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AGAINST ALL ODDS: PROBING THE CASE OF SOLO-PARENT TEACHERS IN RAISING THE FAMILY ALONE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of working solo parents in raising their family alone. By examining the unique challenges faced by solo parents in this situation, this research aims to shed light on the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by resilient individuals to overcome the obstacles they encounter as well as their reflective insight that can be learned from their life experiences. This research utilizes qualitative case study approach and open-ended question as instrument used in the in-depth interview. There were five (5) participants whom were residents of Pantukan Davao de Oro. The findings revealed that solo parent presents a multitude of challenges that are unique and often complex as they raise their family alone, the struggles from providing the needs, the feelings of inadequacy and doubt can be compounded by the added pressure of taking sole responsibility in fulfilling both parental roles of being a mother and a father for the day-to-day aspects of rearing their children which can affect their ability to discipline their children effectively. In conclusion, solo parents don't let life's challenges deter them instead, they proactively employ a diverse range of strategies tailored to their individual circumstances. In their journey, solo parents gain lessons in resilience and advocacy. They strive tenaciously, learning to assert themselves not just for their children's sake but also for their own well-being. Consequently, they cultivate a profound appreciation for the fundamental importance of family.

KEYWORDS: ***solo-parent, challenges, strategies, child/children, case study research, Philippines***

INTRODUCTION

Single parenthood is one of the modern family's developing issues in the Philippines. According to Barajas (2012), about half of children born nowadays live with just one parent, and many adults are experiencing single parenthood. A report issued in 2012 by the Philippine Trade Union Congress provided evidence in support of this. Nearly 14 million Filipinos are single parents who are responsible for raising and supporting their solitary families. In a more recent article from the Federation of Solo Parents, it was shown that these numbers have increased over the years, their data indicates that there were 20 million single parents in 2017.

United Kingdom (UK) and Greece have a high number of single parent families in European countries, the perceptions and consequences of barriers to combining higher-paid work with parenthood are likely to differ across countries, increasing the risk of poverty. Single parents who are unable to work because they are caring for a special-needs child or another family member are of particular concern. Furthermore, the persistent employment gaps and increased poverty risk of single-parent households suggest that programs and policies that previously served families with children may not be adequate to meet the needs of single-parent households in the UK or elsewhere in Europe as cited in the study of (Bird & Ruggeri 2015).

In Pilar Capiz Philippines, as cited in the study of Bargo (2018) revealed that the extent of social problems and concerns of solo parents were significantly related to their number of children and living arrangements. The major issues and concerns of the solo parents was significantly related to their number of children, educational attainment, occupation, monthly income and circumstances as solo parent. In addition to this, Catanduanes Province also has an average age of 38.9 solo parents. Furthermore, the majority of them struggle in raising their families, the opportunity for intervention is the enhancement of their present skills and the entrepreneurial skill needed is a marketing strategy. They trained to produce goods, however did not prosper due to a lack of buyers. As a result, action plan is necessary to create a livelihood project (Lopez & San Juan 2019).

It is undeniable that solo parenting has been recorded over the years and is being supported by the government to lessen the burden of those parents being dubbed as solo parents. In Davao de Oro especially Pantukan South District, more or less 15 teachers at the Elementary level had been recorded as solo parents which is an unusual and

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unique situation. Being a solo parent teacher can be emotionally stressful knowing that they will juggle work and household chores, it can leave them feeling isolated and struggling with the demands to cope with their daily lives.

OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this case study is to explore the solo parent-teachers situation and discover their coping mechanism in surpassing the challenges and circumstances. This study could serve as a tool for school administrators to support solo parent teachers and provide programs that would benefit them and may also be used to create workshops about counseling and financial literacy. This is an important contribution to the study of working solo parent because it fills a gap in the literature, especially in the Philippines, where studies on solo parents are lacking.

METHODS

A case study used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context. In addition, in qualitative research, a case study is one of the frequently used methodologies (Yazan, 2015).

Moreover, case study research also is not used to determine cause and effect or to make predictions. It is distinguished by its narrow focus, high level of detail, and ability to combine objective and subjective data to achieve an in-depth understanding (CIRT 2019).

The researcher conducted extensive observation of the population and study participants. Five (5) working solo-parent teachers in the Municipality of Pantukan, Davao de Oro are the research participants who undergo in-depth interviews. This study focuses on the working solo parent teachers experiences in raising the family alone, the challenges they encountered, their coping mechanisms and the insights they learned.

Furthermore, these research respondents were selected through the use of purposive sampling. The sample being studied is for researchers pursuing qualitative or mixed methods research designs, this is not considered to be a weakness rather it is a choice. A purposive sample is a non-representative subset of a larger population that is designed to achieve a specific goal and fulfill a very specific need or purpose as cited by (Rai &Thapa 2015).

However, the interview guide questions were checked for expert validation after being accepted. It was sent back to the same expert for final approval after the adjustments were complete. Interviews with working solo parents were conducted by speaking both Filipino and their dialect.

Furthermore, data was collected through audio recordings of interview since audio recording improved the accuracy of the content shared in the one-on-one interview. This audio recording of the interview was transcribed verbatim and was checked by the participants for confirmation was taken as it is.

The collected data was reviewed, synthesized, and transcribed to keep careful, detailed notes. The guidelines ensure that realist evaluations are reported in sufficient detail, in the context of existing evidence, and with a rating of the strength of evidence for main findings, which greatly assist evaluation users. Furthermore, thematic analysis is an effective research method for eliciting information about people's ideas, attitudes, knowledge, experiences, or values from a collection of qualitative data.

The researcher obtained approval from the Davao de Oro Division before beginning the study to ensure conformity. Because the study only included participants who exhibited moral and ethical qualities, the researcher ensured the privacy and safety of all study participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1
The formulated theme and central ideas on the lived experiences of solo-parent teachers.

Themes	Central Ideas
Very difficult but encouraging	This can be challenging for solo parents who are also working, as they have to balance their work responsibilities with their parenting duties.
Financial Instability	Mostly, solo parent struggles financially that cause significant stress and anxiety in providing for their children's basic needs.
Distressful emotions and uncomfortable feelings	The constant pressures of solo parenting can be overwhelming, leading to feelings of hopelessness and despair.
Struggles in Parenting	Solo parents have to navigate the practicalities of providing for their children's needs on their own.
Disciplinary Difficulties	Solo parents may face difficulties in managing their own emotions and stress levels, which can affect their ability to discipline their children effectively.
Altered child behavior	Unfortunately, this can lead to a situation where a child's behavior is altered due to the lack of attention and interaction they have.

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Experiences of Out-of-Field Teachers

From the data collected, six (6) themes emerged: (1) Very difficult but discouraging, (2) Financial Instability, (3) Distressful emotions and uncomfortable feelings, (4) Struggles in parenting, (5) Disciplinary Difficulties, and (6) Altered child behavior.

Very Difficult but encouraging

These statements highlight the challenges and responsibilities in caring children that are overwhelming for solo parent teachers especially when they had limited resources and support systems which may have to navigate complex schedules, manage household chores, and provide emotional support to their children while dealing with obligation.

Financial Instability

The same experience was affirmed by participants, that despite the desire to provide support and assistance, there may be limitations due to personal circumstances, such as financial constraints or other family responsibilities that demand time and resources. For them, it is also challenging to find a balance between meeting the needs of others and taking care of oneself and one's own family. The reality of shortages and financial constraints can make her situation even more difficult.

Distressful emotions and uncomfortable feelings

The emotional distress can be so intense that some solo parents may even contemplate suicide. Postpartum depression is also a common experience by solo parents, and it can leave them feeling isolated and struggling to cope with the demands of parenting. The feelings of inadequacy and doubt can be compounded by the added pressure of taking sole responsibility for the day-to-day aspects of rearing their children. Additionally, the absence of a partner can make it difficult to share the responsibilities of parenting and can result in a lack of emotional support and companionship.

Struggles in Parenting

Parenting in the context of being a solo parent can certainly be complex and challenging for some participants especially when it comes to fulfilling both parental roles of being a mother and a father to one's children. This can often lead to feelings of exhaustion. Moreover, solo parents may feel a sense of inadequacy or insecurity when it comes to dealing with certain aspects of their children's lives, such as helping them navigate problems. Additionally, working solo parent struggle to balance their own needs with the needs of their children, as they are the sole worker and provider in the family. Doing the roles of both mother and father can be a difficult task for solo parent, and it can be difficult to find support and guidance as they navigate this journey.

Disciplinary Difficulties

Disciplining a child can be challenging for some respondents due to a range of factors such as the lack of support from partner can make it harder to maintain consistency and establish clear boundaries. One common challenge faced by solo parents is managing the behavior of children with different personalities and needs. Moreover, this can be particularly difficult also for them as a solo parent when children are at different ages and stages of development, as what works for one child may not be effective for another.

Altered child behavior

It can be challenging for some participants to balance work and childcare responsibilities, especially when there is no one else to rely on. There are some children of solo parent who have difficulty communicating because they are not getting enough opportunities to engage in conversation with their parents. This lack of stimulation could potentially result in developmental delays or behavioral issues that require extra support. As a result, solo parents need to take proactive measures to protect their children from harmful influences and ensure that they receive the necessary attention and support.

Table 2
The formulated themes and central ideas on challenges and difficulties of solo-parent teachers

Themes	Central Ideas
Prioritizing essential needs	Thinking possible strategies and making difficult decisions about what is truly necessary.
Self-examination and promoting personal development	Focus on their strength instead of dwelling on their weaknesses.
Develop a constant attitude of prayer	Praying to God serve as a powerful tool on their journey of overcoming the challenges of single parenthood.
Acknowledge and embrace the circumstances	It is crucial to understand that acceptance is the key for them to move forward and find peace in their situation.
Appraise your child/children as your motivational factor	The driving force behind everything in their life is their family, that's why they are fully committed to doing whatever it takes for the sake of their child/children.

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Challenges and difficulties of solo-parent teachers

From the data collected, five (5) themes emerged: (1) Prioritizing essential needs, (2) Self-examination and promoting personal development, (3) Develop a constant attitude of prayer, (4) Acknowledge and embrace the circumstances, and (5) Appraise your child/children as your motivational factor.

Prioritizing essential needs

Working solo-parent consider fulfilling the most essential needs of their family first, this means they identify the most crucial necessities that matter to them and ensure that they are prioritized over other less critical ones as their overcoming strategies to lessen the challenges they have. Additionally, prioritizing the vital necessities of participants as a solo parent means focusing on what is most essential for their family's survival and well-being, and making choices that align with those priorities, that's how they manage the burden they have in dealing with the challenges. As a solo parent there are lots of problems that require solutions in the family but always prioritizes the most important ones. They believe that there is one problem in a family that is more urgent than the others and needs to be addressed first. Prioritizing their problems and making decisions, which likely involves assessing the urgency and impact of each problem and determining which one is most pressing.

Self-examination and promoting personal development

Self-examination and personal growth are crucial for some working solo parent participants to overcome obstacles and achieve goals especially in challenging situations such as raising their child alone. Reflecting on their thoughts, feelings, and actions help them to gain insight to their selves is what they take, they focus on their strength instead of dwelling on their weaknesses. Additionally, solo parent manages it physically, mentally, and emotionally by staying resilient and being better enable to cope with their stress. Considering their determination is what they do in positivity to overcome any obstacle the challenges they have.

It is important to develop self-reliance or self-motivation by learning to stand on their own. While the journey of life may sometimes be tough, they need to remember that they have the power to steer their life in the direction they choose and to make the decision that will shape the future. They also shared that inevitably, there will be times when the road ahead seems unclear but there's still strength and determination for them to keep pushing forward, no matter how difficult the circumstances. The challenges that come on them as a solo parent will allow the opportunities to grow and learn.

Develop a constant attitude of prayer

Prayer can provide a sense of comfort and solace during their difficult times, and help solo parents feel less alone and isolated in their struggles. By turning to a higher power for guidance and support, they may feel a sense of empowerment and strength to face their challenges in life. Additionally, the persistent spirit of prayer can help the participants maintain a positive outlook and stay focused on their goals, even in the face of adversity. By taking time to reflect on their values, priorities, and guidance from a higher power, they may be able to find the inner resources and resilience they need to overcome obstacles and challenges in raising their family alone.

Prayer can be a motivation for them in these difficult times, it is a source of comfort, guidance, and hope as a solo parent. They recognize that they cannot overcome struggles on their own without humbly seeking God's help. Solo-parent firmly believes that cultivating a persistent spirit of prayer enable them to navigate the challenges. It provides a sense of peace and assurance that they are not alone in fighting their struggles in life.

Acknowledge and embrace the circumstances

Overcoming challenges is a struggling task, for solo parents but is the only way to move forward, acknowledging and embracing their circumstances is the cornerstone of most participants' success. This involves accepting the harsh reality of their situation and channeling their energy towards finding solutions instead of dwelling on the challenges. As they acknowledge and embrace their circumstances, they gradually conquer the struggles they face and persevere through any difficulties that may arise.

Through accepting the reality of their situation, they can transform their lives and achieve their goals. In essence, participants have learned that embracing their circumstances is not a sign of weakness, but rather a display of immense strength and resilience. It is a powerful tool that enables them to navigate the challenges of life with grace and perseverance, and ultimately emerge victorious. So, no matter what obstacles they face, they continue to acknowledge and embrace their circumstances, confident in the knowledge that they have what it takes to succeed.

Appraise your child/children as your motivational factor

The situation of the child/children can be a powerful motivational factor in various aspects for solo-parent participants, whether it is striving to provide for their needs, supporting their aspirations or being present in their lives, can find tremendous motivation in their role as caretakers. Their commitment to fulfill the duty of being a parent is unwavering, fueled by the awareness that their children depend on them. Overall, by appraising their children as their motivational factor, solo parent can tap into deep well of inspiration and drive to accomplish their goals and provide for their needs.

They revealed that no matter how intimidating the situation may seem or how insurmountable the obstacles

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may appear, their unwavering commitment to persevere is strengthened by their role as a parent. They understand the profound responsibility they hold to protect and provide for her child.

Table 3
The formulated themes and central ideas of the reflective insights of solo-parent teachers

Themes	Central Ideas
Remain steadfast and dedicated	The profound impact that perseverance and staying committed to oneself can have on one's capacity for learning and growth as a solo parent.
Amplify spiritual sensitivity to God	Trusting in God's plan and surrendering everything to Him is what they've learned throughout their journey.
Trust in your abilities	These insights prove that they are better equipped to handle challenges, bounce back from setbacks, and pursue their goals with determination.

Experiences of Out-of-Field Teachers
From the data collected, three (3) themes emerged: (1) Remain steadfast and dedicated, (2) Amplify spiritual sensitivity to God, (3) Trust in your abilities.

Remain steadfast and dedicated
Solo parents may face different challenges, societal stigmas and stereotypes, which can be challenging to overcome. However, this can also teach them valuable lessons in resilience and advocacy, as they learn to stand up and never give up in life as well as their children in the face of adversity. The participants gain valuable learning experiences that can help them to develop important life skills and strengths through their perseverance and commitment to do and continue to act solely responsibilities in life.

By facing and overcoming these challenges can develop valuable learnings throughout the journey of raising the child alone, they shared their thoughts on how crucial it is to cultivate a sense of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, as relying too heavily on others can ultimately lead to disappointment and frustration. In this difficult world, they learned and gained reflective insights that it is needed to continue and never give up because of their children and determined to provide them the best possible life and opportunities that they can give.

Amplify spiritual sensitivity to God
It can be challenging to do the responsibilities of raising a child alone as a solo parent but many solo parents' participants have learned through their expenses that is essential to trust in their competence and believe in their ability to handle the challenges they encounter. As they reflect on their journeys, they come to realize that they come to realize that they possess the necessary skills and inner strength to take on the responsibilities of parenthood successfully. Therefore, solo parents should always remind themselves that they are capable of rising to the challenge, even in the most trying circumstances.

These insights prove that they are better equipped to handle challenges, bounce back from setbacks, and pursue their goals with determination. They implied that she gained insights about believing in themselves and their abilities is crucial to achieving success in life, especially during challenging times like those faced by solo parents.

Trust in your abilities
It can be challenging to do the responsibilities of raising a child alone as a solo parent but many solo parents' participants have learned through their experiences that it is essential to trust in their competence and believe in their ability to handle the challenges they encounter. As they reflect on their journeys, they come to realize that they possess the necessary skills and inner strength to take on the responsibilities of parenthood successfully.

Therefore, solo parents should always remind themselves that they are capable of rising to the challenge, even in the most trying circumstances. By believing in themselves and their abilities, they can overcome any obstacle and emerge as resilient, loving parents who can provide their children with a bright and promising future.

CONCLUSION
Difficulties and financial struggles are a common problem that affects numerous working solo parent participants, it is hard for them to come up the daily necessities and their children's needs. It is like a vicious cycle that causes significant stress and anxiety for them, leaving parents struggling to provide for their family's most basic needs. it is still not a guarantee that they can make ends meet, especially if they're stuck in low-paying jobs or have several dependents relying on them.

It is a constant battle for them that sometimes leads to drastic measures, such as taking loans or borrowing money for them to deal with their needs. The overwhelming financial strain can have a detrimental effect on them, the stress of not knowing where they get money for their families as well as the sense of hopelessness and despair. Additionally, they confirm that it is inevitable however their struggles can offer ways to alleviate their burden. Single parents face significant hurdles that can impact their physical, emotional, and financial well-being, as well as the situation of their children. This can result in the need to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, which can lead to exhaustion and burnout.

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