individuals who have biological offspring. However, alternative family structures are progressively gaining prevalence in contemporary society. The topic of one-parent families is extensively examined in this particular context, with a predominant portrayal of the single parent as a woman who finds herself without a co-parent toward her wishes. In general, it is evident that there is a subset of women who express a desire to bear children outside the confines of conventional marriage.

Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Dor (2021) concerning single mothers by choice, one of the advantages is that the decision-making for their child's sake is in their hands. Considering that they don't have partners, they don't need to consult another person just to come up with a decision. For most married couples, this is one of the conflicts they often encounter, and as a result, arguments happen. In this case, dealing with the child's welfare is up to the mother herself. Despite having doubts at times, they know that the decisions they make in a particular situation are the right way to do it. As the one in charge, having sole authority over their child means a great deal of power as well as confidence. With this in mind, they perceive their situation as commodious. Another benefit of being a single mother is the calmness of the environment, especially at home. As mentioned before, no spouses mean no arguments. For married couples, these arguments revolve around fatigue, chores, and differences that result in bigger problems, especially those concerning mental health. In addition, no partner means no one else is asking for time except their children. The good thing about being a single parent is that the mother's attention is given in full to the young ones. Compared to other family dynamics, their kind seems sturdier than the rest. Hence, being a single mother isn't always about the difficulty. Though there is indeed difficulty, the advantages also persist.

The Paradox of Single Motherhood

A variety of reasons can contribute to being a single mother. Divorce, losing a partner, and never getting married are the three most common reasons for this. It may also occur as a result of unwanted pregnancies, particularly among young girls and teenagers. As a result, extensive research has been performed to investigate single moms' lived experiences. However, instead of acknowledging single moms' parenting approaches and their reactions to social stigmas, scholars have a tendency to concentrate on their experiences. According to Dor (2021), for example, a lot of research has been done to show that single mothers are stigmatized by society in contrast to fathers, who are seen as loving, responsible, and caring parents; however, very little research has been done to show that single mothers are hardworking, independent, and selfless parents. Furthermore, according to a study done by Kahraman in 2021, single mothers are seen as ethically dubious, careless, and lacking in parenting abilities. In general, there is a scarcity of studies on how people see single mothers and how they respond to stigma.

Without a doubt, pregnancy or solo parenting significantly alters moms' lives. While raising a child and bringing them into the world may be a blessing, it also necessitates significant sacrifices, assistance, work, and investment to guarantee the child's rights. However, not all single mothers have easy access to their children's needs and wants; therefore, they must find work and other means of subsistence. Due to this problem, numerous studies have been conducted to determine how mothers' work-life balance and the absence of a father's role affect children's development. In accordance with Filipino customs, some kids were raised by their grandparents while their single mothers worked or just lazed around. In support of this, a study conducted in 2019 by Del Mundo, J., Macanlalay, and Del Mundo, M. revealed that children raised by single mothers are more likely to be disobedient and have problems understanding the meaning of marriage and family. However, an insufficient amount of research has been done to elaborate on and discuss the parenting style of single mothers resulting from the behavior of their offspring. To illustrate, authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles were elaborated on in the research of Garcia, Lim, Pascua, Santiago, and Tus (2021).

The Multifaceted Struggles of Single Motherhood: Financial Hardships, Emotional Strain, and Societal Implications

Every single mother's path and experiences are unique, and challenges frequently make it harder to provide for the family's needs in

terms of finances, affection, and other crucial areas of life. A constant difficulty for single mothers is managing their time, energy, resources, and emotions with their children and their own. They occasionally suffer complex moments of gloom. In the words of Tunajina (as referenced by Dagupon & Garin, 2019), the responsibilities and difficulties single women encounter as parents cause them to feel depleted and distressed. Fewer hours are spent with their children as a result of parents complaining that they don't have time to unwind and that it is challenging to work and be a parent at the same time. They are likely to admit that the majority of the time they worry—or worry constantly—about not having enough money to take care of their families' needs. Due to poorer earning capacity brought on by a lack of education or training as well as the absence of support from non-residential dads, "mother-only" families are more likely to be insufficient (Ramos & Tus, 2020).

Being a single parent, or, in this case, a single mother, has also become more prevalent. Ramos and Tus (2020) even argued that due to the increasing number of single parents, it has been a so-called "norm" in our society. However, despite these observations, some queries remained unanswered, such as the reason for being a single mother, their source of income, and their way of balancing job and family responsibilities. Aside from this, a discourse regarding their mental health is also worth knowing, as is whether the government programs dedicated to them are enough to sustain their basic necessities; if not, it'll be insightful to know what other forms of support can be provided for their situation.

A rapidly expanding group of people in society are single mothers. A study by the Department of Health and the National Institute of Health at the University of the Philippines estimates that there are 15 million single parents in the Philippines, 95% of whom are women. The majority of single mothers and their children continue to live in extreme poverty and are also frequently financially unstable. A recently conducted study in 2023 also stated that single mothers are nearly three times as likely as married couples to live in poverty. Most single mothers also have higher poverty rates than married couples. Moreover, additional studies have been conducted to take a closer look at the statistics of single-mother poverty in 2023. In accordance with a different recent study by Gitnux Market Data (2023), 78.8% of young single mothers and 74.3% of other young women reported working in June 2021. Since they are more likely to have jobs than other mothers, single mothers may experience lower levels of poverty as a result. Therefore, it is necessary to look more closely at the poverty and unemployment rates experienced by the majority of Filipino single mothers in order to understand the various factors that influence these findings. Consequently, more research is required to better understand and expand upon the experiences of Filipino single mothers raising their children in the face of unemployment and poverty.

Surveys and interviews with single mothers who are having trouble providing for their own needs and raising their children are desirable. Evidence points to an intriguing correlation, so it would be nice to survey married mothers as well as single mothers who work alone to understand their perspectives and how they differ when it comes to the challenges of supporting their families and raising their children. Researchers also advise public and private institutions to offer single mothers better employment opportunities and support systems. Children of single mothers who receive educational assistance at the tertiary level are helped to complete their degrees, which will open up more and better job opportunities for them in the future.

Methodology

Research Design

The research paper is phenomenological in nature. The researchers sought to understand and explore the essence of being a single mother and, in general, the participants' lived experiences; for this reason, phenomenology was used. Data were collected through interviews and observation of the participants in the study.

Participants

For phenomenological studies, researchers are encouraged to have at least six participants (Bernard, 2013; Morse, 1994, as cited in Bekele & Ago, 2022). Thus, in the present study, six participants were chosen from selected cities in Metro Manila through a purposive sampling technique. The criteria used for choosing the participants are the following: (1) Filipino; (2) single; (3) mother; and (4) residing in the selected cities previously mentioned.

Instrument

In this study, the researchers used a semi-structured interview guide as the main gathering instrument. A semi-structured interview guide was used by the researchers to collect the following: (1) open-ended data; (2) exploring and explaining the research subject's opinions, behaviors, and experiences; and (3) delving deeply into personal issues. The interviews mainly addressed the challenges and experiences of Filipino single mothers raising their children. A researcher-made structured questionnaire was used as the interview guide's questions to collect the necessary information from the participants. The questionnaire was drawn out based on the researchers' understanding of the studies, articles, and related literature relevant to the study. Participants were asked a series of background questions following informed consent, including their age, occupation, annual income, and their child's age. The questions in the interview guide are content-validated by experts to test their trustworthiness and reliability. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), validity means the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and among different projects. Validity refers to whether the research is accurate and trustworthy, and reliability refers to the consistency of the data provided with other studies of a similar nature. By



continually checking the transcripts to ensure that they do not contain obvious errors that arise during the transcription process, researchers can ensure that the data collected is reliable.

Procedure

The study was phenomenological in nature and focused on the lived experience of single mothers in six districts in the National Capital Region (NCR). Purposive sampling was used to select participants from six random cities. The following procedures were used to collect data: prior to the interview, single mothers completed an informed consent form (ICF). Participants were then asked to answer interview questions posed by the researcher, which were validated by professionals knowledgeable in the topic. The research instrument contained questions that described the phenomenon and were open-ended; participants' answers were subjective and vague. Due to its subjectivity and vagueness, data saturation was done when necessary. Moreover, the responses were decoded by writing and transcribing their statements and relating them to the study.

Ethical Considerations

As this study used human participants, the ethical considerations necessary to ensure their privacy and safety are highlighted. The researchers conducted the research in a manner that was respectful to the respondents and other human beings who may be influenced by the research process. The researchers ensured that full consent was obtained from participants prior to the interview. Any type of communication about research was conducted with honesty, trust and respect. The researchers avoided the use of offensive, discriminatory, and other unacceptable language in the formulation of researcher-made questions used in the interview. The researchers did not force anyone to answer the questions and made sure that the identity of the participant would be kept anonymous. More so, researchers ensured that the information disclosed by the participants was confidential as part of the ethical principle in research and as declared in the Republic Act 10173, known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the emergent themes that have been found in the research. As shown, there are three (3) superordinate themes with each having five (5) subordinate themes. Superordinate themes are as follows: (1) challenges encountered and coping strategies utilized, (2) role of support systems and influence of others in the parenting process, and (3) cultural and societal factors. With the first superordinate theme, subordinate themes are as follows: personal challenges experienced, navigated coping strategies, one's perceived self, significant occurrences that influenced one's self-esteem, and mutual experience within a single parenthood community. For the second superordinate theme, subordinate themes are composed of received support from family, friends, and colleagues at work, obtained government support, influence of extended family in one's decision-making, public prejudices, and significant experiences that affect parenting style. Lastly, the third superordinate theme consists of five (5) subordinate themes including assumptions to gender roles, stereotypes within cultural context, satisfying children's needs, external factors that affect decision-making, perceived role of mother in the Filipino context.

Table 1. *Emerging Themes*

<i>Superordinate Themes</i>	<i>Subordinate Themes</i>
Challenges encountered and coping strategies utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal challenges experienced• Navigated coping strategies• One's perceived self• Significant occurrences that influenced one's self-esteem• Mutual experiences within the single parenthood community
Role of support systems and influence of others in the parenting process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received support from family, friends, and colleagues at work• Obtained government support• Influence of extended family in one's decision making• Public prejudices• Significant experiences that affect parenting style
Cultural and societal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assumptions to gender roles• Stereotypes within cultural context• Satisfying children's needs• External factors that affect decision making• Perceived role of mother in the Filipino context

This research aimed to uncover the lived experiences of Filipino single mothers in raising their children. Moreover, this research has studied and investigated the challenges that single mothers faced in their journey to single parenthood, together with the support systems and coping mechanisms they have navigated in order to live. With that, the findings in the current study have found the first emergent theme which is about the challenges encountered and utilized coping strategies. In this research, the first subordinate theme found was the experienced personal challenges. Which participants' personal challenges were finances to sustain their family's everyday needs. "Hmm, unang una kasi financial eh. Kasi ako lang yung nagwo-work tsaka ayokong pagtrabahuin yung mga anak ko." This is consistent

with the findings of Dagupon and Garin (2022) where the majority of participants faced financial challenges due to shortcomings of regular sources of income. Apart from finances, mental health is also a challenge in this study. "... kung hindi mo aalagan sarili mo, hindi mo alam kung, ah, san ka kukuha ng magiging outlet mo nakakabaliw siya. Siguro yung pinaka struggle mo is yung mental health". It supports the study of Del Mundo, M., Del Mundo, J., and Macanlalay (2019) where solo mothers are more susceptible to poor mental health and tend to report more problems with pressure. In line with this, navigated coping strategies from participants were to find work to sustain needs "...three months palang naghanap nako ng work" and to bond with family, friends, and colleagues "... yung ginagawa kong strategy, napapagaan naman kasi meron din akong mga kaibigan na nakakausap..." It is supported by Ramos and Tus (2020) in which participants hold on to their faith and seek support from family, friends, and colleagues to stay positive and keep on track.

Furthermore, concerning the way single moms regarded themselves, the majority of participants felt that being a single mother affected their sense of well-being and served as an example for others. "Oo kase sobrang iba ako before eh. Nung bago ako magkaron ng anak, sobrang iba talaga ako.". The research of Kim, Jeon, and Song (2023) has demonstrated that they discovered that major life changes, including being a single parent or getting divorced, had an impact on an individual's well-being. On top of this, single mothers could perceive themselves as less valuable and feel inferior due to internalized stigma. Taylor and Conger, on the other hand, as referenced by Kim, Jeon S., and Song J. (2023) noted that having a single mother had an impact on their sense of self-worth, which in turn improved their well-being and encouraged good mental health. Moms' self-esteem is influenced by important experiences in addition to their perception of themselves. "I'm proud to be a single mom. Pinapakita ko lang na kung anong kayang gawin ng lalaki, kaya ring gawin ng babae. Hindi ako nagpapatalo sa mga problema ko.". The study conducted by Kim, Jeon S., and Song J. supports this claim, it has been found that being a single parent caused social marginalization for single mothers, which in turn caused issues including depression and low self-esteem (2023). Finally, among the group of single moms, there are common experiences. "... it builds camaraderie between us and also, ahm, pinapa-remind sayo na 'uy di ka nag-iisa, hindi lang ikaw yung nakakaranas ng ganon". It is implied by the statement that belonging to a group where people have common experiences makes them feel supported and like they belong. It confirms the findings of the study by Fajarwati, Muarifah, and Widyastuti (2019), which stated that social support is the most important thing a person needs to boost their self-confidence in handling life's challenges and that a person needs a good, uplifting, and complementary relationship in order to stay happy.

According to Elterman (as cited by Ramos and Tus, 2020), Filipinos have very close-knit families. In this case, the family welcomes the situation and offers assistance, whether financially or by caring for the child(ren) while the single mother works. As a result, the findings revealed that the majority of the participants received family support in terms of caring for their child. Emotional support from family and friends is also extremely beneficial to the well-being of single mothers, "May mga friends ako na tumutulong din sa'kin, iaano niya ako kumbaga parang nagbibigay ng advice sa'kin, at the same time yung family ko yung nanay ko." After all, the support system gave them the feeling that they were not alone. Talking to family and friends about their situation and the advice they received from them serves as fuel to keep them going and knowing that there is hope and things will get better (Ramos and Tus, 2020). Government support was also obtained by some of the participants and used the benefits that are given to them. "I'm very thankful don sa minsan may financial, ahm, support or assistance, even if hindi naman siya kalakihan or, ahm, yung seven day, ahm, solo parent leave. So that, that have helped me spend more time, at least a bit more time with my son." However, the study by Garcia et al. (2021) contradicts this statement by demonstrating that the majority of single mothers are not that aware of and do not exercise government benefits specifically for single parents. This is evident in the government's lack of methods and approaches to inform single parents of these benefits.

Aside from the received support from family, friends, workmates, and obtained government support, there is also an influence of extended family in terms of decision-making. "Siguro yung pinaka social support ko talaga dyan, family ko eh syempre parang kahit-kahit na malayo sila emotionally talagang ipaparamdam nila sa'yo na andito sila, na papayuhan ka kung ano ba gagawin mo dito, dapat ganito, ganito-ganyan". As per Chavda and Nisarga (2023), when an extended family cohabits with a single parent, they typically encourage the parent's choices, exhibit minimal control, and minimize unsolicited criticism and advice. This indicates that extended families do have some influence over a single parent's parenting style and decision-making. When it comes to single parenting, stereotypes persist even with the abundance of support from relatives and extended families. "... even without the backstory people are going to be judging you and of course always asking kung bakit siya iniwan, bakit sila iniwan, or bakit hindi nagsu-support.". Being a single mother is hard because there will always be prejudice and stigma attached to it. As stated by Jain & Mahmoodi (2022), In every culture, single parents face negative consequences, which could stem from social stigma as well as financial limitations. And lastly, some experiences of being a single mother affects their parenting style. "...para sakin hindi pa sya enough kase mas better kung andito lang sya eh parang mas mafo-focusan sya eh. Pag andyan kase sya sa lola nya, yun nga spoiled nga diba? So parang um ang hirap kay Mia kase hin- iba-iba yung naa-adopt nyang environment. Oo, kaya ngayon parang di pa ganon ka- enough sakin kung ano yung nagagawa ko". According to Muslihat and Listiana's research (2021), having been a solo mother can be challenging because there are responsibilities that should be shared by two people. Consequently, making parenting errors can have a negative impact on the child's future.

An individual's beliefs and behaviors are significantly influenced by cultural and societal factors, which also affect how they perceive gender roles and stereotypes. These factors provide a complex backdrop against which choices are made, children's needs are satisfied,

and situations involving cultural diversity affect how mothers are perceived. These features have their roots deep in norms, historical settings, and traditions.

Marriage to a heterosexual couple and their kids constitutes the standard definition of a "family" in Filipino society. In such a cultural context, raising a child or children is expected to be a joint responsibility between the mother and the father. But in households headed by single mothers, where they are the only provider and caregiver. "I make sure na meron akong enough na (brief pause) income, flowing yung income ko, meron akong passive income aside from my monthly income, para masuportahan ko yung pangangailangan ng anak ko". Children's psychological and emotional development is the responsibility of parents, as is teaching them about societal norms and values and sharing the same experiences with other single mothers. "...So we have shared experiences, challenges like uhh how to discipline your child, anong dapat mong gawin para (brief pause) ma... madisiplina mo yung anak mo mapa.. paano ang gagawin mo, kailan mo siya pwedeng payagan na lumabas, naging maging independent para sa sarili niya". According to Soomar (2019), single mothers are more stigmatized because of patriarchy. The lack of love and warmth that comes with single parenting appears to have an impact on a child's general well-being and upbringing. The 2010 book "Gender Stereotyping" by Rebecca J. Cook and Simone Cusack (as cited by Bain, M. C., 2020) presents viewpoints on how women's lives are impacted by the socialization of roles. Additionally, the book also highlights how social construction of women into submissive roles is a result of gender stereotyping. "You have to make sure na yung anak mo laging maayos yung itsura. kapag yung anak ko mukhang nakapambahay or mukhang hindi maayos, nahuhusgahan ako doon. So, isa rin yon sa mga bagay na siguro I have to ano, adjust para sa society. Moreover, the book also covers the detrimental effects of gender stereotypes being applied to both men and women, as well as how it affects women's lives.

Conclusions

This study has provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of Filipino single mothers, highlighting the multifaceted challenges they face, including financial instability, mental health issues, and the impacts of societal stigma. The research identified key themes such as personal and financial challenges, coping strategies, and the role of support systems. Participants consistently reported difficulties with finances and mental health, echoing findings from previous studies (Dagupon & Garin, 2022; Del Mundo et al., 2019). They employed various coping mechanisms, such as seeking employment and relying on support from family and friends, which aligns with the resilience strategies noted in existing literature (Ramos & Tus, 2020). Additionally, the study revealed that single mothers often experience a shift in self-perception and well-being, influenced by societal expectations and internalized stigma, which affects their self-esteem and parenting style (Kim et al., 2023; Jain & Mahmoodi, 2022).

To expand upon these findings, future research should adopt a longitudinal mixed methods approach to track the evolving challenges and coping strategies of single mothers over time. It is crucial to include a more diverse sample encompassing various regions and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as Filipino single mothers working abroad, to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. Emphasis should also be placed on exploring the impact of support networks and policy implications, as these factors play a significant role in addressing the needs of single mothers. Engaging with community organizations could facilitate participant recruitment and offer deeper insights into their experiences. By addressing these recommendations, researchers can contribute to more effective interventions and policies that support the well-being of single mothers and their children.

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