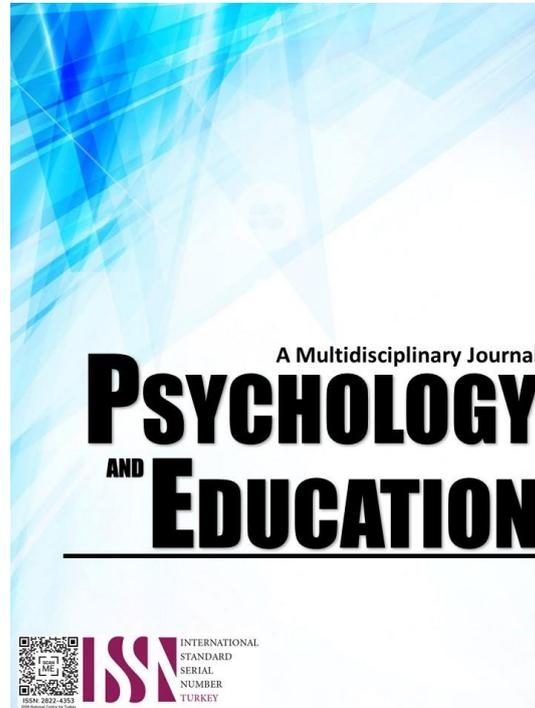


**THE HIDDEN TRUTH BEHIND THE LIFE  
CIRCUMSTANCES OF TEACHERS WHO ARE  
SINGLE PARENTS**



**PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL**

2023

Volume: 6

Pages: 957-969

Document ID: 2022PEMJ500

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7548481

Manuscript Accepted: 2023-15-1

## The Hidden Truth Behind the Life Circumstances of Teachers Who are Single Parents

Catalino E. Egaran, Jr.\*

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

### Abstract

This qualitative study explored the narratives of teachers who are single parents and who experienced taking care of their children alone. The total number of conversational partners are 15 where 3 males and 12 females took the in-depth interview. This study was conducted in different secondary schools in the PPALMA in the school year 2021–2022. The study utilized a qualitative research design anchored on the descriptive phenomenological design. An in-depth interview was used to gather the lived experiences of the conversational partners. This study used a snowballing, a non-probability sampling method. Specifically, it gathered personal narratives on the following: responses of the conversational partners on their lived experiences as undesirable and beneficial to them, factors in the environment that posed as challenges and self-issues that they faced while they were in parenting, coping mechanisms of teachers who are single parents to address the struggles encountered, motivating factors used by the conversational partners as their strength in facing the challenges as a single parent. The results of the study revealed different theme clusters in the research questions. The common themes that were found through this study are: *Betwixt and Between*, *Against All Odds*, *Tougher Than Before*, and *Rebuilding Life*. All of these themes represent the lived experiences that the teachers.

**Keywords:** *single parent teachers, lived experiences, phenomenology*

### Introduction

Being a single parent is twice the work, twice the stress, and twice the tears but also twice the hugs, twice the love, and twice the pride (Pointer, 2021).

Single parenting, also called solo parenting, has been a social issue regarding families, the basic unit in the community. Single parenthood may be caused by choice, as in adoption, artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood, divorce, and not remarried or never married teen single parenthood (mother/fathers). In contrast, others result from an unexpected incidence, such as the death or abandonment of either one of the parents (Mendez, 2010). It was stated by Dunn (2008) that families led by single parents face three significant problems such as inadequate income and parenting difficulties, particularly in monitoring the children and running the house. However, many people choose to become single parents rather than remain in an unhappy relationship, even if they know the difficulty of adjustments.

In Africa, an increase in single parenting has become a global concern as existing evidence continues to display that single parenthood is associated with higher risks of poverty, reproduction of poverty, and other adverse outcomes that affect the welfare of single parent and their children (Ntoimo et al., 2020).

In the Philippines, it was reported from a recent survey that the country has around 15 million single parents, of whom 95 percent are women, and 5 percent are men

(WHO, 2020). The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) acknowledges that 15 million single parents are included among disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors of the Philippine society, citing

the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) having the highest number of poor single parents and National Capital Region (NCR) with the highest population of non-poor (De Vera, 2016).

In PPALMA Area, specifically in the First Congressional District of Cotabato, few studies and literature discuss single parents, although it frequently happens in the locality. As narrated by the teachers who are single parents, the process of parenting while working has put them into a dilemma on what to prioritize. They mentioned that they somehow struggle to keep their personal life and professional career proactive and efficient, especially since various responsibilities anchor teachers in delivering impeccable learning outcomes. Consequently, they tend to overthink, which affects their efficiency as teachers and parents. This unique phenomenon was observed and noted by the researcher and was considered carefully for further study.

These scenarios have motivated and led the researcher to deal with and dig deeper into the experiences of these single-parent teachers in raising their children and how they manage to balance their workload and family life. Therefore, this study was conducted to look into the lived experiences of teachers who are single parents.



## Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the narratives of teachers who are single parents and who experienced taking care of their children alone. It examined their successes, setbacks, frustrations and problems they have encountered. More specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of teachers who are single parents?
2. What are the challenges they encountered as single parents and as teachers at the same time and how do they cope with these challenges?
3. What are their learning experiences and aspirations for self and children?

## Literature Review

### Single Parents

The phenomenon of single parenting is a social issue in different countries nowadays. Globally, one-third of all families are headed by single mothers, calling into question the normativeness of couples headed by families. Developed countries, particularly, are experiencing an increase in single-parent families as divorce becomes more common.

In addition, according to the 2009 United States census, about 13.7 million single parents have custody of 21.8 million children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). It continues to increase as the years go by, raising questions about the effects of single parenting on children. Research studies show a steady trend of children expressing significantly more negative behaviors when raised by a single parent than when raised in a dual-parent home (Blackwell, 2009).

Single parenthood is a phenomenon that does not occur naturally. There are several reasons why this phenomenon happened. Thus, the Philippine government has passed a law ensuring the welfare of single parents. Republic Act 8972 or also known as the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000, declares that it is the policy of the State to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development. The law calls for developing a comprehensive package of services for single parents to address their needs (DSWD, 2003).

The burden of raising children independently as solo

parents have been a multifarious and challenging task. According to Ali et al. (2019), children are raised by single parents due to several reasons, which include divorce of partners, death of the spouse, unwanted pregnancies, and adoption that may result in many problems such as psychological health and behavioral issues, financial struggles, low academic performance in school, low self-confidence, poor social interaction, and unhealthy lifestyle.

Tassoni (2002) also concurred as he pronounced in his findings that the causes of single-parent families in U.S. sites divorce and death as some of the significant causes of single-parent families. At the same time, New York Times (2004) conducted studies in the southern part of Africa and found that poverty and teenage pregnancies led to a rise in single-parent families.

Another study by Noronha et al. (2016) revealed that in India, single parenthood happened because of death, divorce, or separation. In the case of divorce or separation, the mother was given custody of the children. Noronha et al. further accentuated that life is hard for most single-parent families in India; however, many still choose to become single rather than remain in an unhappy relationship, even if they know the difficulty of adjusting.

In the Philippine setting, single parenthood gives opportunities and privileges because being a solo parent can be very difficult emotionally and financially. In a study conducted by Valet (2017), he presented that the traditionally conservative Filipino society is slowly embracing the idea of single-parent households. It has existed for a while now, but the rate at which it increases is faster than in previous years, and the reasons for this are also growing. He further mentioned that the stigma regarding single parenthood, especially if the cause is pregnancy out of wedlock, is a great deal.

### Challenges and Parental Concerns of Single Parent

The reality of single parenting can be challenging, but those challenges differ along with the household's circumstances. This certainty should be well known to all who work with single parents, even though it does not seem to be common knowledge. This is why it should also be a focus of attention to consider for future studies because single parents do not all fit into one category when it comes to challenges. Not all single parents have the same situations or capabilities, mainly because not all single parents have access to the same resources, such as housing and financial,

social, and family support, to name a handful of these variations. Some of these varying situations are even more complex than most studies have shown (Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2011).

Further, the study of Dela Cruz et al. (2014) on home management practices of solo parents in Samar, Philippines, determined home management practices and problems met by the solo parents of selected rural areas in Samar along with child-rearing practices such as household chores and routine, time management, and financial management. In the data-gathering procedure, a researcher-made questionnaire was utilized. A significant relationship was evident in the home management practices, problems met along with child-rearing practices, household chores, routines of the respondents, and their classification as solo parents. Meanwhile, the study pointed out that the national and local government has a big responsibility to address the needs and problems of solo parents. Moreover, Reece (2013) noted that parenthood is challenging under the best conditions. With one parent, the challenges are multiplied as the road of a single parent may consist of obstacles such as loneliness, grief, hurt, sadness, rejection, guilt, insecurity, and depression.

Single mothers reveal that they live under challenging conditions. The cultural norms and practices have been to be continually discriminating and carry inequalities to the daily life journey of single mothers in the Philippines. It also shows that paternalistic and discriminatory practices influenced by society exist within the church to fully meet the needs of single mothers (Bain, 2020).

In the Philippines, being a single mom due to pre-marital intimate engagement caused stereotyping and societal pre-judgment. Cabato (2018) reported that the stigma is challenging for single mothers in a dominantly conservative country. It was remembered then that Majority Leader Senator Tito Sotto was hit for the supposed joke, calling then Social Welfare Secretary and single mom Judy Taguiwalo "na-ano lang." Although the senator has since promised to give solo parents a helping hand, the laughter that followed his joke manifested a larger problematic culture. Society still expects women to bear the brunt of child-rearing but cannot take them seriously when she does it alone. Even if they have to show others that they can care for their children, others would still question their ability to raise them. However, they have to persevere in facing the challenge that they are experiencing at the moment. The burden and suffering may weaken them, but their children may serve as their strength to

continue despite what they are going through.

The biggest challenge a solo parent is fronting is the family's economic stability. If only one person is working for the whole family, then it is expected that income would not suffice the needs of the children in general. As explained by Garfield (2009), when there is only one parent who is consistently present in the household, this usually equates to being the only economic and parenting provider and must be hard-pressed to fulfill both ends, resulting in multiple problems like anxiety and depression and physical fatigue from trying to balance time and resources hoping to accomplish all the responsibilities. This often results in less time spent with their children, which they will miss when they grow up. Sometimes it may cause misunderstanding between the single parent and the children. On the other hand, the time and the situation they have will explain to the child why their parents have less time for them. The time spent with the children of single parents will be utilized in another way for them to fulfill their responsibilities as both a mother and fathers.

Researchers like Boylu and Ozturk (2014) also claimed that single-parent families face many problems in their daily lives. These problems include parenting, child care, chores, a decrease in income, social life, and time use. As a result of these problems, leisure consumption, one of the indicators of quality of life, can be changed.

Nurturing a child is a thought-provoking experience. It was reported by Ezeobi (2010) that parenthood is challenging enough, even under the best of conditions. So, being a single parent in our society is tasking. This is because, with one parent, the challenges are multiplied. Single parenting in our society has been the focus of much interest and research in recent years, no doubt due to divorce, death, and the increase in the incidence of birth outside of marriage.

The research study of Diesta (2018) revealed that Filipino single fathers went through stages and transitions concerning the post-divorce and bereaved life cycle. They experienced extreme stress due to the transition from being married to becoming single. They also have feelings of inadequacy that surfaced in performing the role of the mother and father in the household. However, they also developed a more solid and positive bond with their children, and heightened spirituality was observed.

For Single fathers, there is a general struggle over their identities as fathers, and when in the single-parent situation, there is a drive to prove themselves capable

of traditional mother roles in providing complete care for their children. It has also been noted that fathers struggle with a constant need to reaffirm their masculinity and feel like they no longer fit the traditional masculine male role. Some single father addresses these personal struggles with gender roles as a mother and father by changing how they view and conduct these roles (Coles, 2009).

It was clearly stated in the argument of Dufur et al. (2010) that single fathers appear to have a more difficult time adjusting to the new role and accepting it. Some of their findings suggest that single fathers are associated with having more negative feelings toward single fathers are associated with having more negative feelings toward single parenting, especially with younger children, due to the massive amount of time and care involved with younger ages. Their research also found that single fathers tended to be less affectionate, stricter on daily routines such as bedtime, T.V., and food, and also less abrasive in their discipline techniques. They also found that different activities and games were played in single-father homes.

### **Impact of Being Single Parent on their Children**

Over the past 20 years, single-parent households have become even more common than the "nuclear family," which consists of a mother, father, and children. More commonly is the presence of a variety of single-parent households headed by mothers, fathers, and even grandparents who raised their grandchildren. Despite this dynamic becoming more popular, children that are raised apart from one or more biological parents experience disadvantages in more ways than one (McLanahan & Schwartz, 2002)

Most of the research on the impact of being a single parent had pointed to less success in their children's academic performance. According to Bogenschneider et al. (1993), children who live with only one of their parents do less in school, obtain fewer years of education, and have trouble keeping a steady job as young adults. Children from single-parent families are six times more likely to be poor. Daughters of single parents are more likely to bear a child out-of-wedlock, divorce, and receive welfare benefits as young adults. Psychological problems and behavior problems are more likely in offspring from single-parent or remarried families. Single parenthood seriously disrupts the relationship between children and noncustodial parents in most families.

The same is true with recent studies like the research

of Nicolas (2018) which claimed that the impact of being a single mother goes down to their children who could not be provided enough care and attention by solo parents. Being a single parent in a situation has an adverse influence on the academic success of children. Although other factors may aggravate the children's problem, children in solo-parent homes often face more significant problems.

Impact on children may differ depending on the factors growing in the care of a single parent. As presented by Mackay (2005), parental separation has been reported in the literature as associated with a wide range of adverse effects on children's well-being as a consequence of the transition in the form of more enduring effects that persist in adulthood. Effects include adverse cognitive capacity, schooling, physical health, mental and emotional health, social conduct and behavior, peer relations, criminal offending, cigarette smoking, substance use, early-onset sexual behavior, and teenage pregnancy.

The absence of a father figure in a family also affects the child's well-being. As stipulated by O'Dwyer (2017), a father's absence in a child's growing years severely affects their self-esteem. To those who lost their fathers early in their lives through death, deep sadness, and a sense of loss for a long time, while those whose fathers were still alive but left them to suffer from an extreme feeling of rejection and anger, usually kept within. Thus, it is essential that solo parents, especially women raising a child independently, should showcase the qualities of a father figure to bridge the gap growing up. This is also the same case for solo-parent males.

The effects are more devastating on the part of the children because single parenthood has left them with deep scars. Being a single parent is a very tough and challenging task.

### **Coping Mechanisms of Single Parent**

Dunifon et al. (2016) pointed out in their published work entitled "Mothering Experiences: How Single-Parenthood and Employment Shift the Valence" mothering experiences are usually linked to a higher level of emotional well-being. However, the shift in emotional valence is still due to single-parenthood. It was also accentuated that unemployed single mothers' emotional aspect is indeed unstable as they feel less happiness and more sadness, stress, and fatigue in parenting than those partnered mothers. On the other hand, employed single mothers are happier and less sad and stressed when parenting, contrary to common

assumptions about maternal employment. However, it was also revealed that employed mothers experienced more fatigue in parenting than those who were not employed. This proposition was somehow parallel to the research findings of Author (2014), as cited in Dunifon et al. (2016), which revealed that though being a parent is generally assumed to give positive feelings, mothers reported less happiness, more stress, and significantly more significant fatigue in time with children than fathers.

As Naumburg (2014) states that for single parents, being self-aware is key to connecting with their kids. When single parents are not self-aware, they might get caught up in their own emotions instead of being present with their children. They also might not recognize that they are unconsciously repeating the patterns of their childhoods in their parenting today. Self-awareness helps single parents make intentional choices, and the more self-aware they are, the more likely they are to behave in ways congruent with whom they want to be and how they want to interact with the people in their lives, including their children.

Based on the statement of Lawler (2021) said that self-care means taking care of themselves so that one can be healthy, they can be well, they can do their job, can help and care for others, and they can do all the things they need want to accomplish. It is taking steps to tend to their physical and emotional health needs to the best of their ability. Being a single parent is tough, and time for oneself is almost non-existent. Most single parents work very hard to ensure their children's needs are met outside and inside the home. They cannot take care of their children properly if they cannot take care of themselves; self-care arises.

Based on the study of Lynch (2013), a single parent is a powerful individual who does not fear what lies ahead. Single parents have unfortunate roles because they have to assume all parental roles and responsibilities and work twice as hard as a two-parent family. They not only have to provide a home and food for their children, but they also have to make sure the home is a safe environment for the children and keep them healthy and happy at the same time; with all these rules and responsibilities, a single parent needs to be tough and courageous to perform those errands.

Based on the discussion presented by Cuppy (2020), steadfastness is unwavering and never changing. It is a relationship founded on trust and acceptance, no matter what. Single parents serve as the mirror to their children, and they will love their children no matter the situation, and parenting is not a destination but a

journey.

As mentioned by Son and Bauer (2010), single parents' support systems are composed of family, friends, schools, and the community. This finding was significant because it suggests that having a strong support system is one of the essential factors to single parents, the participants in their study explained how much their support systems influence the outcome of their parental success. They demonstrated remarkable resilience in uncontrollable life situations.

According to Taylor and Conger (2014), identifying processes and mechanisms helps single parents function well despite their challenges. Specifically, in terms of social support and internal strengths. Higher levels of social support give them higher positive behaviors, self-efficacy, and a warmer relationship with their children. Optimism is part of an internal strength that significantly impacts single parents' lives and serves as their light to continue across various challenging situations.

A qualitative study by Greef & Fillis (2009) explored spirituality and its influence on the successful outcome in single-parent families after experiencing a crisis. He asked families to identify the three most important factors or strengths that had recently helped their family through the crisis. The results indicate that spirituality was one of the top three coping resources.

The literature review highlighted several challenges for single parents and their children, which pointed to some concerning situations for those families. These families' adversities were said to put them at a disadvantage in multiple ways, with some facing even greater trials than others. The challenges of single-parent households vary along with the circumstances. It should also be a focus of attention to consider for future studies because single parents do not all fit into one category when it comes to challenges.

In summary, the reviewed literature discussed the root cause of being a solo parent, their experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Relevant data on working and non-working single parents were also included in order to compare and contrast similar and differing experiences.

Research revealed that working solo parents are mostly women and that they experienced a lot of struggles emotionally, physically and financially in raising their children singlehandedly. However, it was presented that single parents should also consider factors that help them cope with their challenges. Hence, the researcher pursued to collect first-hand



information regarding the lived experiences of single-parent teachers, the challenges they encountered, their coping mechanisms, and the insights these teachers could share with their peers and to the academe in general as this would be an opportunity for the administrators to look into possible intervention, which makes this study unique than the other studies.

## Methodology

This section includes the research design, sampling design, conversational partners, role of the researcher, data sources, instrumentation, data-gathering procedure, face-to-face interview, data analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.

### Participants

The study's conversational partners were the selected teachers who are single parents in different secondary public schools in PPALMA teaching in the school year 2021-2022. The selection of conversational partners was based on the following inclusion criteria which are: (a) must be a single parent; (b) either male or female teacher; (c) 25-60 years old; and (d) with a child/children who are studying. Those who have not met the criteria are excluded in the study.

### Instruments of the Study

This study used a semi-structured interview guide to gather the needed data, which served as an instrument. It was divided into three parts. Part I contains the orientation of the conversational partners for them to become aware of what was the flow of the interview. Part II is the interview proper which contains preliminary questions to set the mood of the conversational partners, followed by the leading questions comprising 12 items that determined their lived experiences, their struggles and the challenges they encounter, how they cope as well as their aspirations. Last is the wrap-up question to conclude the interview.

### Procedure

To facilitate this study, the researcher considered the following steps. Primarily, the researcher sought approval from the Dean of the Graduate School of Notre Dame of Midsayap College to conduct a research study. Secondly, the researcher asked permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Cotabato Division by sending a letter duly

noted by the Dean of the Graduate School of Notre Dame of Midsayap College to request approval for the interview of the conversational partners and then submitted a copy of this letter to the school heads and conversational partners to enable the researcher to conduct the study.

Then, the researcher personally communicated with the conversational partners for their approval before conducting the in-depth interview and explained to them comprehensively the content of the informed consent. The conversational partners accepted the invitation positively and willingly by affixing their signatures to the consent form. After the in-depth interview, the researcher transcribed all the data gathered and translated all the information into English. Finally, the researcher let the conversational partners read all the transcribed and translated information. To check the congruency of data to their statement, the conversational partners affixed their signatures to the verifications form.

## Results

This section provides and presents information gathered from the participants and arranged according to the themes generated from their responses to the questions asked. It discusses the narratives of single parent-teachers who have first-hand experiences in taking care of their children independently. To deepen the understanding of the phenomena, it also examines their successes, setbacks, frustrations, and problems in raising their children while performing their duties as both teachers and parents.

### Profile of the Conversational Partners

The profile of the Conversational Partners was composed of pseudonym, age, sex, number of years in service, number of children and number of years as a single parent. The Conversational Partners were 3 male and 12 female teachers who are single parents. All of them were asked of the same questions as reflected in the interview guide. For this study, their identities were kept confidential; hence they were only referred as Confidante 1 to Confidante 15.



**Matrix 1. Profile of the Conversational Partners**

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Number of Years in Service	Number of Children	Number of years as a single parent
Confidante 1	43	Female	9 years	4	6 years
Confidante 2	57	Female	36 years	3	1 year
Confidante 3	52	Female	26 years	4	12 years
Confidante 4	59	Male	37 years	2	17 years
Confidante 5	57	Female	32 years	6	10 years
Confidante 6	52	Female	22 years	4	11 years
Confidante 7	42	Female	13 years	3	9 years
Confidante 8	38	Female	10 years	2	16 years
Confidante 9	53	Female	24 years	3	2 years
Confidante 10	46	Female	10 years	1	3 years
Confidante 11	49	Female	25 years	2	10 years
Confidante 12	49	Female	16 years	2	9 years
Confidante 13	42	Female	2 years	2	3 years
Confidante 14	42	Male	12 years	2	17 years
Confidante 15	38	Male	5 years	2	13 years

**Themes**

There are 163 significant statements and 30 formulated meanings framed from the thematic analysis.

**Matrix 2. Themes, Core Ideas and Categorization of the Lived Experiences of Teachers Who Are Single Parent**

Themes	Core Ideas	Categorization	
Betwixt and Between	Related Deaths due to Accidents and Sickness	General	
	Unhealthy Relationship	Typical	
	Gender Preference	Variant	
	Fears and Insecurities	Typical	
	Sadness and Despondency	Variant	
	Happy Camper	Variant	
	Fulfilled and Relieved	Typical	
	Favorable Living Condition	Variant	
	Health Problem	Typical	
	Financial Constraints	Typical	
	Burden Caused by Responsibility	General	
	Against all Odds	Becoming Ineffective and Inefficient	Typical
		Imposing Discipline	Typical
Emotionally Stressed		General	
Being Judged by Others		Variant	
Self-sacrifice		Typical	
Stronger and More Fearless		Typical	
Pretend Everything is Alright		Variant	
Tougher Than Before	Steadfastness and Acceptance	Variant	
	Faith in God	General	
	Self-Awareness	General	
	Strong Support System	General	
	Adjustments at Home and in School	General	
	Good Health	Variant	
	Strong Family Bond	Variant	
Rebuilding Life	Welfare and Success of Children	General	
	Self-Care	Variant	
	Keep on Dreaming	Variant	
	Career and Financial Stability	Variant	
	Knowing the Partner Better before Marriage	Variant	

Matrix 2 shows four major themes that emerged from

the subjective experiences of the Conversational Partners, specifically their lived experiences as a teacher and single parents. The core ideas and categorization were presented, and each major theme was discussed. The major themes are: *Betwixt and Between, Against All Odds, Tougher Than Before, and Rebuilding Life.*

**Discussion**

This section provides a discussion of the themes from the analyzed data. This phenomenological study aimed to explore the narratives of teachers who are single parents and who experienced taking care of their children alone. It examines their successes, setbacks, frustrations and problems they have encountered while experiencing such situation.

According to Kaplan et al. (2005), the goal of qualitative research is to enhance understanding of phenomena or particular situations by exploring the perspectives and behavior of the people. As such, in-depth interviews were conducted with the conversational partners to provide a clear view about the significant lived experiences of teachers who are single parents, highlighting their life-world, struggles, learnings and aspirations in life. The conversational partners of the study were 15 teachers who are single parents of the public secondary schools in the PPALMA area who spontaneously shared their experiences. The narratives were analyzed and categorized into themes and sub-themes from the core ideas they have articulated. The main themes of the study are *Betwixt and Between, Against All Odds, Tougher than Before, and Rebuilding Life* which are discussed as follows.

**Betwixt and Between**

From the lived experiences of teachers who are single parents, the essential theme *Betwixt and Between* emerged. This theme was developed because of the mixed emotions expressed by the conversational partners. The experiences of teachers who are single parents vary and do not fit into one category when it comes to their encountered realities in life. As much as we would like to live an easy life full of happiness and abundance, the reality is that, life can be very difficult at times. Regardless of who you are, what you do, or how hard you try, life will throw you plenty of curve balls to knock you off track. You can get derailed unexpectedly from your plans and goals at a blink of an eye (Dan Lu, 2018).

Some of them viewed their situation as a negative experience. The core ideas account for the responses of the conversational partners with undesirable experiences as single parents. These ideas were formed based on their perception on the unpleasant experiences they have had in their marriage. Life is beautiful, but it is also hard, messy, exhausting, temperamental and sad. Whether we like it or not, there are things in life that are completely beyond our control. The study of Zabala (2016) emphasized that single parenting is a crucial challenge to all who lost their loved ones because of various accidents, separations or any other means. They met challenges on personality, behavior patterns, social and emotional problems as well as the effect of this situation to their child that may be experiencing lack of self-confidence, lack of interest in doing something and lack of self-encouragement. Sometimes, single parent teachers seemed to be irritable, hot tempered, afraid, jealous, nervous and critical. More so, the conversational partners did not hesitate when they told their challenging experiences of being a teacher and a single parent at the same time.

Some of the conversational partners perceived their situation as beneficial and the other core ideas contained the positive responses of the single parents. While there may be negative experiences for solo parents, there are also people who experienced it differently. These conversational partners regarded their solitude as a redeeming opportunity for them despite the challenge it posed to them. They further articulated what they have encountered such as discouragement, embarrassment, and brokenness which were just part of being a single parent. They deemed these challenges as a factor to grow as a person who is able to convert trials into triumphs.

### **Against All Odds**

The life of single parents can be a very tough job. They have to be a good role model as both mother and father. The financial help that is needed may or may not always be there, like child support. Performing both roles can be vigorous at times. Disciplining children is carried out by only one person. The parent does not have anyone to back them up in disciplining their children, or to help enforce the rules. Children need to be shown the gentleness of a female, but also the firmness of a male. All the responsibilities of the household were taken by a solo parent singlehandedly. Even though single parenting can be difficult, the rewards are far greater (Single Parent Essay, 2019).

This section discusses the different struggles

encountered by the conversational partners in their solo parenting, named as *Against All Odds* which is composed of different core ideas that discuss about the external struggles which deals with the factors in the environment that posed as challenges to the solo parents while the internal struggles are the intrinsic and self-issues that they faced while they were parenting. Cho (2018) revealed that your purpose in life is to aim for the highest possible good in your life, to look within and find the things you can change and improve to yourself, to pursue the betterment of yourself and the people around you and the society itself. The following is a discussion of the theme *Against All Odds*, along with the core ideas they entail.

The challenges faced by single parents vary according to their circumstances, but there are also common experiences that are shared by most single parent families. The conversational partners revealed that they have to shoulder all the responsibilities, being a mother and being a father. This means that they should act two roles for their children in order to sustain the presence of both parental care and guidance. Moreover, there are times that their attention was divided since they too, have obligation in the workplace. It is also evident in their responses that this situation has led to dilemma in terms of making decisions with regards to raising their children. In general, it infers that single parents had to face a lot of challenges in providing the basic needs of the family including the psychological and emotional well-being of every member of the family. Not only that but also the burden of performing all the duties at work should also be taken into consideration. This finding is being supported with the statement of Diyana (2015) mentioning that the challenges faced by single mothers as head of the family are arduous because they have to shoulder dual responsibilities of a mother and a father, where they are not only the breadwinner but they are also the manager and educators of their children. Further, Diyana's (2015) claims also supported the results from the interview as it paralleled to his claims that the major challenges confronting single mothers are emotional stress, psychological and physical problem, challenges in providing their children with education, care and love, and also negative social stigma towards them.

### **Tougher than Before**

On the issues probed to the conversational partners about their coping mechanism, the third major theme emerged as *Tougher Than Before*. Solo parents have endured many challenges in the course of their lives especially during the times that they must raise a

family on their own. In order

to do this, they often turn to several coping mechanisms and strategies to overcome the adversities that they faced. Moreover, the single parents obtained several learning experiences after enduring hardships that made them more resilient than ever. Based on statement of Taylor and Conger (2014), identifying processes and mechanisms helps single parents function well despite the challenges they face, specifically, in terms of social support and internal strengths. Higher levels of social support give them a higher positive behaviors, self-efficacy, and warmer relationship with their children. Optimism is part of an internal strength that creates a great impact to the life of single parents which serves as their light to continue across a range of challenging situations.

*Tougher than Before* contains different core ideas. It can be discuss as living and learning experiences of teachers who are single parents that made them tougher individuals while the other ideas pertains to the different mechanisms the solo parents have developed to endure challenges.

The knowledge of what it takes to be a successful single parent does not just arrive in the minds of single parents. Rather it takes willingness for them to adapt what lies ahead of them. Single parents do not expect any handouts from anyone and they do well to give their family the kind of lifestyle and resources that they need. It is about working hard and sometimes fighting through the obstacles, to make sure they are able to provide for what their family desires (Imafidon, 2015). This disposition of single parents contributes to the continuity of their lives to take-up in pursuing their dreams.

Staying motivated as single parent is tough, however the best way to prosper as a single parent is to keep a steady stream of motivation and encouragement coming from their heart (Joshi, 2021). This means that keeping the negativity out of their life requires them to fill that space with a positive outlook and disposition in battling pessimism and disapproval from others and having different inspirations will help them move forward in life and face challenges tougher than before.

### **Rebuilding Life**

The life of a single parent is like jogging up a never-ending steep mountain track wearing the wrong shoes. As presented in the discussion of Pather (2020) it is a fact that the life of a single parent is fraught with

overwhelming difficulties. But with a family to nurture, they have to snap out of it and learn to cope as best they can. One of the biggest challenges in the life of a single parent is that you have to rebuild their life. In the previous themes of this research, we have discussed the different lived experiences of teachers who are single parent, their emotions and struggles. Also, we have heard their fighting stories and learning experiences as a single parent as well as their motivational perspectives. Additionally, Saviuc (2020) discuss that it is never too late to begin rebuilding your life and make it ridiculously amazing. Never too late to start all over and rebuild your life from scratch. Now, we have to dig deeper on how these single parents rebuild their ruined life and destroyed trust.

This section discusses on how these single parents recover from their past and present experiences encountered as the conversational partners, named as *Rebuilding Life* which is composed of the wishful thinking of teachers who are single parent for those things they want to happen in the near future for their children and for themselves while their discernments are the things that will guide our conversational partners as a single parent to a better version of their selves.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this research inquiry provide a whole new perspective in understanding the life journey of teachers who are single parents and who have experienced taking care of their children independently. The conclusions of this study may provide a general perspective of a phenomenon uniquely experienced by solo parents who are teachers. To add, this research paper, in general, will give relatable lessons not only for solo parent-teachers but also for working solo parents who have problems dealing with life's adversities brought by the circumstance. Hence, they will be able to feel that they are not alone as there are also people in the same situation.

The findings from the current study will not only benefit solo parents and other researchers. However, they will also give a sense of enlightenment to the community as this phenomenon is not simply a choice. However, its occurrence is brought about by many factors, including natural incidences and extenuating occurrences. Based on the findings and generated themes from this study, the following Implications are being notated:

It is important to note why our conversational partners, teachers, become single parents, the painful realities they encounter, the blessing in disguise they experience that test their stability as single parents, and the undesirable and unpleasant experiences that measure how they react to it. Conversely, some of the conversational partners perceived their experiences as beneficial. The separation from their loved ones becomes a redeeming opportunity for them. With this, the single parents deemed these challenges as a factor to grow as a person who can convert trials into triumphs. The conversational partners should face reality with ease and confidence that they are not alone in their battle as single parents and as a teacher.

The unforeseen circumstances are inevitable. When this happens, teachers who are single parents should be prepared in all aspects. As revealed in the study, different struggles hindered our conversational partners, the factors in the environment that posed challenges, and the intrinsic and self-issues they faced while parenting. These struggles would cause a lot of harmful effects, even including depression. They are bombarded with responsibilities and obligations at home and school, accompanied by health problems and financial issues. They become ineffective and inefficient as a parent and teacher, adding to negative criticism from people that make them emotionally stressed. This is the reality that single parents experience nowadays, discouragement, embarrassment, and brokenness. However, it is manifested in their responses with the firm conviction that their children played a significant part in the single parents' overcoming it. This is especially true for that crucial moment when they were about to give up, for some of the single parents remembered that they still have a purpose because of their children. Thus, it is advised for our single parents' children always to have a close relationship that will strengthen them.

The conversational partners of this study have experienced adversities multiple times. This only proved that they became triumphant through motivation and self-drive, supporting the Theory of Resilience of Dr. Norman Garmezy (1991), which is basically about the resiliency of individuals, how they adapt to difficulties and how they overcome their struggles. It argues that it is not the nature of adversity but how they will deal with it. Single parents may face adversity, misfortune, or frustration, but being resilient helps them bounce back, survive, recover, and even thrive in stressful events. This is evident in the living and learning experiences of single-parent teachers and the mechanisms that made them stricter individuals.

Becoming a single parent is not part of the carefully made plans of a married couple. It is one of life's most complex events that will change their life. However, this is the sad reality that single parents will have to face, and understanding the reason behind this event makes them into new individuals. This is to prepare somehow the single parents to rebuild their life. In support of the statement, Saviuc (2020) said that it is never too late to upgrade your life and make it ridiculously unique. Never too late to begin to remake your life from scratch. The wishful mind and discernments of single parents are the things that guide them to a better version of their selves.

For those teachers who are single parents, the researcher recognizes all your sacrifices and unconditional love given to your children. The researcher recommends that you sustain your time concerning management at home and in school, considering the welfare of your children and your students. You have to continue reaching your dreams and aspirations to set an example of an ideal single parent, even if you are being criticized sometimes in this hypercritical world.

The researcher documented that the study needs further investigation. This study will guide future researchers in exploring the experiences of single parents who are not teachers to compare the results. The findings of this study may also be replicated but in a broader scope.

### Insights

There is a phenomenon in life when we sometimes feel betrayed and lonely in the middle of nowhere and think that life has been cruel to us. However, based on the results presented by this study, as long as you are looking at the brighter side of life, you cannot think that you have been played by fate.

As a researcher, I always feel sorry for those teachers who are single parents. This time I understand that their insecurities, embarrassments, and struggles are all affecting them as a parent and teacher until they become ineffective and inefficient in their roles. As what I heard from the conversational partners; I was surprised by their statements regarding the circumstances that happened to them. They become single parents because of the sudden death of their spouses, abandonment, third party, and sex preference that we only see on television, and now it happens in real life. These single parents are affected by their situation, which aggregates their condition. It is also enlightening to know that some single parents suffer

other than those who feel less difficulty. This made me realize that we should be more sensitive and tactful in dealing with those single parents. They may smile and say they are all right, but deep inside, they might be crying for help. Though things may already seem difficult for these teachers who are single parents, it is nice to see that their family and children always give them strength and purpose to continue and persevere despite misfortunes and frustrations. I also noticed when asking about their motivation and self-drive, that no matter what they go through, it all goes back to the family and the Almighty. It is really for their family why they need to perform their obligation in school, why they need to carry out their responsibilities at home, why they work for a brighter future and why they need money to finance and provide their children the things they need and prepare them for the future.

I also found out that conversational partners, especially those with spouses who were lost due to death, believe God knows what is going on in their lives because there is a reason for everything that happens. They leave everything to God, their life, and their children. Their faith in God empowers them to keep going.

It is arduous, disturbing, and depressing for teachers who are single parents to experience heartaches and isolation. They experienced insecurities where they questioned their personality, profession, purpose, and self-worth. Some would even see themselves as worthless, especially those teachers who had separated and were left by their spouses. However, the conversational partners proved that a person's worth is not measured by their status but by how they handle single parenthood. Through single parenting, they were able to rediscover self-awareness and self-care. They learn something independently, and they take better care of themselves. They believe they are still capable and that nothing is impossible through love, hope, and faith.

In conclusion, I want to commend single parents and salute their steadfastness. Also, I admire their persistence and determination. It proves that though they are affected by the challenges, they view it positively as a situation that can pave the way for other opportunities. Through the compilation of responses from the conversational partners, it represents the hidden truth behind the life circumstances of teachers who are single parents.

## References

Ali, S. K., and Soomar, M. (2019). *Single parenting: understanding reasons and consequences*. JOJ nurse health care 2019; 10(2),

001-003.

Bain, M.C. (2020). *Exploring the challenges of the single mothers in the Philippines: Empowerment as diaconal task of evangelical church in the Philippines*. <https://vid.brage.unit.no/vid-xmlui/handle/11250/2825396> Accessed March 1, 2022

Blackwell, W. (2009). *Early parenting factors, monographs of the society for research in child development*, 74, 55-60. Doi: 110.1111/j.1 1540-5834. 2009.00533. x.

Bogenschneider, K., Kaplan, T. and Morgan, K. (1993). *Single parenthood and children's well-being*.

Boylu, A. A. and Ozturk, M. S. (2014). *Single parent families*. The international journal interdisciplinary social and community studies. 8(2):73-85.

Cabato, R. (2018). *The cost of being a single mother in the Philippines*. Manila – CNN Philippines life, accessed July 27, 2021. <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/2018/03/27/single-mothers%20Philippines.html>

Cho, W. (2018). *Struggle is what gives us meaning and makes us human*. Published in student voices. <https://mystudentvoices.com/struggle-is-what-gives-us-meaning-and-makes-us-human-21ae92f2e4af>

Coles, R.L. (2009). "Just doing what they gotta do: Single black custodial fathers coping with stresses and reaping rewards of parenting." *journal of family issues* 30(10):1311-1338, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X09339290>

Cuppy, C. (2020). *Demonstrating steadfast love in parenting*. Published by focus on the Family. <https://church.focusonthefamily.com/s/content/a354W000003St2Cqae/demonstrating-steadfast-love-in-parenting>

Dan Lu. (2018). *12 harsh & sad realities of life you must learn to accept*. <https://medium.com/@danluconsulting/12-harsh-sad-realities-of-life-you-must-learn-to-accept-2a8265650134>

Dela Cruz, J., et al. (2014), *Home management practices of solo parents in Samar, Philippines*. retrieved August 22, 2021, from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/home-management-practices-of-solo-parents-in-Samar%2C-DelmonteGabon/a73ae293858055c29afb8c980f5194f19f6a%209b53>

De Vera, E. (2016). *DSWD explains solo parent's welfare act*. Manila bulletin, August 28, 2016. <https://www.pressreader.com/Philippines/manila-bulletin/20160828/282144995770997>

Diesta, M.A. (2018). *Exploring the experiences of Filipino single fathers: A qualitative study*. archives, thesis col. graduate, 12F (Mezz.) Henry Sy Sr. hall CDTG007707 retrieved from [https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/etd\\_masteral/563%20Accessed%20March%201,%202022](https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/etd_masteral/563%20Accessed%20March%201,%202022)

Diyana, N. M., Zarifah, M. and Aswati, H. (2015). *Repositioning children's developmental needs in space planning: A review of connection to nature*.

Dufur, Mikaela, Nyssa C. Howell, Douglas B. Downey, James W. Ainsworth and Alice J. (2010) *Sex differences in parenting*

- behaviors in single-mother and single-father households Lapray journal of marriage and family, Vol. 72, No. 5 (October 2010), pp. 1092-1106 (15 pages) published by: National council on family relations. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40865597> Accessed March 1, 2022
- Dunifon R., et al (2016). *Mothering experiences: How single parenthood and employment shift the valence*. retrieved August 19, 2021, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5497991/>
- Dunn J, (2008) *Family relationships: children's perspectives one plus one: London Goldscheider, Frances K., Arland Thornton, and Linda Young- De Marco*. 1993. A portrait of the nest-leaving process in early adulthood demography 30 (4): 683.
- Ezeobi, C. (2010). *The challenges of single parenthood*. This day newspaper, Ijaw monitoring group. <http://www.ijawmonitor.org/news.php?article=544&ct=3>
- Garfield, C. (2009). Variations in family composition. In *developmental-behavioral pediatrics* (pp. 94-102). ElsevierInc. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-4160-3370-7.00009-2> <https://www.scholars.northwestern.edu/en/publications/variations-in-family-composition>
- Garnezy, N. (2008). *Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Greef, A., & Fillis, J. (2009). *Resiliency in poor single-parent families. Families in society*. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_lookup?title=Resiliency%20in%20poor%20singleparent%20families&author=A.%20Greef&author=J.%20Fillis&journal=Families%20in%20Society&volume=90&pages=279-285&publication\\_year=2009](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_lookup?title=Resiliency%20in%20poor%20singleparent%20families&author=A.%20Greef&author=J.%20Fillis&journal=Families%20in%20Society&volume=90&pages=279-285&publication_year=2009)
- Imafidon, C. (2015). *7 Invaluable lessons you can learn from single moms*. Published by lifehack. <https://www.lifehack.org/285784/7-invaluable-lessons-you-can-learn-from-single-moms>
- Joshi, P. (2021). *11 Terrific ways for staying motivated as a single mom*. Published by sanity daily. <https://sanitydaily.com/11-terrific-ways-for-staying-motivated-as-a-single-mom/>
- Kaplan, B. & Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research methods for evaluating computer information systems*. Evaluating the organizational impact of healthcare information systems (pp.30-55). DOI: 10.1007/0-387-30329-4\_2 [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226227177\\_qualitative\\_research\\_methods\\_for\\_evaluating\\_computer\\_information\\_systems](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226227177_qualitative_research_methods_for_evaluating_computer_information_systems)
- Lawler, M. (2021). *What Is Self-Care and Why Is It So Important for Your Health?* Everyday Health Inc. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/self-care/>
- Lynch, L. (2013). *Single mother essay*. <https://www.majortests.com/essay/single-mother-605853.html>
- Mackay, R. (2005). *The impact of family structure and family change on child outcomes; A personal reading of the research literature*. Social policy journal of New Zealand, 24(4), 111-133. accessed July 27, 2021.
- McLanahan, S. and Schwartz, D. (2002). *Life without father: What happens to children?* Sage journals, from <https://doi.org/10.1525/ctx.2002.1.1.35>,%20Accessed%20August%2008,%202021.
- Mendez, Daisy (2010). *Single parent families*, essay # 4, English 52 <https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/an-introduction-to-the-analysis-of-single-parent-families-U9eKGarE>
- Naumburg, VC. (2014). *Parenting in the present moment: how to stay focused on what really matters*. <https://psychcentral.com/blog/developing-self-awareness-as-a-parent-#1>
- Nepomnyaschy, L. & Garfinkel, I. (2011). *Fathers' involvement with their nonresident children and material hardship*. social service review. 85 (1) 3 - 38. Retrieved from: <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.stthomas.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=25&sid=caaf98c6-f9e2-4650-99a3-6a9a892ed191%40sessionmgr4008>
- Nicholas, W. J. (2018). *Serendipity of Solo Parents: Its Psychosocial Analysis*, Volume – 6, Issue-4, p-ISSN: 2349-0187.
- Noronha, L. Govindaraju, M. and Monteiro, M. (2016). *A study on the challenges faced by single parent on teenager care*. International journal of advanced trends in engineering and technology (IJATET), ISSN: 2456-4664, Volume 1(1), 2016, p. 54-59.
- Ntoimo, L.F.C., Okonofua, F.E., Igboin, B. et al. (2019). *Why rural women do not use primary health centres for pregnancy care: evidence from a qualitative study in Nigeria*. BMC Pregnancy Childbirth 19, 277 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-019-2433-1>
- O'Dwyer, D. (2017). *A psychotherapeutic exploration of the effects of absent fathers in the children* <https://esource.dbs.ie/handle/10788/3317?show=full>
- Pather P. (2020). *The harsh reality of life as a single mom (and how to thrive)*. family growth of life. <https://familygrowthlife.com/life-single-mom/>
- Pointer, T.M. (2021). *Being a single mom is twice the work, stress & tears but also twice the hugs, love & pride*, A journal that shows appreciation to single mothers. <https://www.amazon.com/being-single-twice-stress-tears/dp/b094vm5pfx>
- Reece, Virginia MS. (2013). *On your own: being a good single parent*. Published, 8/18/2014, Accessed July 27, 2021.
- Roshaida & Arifin, (2018). *Ethical considerations in qualitative study*. International journal of care scholars. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31436/ijcs.v1i2.82>
- Saviuc, L. D. (2020). *How to start all over and rebuild your life from scratch*. <https://www.purposefairy.com/74960/how-to-start-all-over/>
- Son, S., & Bauer, J. W. (2010). *Employed rural, low-income, single mothers' family and work over time*. Journal of family and economic issues, 31(1), 107-120.
- Tassoni, P. (2002). *Certificate in Child Care and Education*. London, Heinemann UNICEF (2008). *The State of the World's Children*, New York. UNICEF.
- Taylor, Z. & Conger, R. (2014). *Risk and resilience processes in single-mother families: an interactionist perspective* defining



prevention science (pp.195-217) DOI:10.1007/978-1-4899-7424-2\_9

Valete, M. (2017). *In defense of single moms by single moms*. Philippine daily inquirer. published May 12, 2017, Accessed August 13, 2021.

Zabala, B. J. (2016). *The phenomenological make-up of solo parents' dependents in regions 2 and 3 in the Philippines*. journal of arts, sciences and commerce, ISSN: 2331-4172

## Affiliations and Corresponding Information

**Catalino E. Egaran, Jr., MAEd**

Pigcawayan National High School

Department of Education, Philippines