



The Dual Journey: A Qualitative Analysis of the Lived Experiences of Single Fathers in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija

Dane Jei G. Casco¹, Crismar M. Escobido², Oliva B. Parico³

Department of Social Sciences, Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, 3119, Philippines^{1,2,3}

✉ crismarescobido@clsu.edu.ph

RESEARCH ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p>Received: August 23, 2024 Reviewed: April 18, 2025 Accepted: June 17, 2025 Published: June 30, 2025</p> <p> Copyright © 2025 by the Author(s). This open-access article is distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.</p>	<p>Research has been published around the globe on how challenging it is to be a single parent. However, most of the research available is focused on single mothers, leaving a gap in studies about single fathers. This study aimed to explore and understand the lives of single fathers, the challenges they face, and the coping mechanisms they employ. A qualitative research design was used with the aid of Social Role Theory as its framework. In-depth interviews guided by a semi-structured questionnaire were used to gather data involving eight single fathers residing in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija. Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret the data. Results showed that single fathers experience a variety of challenges from the burden of working alone, balancing their roles and obligations, financial difficulties, conflicts with their children, emotional challenges, and future concerns. This study concluded that single fathers acknowledge their responsibility, navigate conflict, and nurture bonds with their children, drawing upon their strengths and support system, resourcefulness, and unwavering commitment to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for their families. Single fathers utilized various support systems to navigate the challenges of parenting alone and address their needs effectively. Parenting classes, support groups, and counseling services are essential to strengthen solo parenthood. The researchers suggest that further research on additional factors influencing life quality</p>

and comparing single mothers and fathers can be conducted in the future.

Keywords: *Single fathers, lived experience, challenges, coping mechanisms, Social Role Theory*

Introduction

In recent decades, the number of single-parent households in the Philippines has increased. According to research conducted by the Department of Health (DOH) and the University of the Philippines-National Institute of Health, there are an estimated 14 million to 15 million solo parents in the Philippines. The government should promote policies and programs that would support solo parents in the Philippines. For instance, the Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000 provides solo parents, whose income falls below the poverty threshold, with necessary social welfare benefits and support to raise their children despite their circumstances. It is important to note that single parents need support for their socio-economic conditions because living with a single parent can be extremely stressful for adults and children. For instance, a study by Lopez et al. (2018) examined the case of Zamboanga City and found that, in terms of different aspects such as income, education, and social services, single parents face significant challenges.

Challenges of single parents are not only in the Philippines but also reflect in the international arena. For instance, in Japan, Nishioka et al. (2021) found that the Japanese government should prioritize the provision of additional social care for every single parent. While in Europe, Lanza-León et al. (2024) examined the case of single parenthood in 20 European countries, they found that the trend in today's time for single parents has declined and worsened health problems. Indeed, a single parent may feel overburdened by the demands of juggling childcare, a job, paying the bills, and maintaining household chores (APA, 2019; De Castro, 2023). Furthermore, compared to their counterparts, single parents have the worst work-life balance (Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020).

Single fathers were the subject of this study. Pew Research Center (2013) stated that despite making up a smaller percentage of single-parent households, more than 500,000 men are raising their children by themselves. According to Chiu et al. (2018), single fathers are those who have lived with one or more biological or adopted children; they may also be widowed, divorced, separated, never married, or not living with a partner. Just like single mothers, single fathers also face several challenges. For instance, a study from Saputra et al. (2022) sought to examine how stress and adjustment affected the quality of life for single fathers. Based on the study, single fathers' stress levels and quality of life were in the middle range, meaning the quality of their life is not in a good state, but also not in a bad state. In relation to this study, Salo et al. (2020) found that habitual stress, loneliness, and depression are increased in single fathers. Moreover, they also experienced prejudice and gender stereotypes, such as parental incompetence (Baršić & Jevtic, 2019). Indeed, single fathers face a range of challenges that include socioeconomic instability, health risks, and societal pressures regarding traditional family structures. These challenges are compounded by the lack of research and understanding about the unique experiences of single-father families, which can lead to isolation and inadequate support systems (Chiu et al., 2018; Maldonado et al., 2019; Williams, 2015).

Research has been published around the globe on how challenging it is to be a single parent. However, most of it focused on single mothers (Coles, 2009; Kotchick et al., 2005). Moreover, the experiences and challenges of single fathers remain underexplored in many researchers despite the fact that they have a growing visibility in this contemporary world (Brown, 2019; Capacio et al., 2024). Additionally, few studies focused on the aspect of well-being that single father faces in child rearing (Sison et al., 2024). Therefore, there is a gap in studies about single fathers. The goal of this research paper was to bridge the gap between studies on solo parents. The central question that guided this study is: What are the lived experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of single fathers? Through qualitative inquiry, it aimed to capture and highlight the unique accounts of single fathers, focusing on their emotional, financial, and social challenges. This study contributes to the discourse of single parenthood by exploring the narratives of marginalized single fathers, especially those who are separated and widowed, using Social Role Theory. Furthermore, the study is situated within the broader context of family structure and social support systems, with the locality of Cuyapo representing a contextual gap in existing research.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Social Role Theory. According to Sluss et al. (2011), a “role” is a set of behavioral expectations connected to a person’s position within a specific social group or environment. Therefore, social role theory aims to define and elucidate the roles that people are assigned (such as cultural, gender, or career roles) as well as the norms, stereotypes, and permissible behaviors that go along with them (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Social role theory covers a wide range of actions, including supporting or feeling-related behaviors and aggressive, power-related behaviors that apply to interaction in all circumstances. According to Eagly et al. (2000), social role theory addresses the status of different family roles and the expectations, behaviors, rights, and obligations that go along with them. Gender roles also mirror what society believes and expects of men and women in terms of roles, proper behavior, prestige, and power.

In the context of single parenthood, single parents are expected to simultaneously perform multiple roles. Opposing obligations in different roles may be difficult to satisfy either responsibility effectively. People might not act in a way that fits the expectations of their roles, or they might be made to assume roles that have different expectations. According to Baron and Byrne (1991), the strain of having to fulfill two or more roles at once causes role conflict. Role conflict is defined by Shaw and Costanzo (1982) as the result of conflicting expectations from multiple roles. According to Thomas and Biddle (1979), role conflict arises when an actor and others have different expectations of them.

Methods

This study utilized a qualitative-descriptive research design to capture the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of eight (8) single fathers residing in the different selected barangays in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija. This research design enables participants to explain how, why, or what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing at a particular moment or during an event of interest.

Purposive sampling was used in this study to choose the participants who were qualified for the criteria set by the researchers, and at the same time, snowball sampling was used. After interviewing a participant, the researchers asked for a referral for

another possible participant. The Municipality of Cuyapo was selected because of the purpose that one of the researchers resides in this area, using connections and networking, the participants agreed easily to become participants.

A semi-structured interview guide is utilized to unveil the stories, perspectives, and to fully understand the lived experience of the participants. To verify the validity of the interview guide, content validation was applied to the questions, such as pre-testing. Moreover, two from the Department of Social Sciences validated the validity and reliability of the questions. After eight (8) participants who satisfied the study's requirements were chosen, they were given a consent form asking for their permission. Then, the interview using local dialect was conducted via a face-to-face conversation that lasted between 30-50 minutes. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Additionally, interviews were translated into English for wider dissemination. As a result, it was revealed that the participants of this study have an age range of 45-65 years old. Most of them have one (1) to three (3) children, and they are either separated or widowed. Notably, most of the participants work in informal sectors such as farming, tricycle driving, and tailoring.

For data analysis, thematic analysis using the Caulfield (2019) approach was utilized. The researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. Then, labeling the sentence with descriptive codes was done. After coding, the researchers grouped similar codes to create themes. Also, the researchers reviewed all the codes and themes to assess if they fit together and the refinement of themes into a unique and captivating one. Themes and codes were verified by another researcher. Finally, to bring the themes into reality, the discussion was based on the themes and quoted statements.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to ethical standards with the Ethics Review Committee Code 2024-062. The participants retained the option to abstain from responding to survey questionnaires or interviews. Their involvement in the data collection processes was entirely voluntary. The researchers emphasized safeguarding the confidentiality of respondents' data. Participants were aware that the data collected was intended solely for research purpose. Moreover, pseudonyms or codes were used for confidentiality. These ethical considerations underscore the dedication to conducting the study with the highest regard for the rights and well-being of the participants, ensuring the integrity and ethical soundness of the research endeavor.

Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Among the eight participants who participated in the interview, five of them are working in the informal sector, while two are working in the public sector, and one is unemployed. The age range of the participants is 46-65 years old. Seven participants have four children or below, while one participant has six children. The monthly household income of the participants ranges from 15,000 to 30,000 (See Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Coded Labels	Participant's Pseudonym	Number of Children	Monthly Household Income	Age, Occupation, and Marital Status
P1	Brics	6	< Php 20,000	58 years old, Construction Worker, Widower
P2	Carlo	3	< Php 15, 000	56 years old, Tailor, Separated
P3	Ruben	4	< Php 15, 000	57 years old, Farmer, Widower
P4	Marquez	2	< Php 15, 000	62 years old, Farmer, Widower
P5	Cenon	3	< Php 15, 000	59 years old, Tricycle Driver, Widower
P6	Gupit	1	< Php 30, 000	46 years old, Barangay Police, Separated
P7	Boy	2	< Php 15, 000	65 years old, Currently Unemployed (Former Barangay Secretary), Separated
P8	Mario	2	< Php 20, 000	55 years old, Barangay Counselor, Separated

There were seven (7) themes drawn from the statements of the participants, as shown on Table 2. These themes show the rich and unique experiences and narratives of eight participants.

Table 2. Summary of Codes and Themes

Codes	Themes
Seeking help on family members; Part-time jobs as a source of income; Self-reliant; No one to live with.	Understanding the Realities and Changes Faced by Single Fathers
Assuming the roles of both the father and the mother; Acknowledgment of Parental Responsibility; Sacrificing time with children to fulfill the role; Lending a hand with regard to their children's education;	Acknowledging and Balancing the Parental Roles and Responsibilities
Open communication between father and child; Children excited to spend time with their father; Children become closer; Communicate the problem/conflict;	Fostering Emotional Connections: Nurturing Bonds

Bonds become greater	
Financial difficulties;	Weathering the Storm:
Financial management;	Allocating Budget on Necessities
Government aids, but in small amount	
Seeking help on family members;	Relatives and Vices as Coping
Drinking to forget problems;	Tools of Single Fathers
Diverting attention	
Focusing on children rather than self;	Nurturing Growth
Positive reinforcement;	
Accepting and moving on;	Change for the Better

“You’re the Father at the Same Time, Doing the Role of a Mother”: Understanding the Realities and Changes Faced by Single Fathers

Participants in this study depicted their day-to-day experiences of parenting, balancing work and childcare, and expressing the significance of their respective roles as fathers. Moreover, they all expressed about the challenges that came with doing it alone. First, they acknowledge and balance the roles and responsibilities of a single father. Second, they foster emotional connections to their children. Lastly, they experience economic burden.

Acknowledging and Balancing the Parental Roles and Responsibilities

Participants showed that single parenting requires essential sacrifices and adjustments to fulfill their duties. Participants involved in this study expressed their acknowledgment of their duties as being the sole providers for their families. P1 explained that the burden of providing for the needs of his children falls on his shoulders alone: performing both “roles”, such as doing the laundry, cooking, and providing the basic needs of the family. These everyday lives of being a single father are also evident to other participants.

For me, being a single father is difficult, and it’s a big responsibility. It’s hard, so you must be strong when you’re put in this situation because otherwise, you won’t be able to handle it. It’s burdensome that I don’t have a partner to watch or support my children. That’s why I make time for my children, but I also make sure that I don’t neglect my work because if I become irresponsible in my duties, I won’t be able to provide for my children. (P8)

Daily struggles, child involvement, time management conflicts, and balancing routines are also manifested. Most of the participants also illustrated that sacrifices are needed to fulfill their roles both as fathers and mothers in the family. For instance, P5 said that balancing time is not easy since he must leave the house early in the morning and come back in the afternoon. It was hard to fulfill their obligations to care for their children and provide for their food at the same time. The biggest challenge is the immense responsibility of rearing a child alone. Most of the participants highlighted that not having a partner to balance daily responsibilities provided them with overwhelming work both outside and inside the household. These fathers encountered major difficulty juggling work and family obligations while attempting to live balanced lives and prioritize their children. When asked whether they thought they successfully balanced these two responsibilities, whether work spilled over into family time, and whether they felt their

time at work affected their time with their kids, some men responded in a way that suggested work had to come first.

These balancing roles and responsibilities by the fathers involved are based on Social Role Theory. This theory addresses the status of different family roles as well as the expectations, behaviors, rights, and obligations that go along with them (Eagly et al., 2000). To specify, the participants in this study were experiencing role conflict. As defined by Shaw and Costanzo (1982), role conflict is the result of conflicting expectations from multiple roles. The findings of this study show that assuming dual parental roles presents its own set of challenges for single fathers. As suggested by Role Conflict Theory, assuming roles may be difficult for many because men are rarely socialized to be the primary caregivers for children. Fathers have few male role models for balancing the conflicting demands of work, socializing, housekeeping, and childcare (Greif & DeMaris 1990). Likewise, many find themselves thrust into unfamiliar territory, having to quickly adapt to tasks traditionally associated with mothers, such as managing household chores and providing emotional support. Many of these fathers expressed their struggles of juggling their daily lives, work-life balance, and the burden of parenting alone. Prior studies have demonstrated that raising children alone increases the stress in parents (Respler-Herman et al., 2009). Another recurring theme was the feeling of being overloaded all the time, which made it difficult to deal with the kids daily.

In the discussion about not having a partner to assist them, many fathers, notwithstanding their everyday challenges, realized that their distinct influence and quality time with their children were key reasons for being able to do it alone, pushing them through at times of difficulties. Although the participants were challenged when it came to their roles, they nonetheless had a positive attitude towards parenting. The optimistic perspectives of the participants regarding single parenting contrast with the results of Dufur et al. (2010), who argued that men who operate alone tend to feel more negative emotions toward single parenting. These fathers appeared to have come to terms with the time and effort required to raise their kids.

Overall, achieving a harmonious balance between work and family life is a perpetual challenge for single fathers. Limited access to flexible work arrangements hinders their ability to fulfill parental responsibilities. In relation to this, nation-states should strengthen laws and policies that would help single parents. For instance, according to Labor Law PH (n.d), the Philippines implements the Republic Act No. 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act that gives privileges to solo parents. This law grants they are eligible to a flexible schedule. Despite these challenges, these fathers keep an optimistic view concerning their roles in nurturing and providing for their children. However, juggling competing demands often necessitates sacrifices, leaving single fathers susceptible to burnout and diminished well-being.

Fostering Emotional Connections: Nurturing Bonds

Single fathers are capable of building and nurturing a connection, a healthy relationship shared with their children. For instance, P1 said that his children see him as a friend, father, and counselor. They regularly communicate well with each other. A foundation of trust and connection exists based on P1's narrative. Likewise, a similar narrative was shared by P2, 4, and 7. They shared a similar level of connectedness and closeness with their children, rooted in trust and founded on effective communication.

According to the participants' claims about their experiences, there is unquestionably strong connectedness with their children as a product of effective communication.

Be that as it may, not every father in this study shared the same level of connection with their children. A few of them stated that they were not that close with their children, even though they were the sole providers of their families. Factors such as age difference and gender difference played a role in the relationship they shared. Some of them showed satisfaction with the level of connection they share with their children; what is important, according to them, is that they can provide for the needs of their children.

However, they still value communication. For instance, according to P5, they are not very close. It should be noted that the children that these fathers have are of a different sex. Meaning that gender differences can be a barrier to their kinship. For instance, P2 said he does predictions since he has no idea about what happens to a woman's body, especially when his daughter gets her monthly period. This shows that despite their efforts to form a strong bond with their children, gender difference is a barrier they cannot easily climb over. This finding is connected to several studies that, regardless of these challenges, some single fathers develop stronger bonds with their children post-separation, highlighting the variability in outcomes depending on individual circumstances (Greif & DeMaris, 1990).

Moreover, a study suggests that successful single parents often embrace their parenting roles, prioritize communication, and foster supportive environments, which can lead to positive outcomes for both children and parents. Single parents identified as successful often accept and prioritize their parenting responsibilities, maintain open communication, and support their children's individuality (Olson & Haynes, 1993). Additionally, according to a study conducted by Deivita (2023), single fathers who communicate affection with their children have lower levels of stress and conflict avoidance than single fathers who do not communicate affection with their children. Therefore, affectionate communication contributes to the family because it can minimize conflicts that may occur between single fathers and children.

Weathering the Storm: Allocating Budget on Necessities

Single parenthood is often accompanied by significant financial challenges, as single parents bear the sole responsibility of providing for their families. Whether due to separation, the death of a partner, or choice, single parents navigate a complex financial landscape characterized by limited resources, increased expenses, and heightened financial stress. One of the biggest obstacles for the participants of this study was providing quality education for their children. They shared the same idea that education is a basic human right; it is essential for the development of a child. However, knowing the importance of education is not enough. They need to provide it for their children. Several of the participants faced the same challenge of financial incapacity, as education in our country is costly.

One of my experiences that I can truly say I struggled with was when I didn't have enough money for my children's tuition fees. A lot of money is needed, especially for their education, since I'm sending three of them to school. Of course, we are talking about education, it is very important, and I want all my children to graduate from their studies so they can be successful someday. (P5)

As P5 asserted, it is a struggle for a single parent to provide for the financial demands of education. Budgeting their finances was the way to alleviate this burden for P8. Some participants also stated that their burden was being alleviated by their family members. When these fathers are faced with the incapacity to put food on the table, they tend to scrounge from any available source, such as friends, relatives, and even emporiums. However, borrowing could be seen as a band-aid solution that is difficult to work through. For instance, P8 said that he borrows money from his close friends. Moreover, P3 said that he can borrow something from his friend's store. Although there already exists a law providing for and aiding solo parents with their children. It is still not enough for most of them. The purpose of governmental aid is to assist people who need money until they can continue to meet their fundamental needs, but it does not mean that this help will be enough to make a family financially stable. For instance, according to P3, financial assistance for single parents is somewhat limited.

A by-product of navigating parenthood alone is the financial burden that is imposed not by anyone but to make ends meet. A common narrative from the participants is the financial burden and the difficulty they face. Most of the fathers stated that they would use whatever means necessary to provide for their children. They frequently turn to friends or family for financial assistance so they can provide their kids with what they need. Everything must be on a budget because when luxury comes first, daily needs cannot be provided.

The findings of this study are similar to several studies. For instance, based on studies, single-parent families face significant economic challenges, with higher poverty rates and socioeconomic disadvantages compared to two-parent families (Maldonado et al., 2019). Moreover, these families are more likely to experience poverty, with single-parent families having poverty rates five times those of married-parent families since they have fewer resources, which impacts their well-being (Sawhill, 2022). Without the support of a partner, single fathers in this study bear the full responsibility of earning an income to meet the needs of their children.

As a single parent, they need to plan to handle all financial conditions. These findings are supported by several studies. For instance, the single father should live within a reasonable plan and save money to cope with unexpected emergencies (Measom, 2019). Studies have shown that the reality for single fathers, single parents in general, is that they face a lot of financial burden. Additionally, in a study by Sierminska (2018), where he measured the economic well-being of single parents in terms of wealth and compared them to other types of families, he found out that, first, in all countries parent family's wealth is at the bottom of the wealth contribution and single parents are most likely to be at the receiving end of social benefits.

In conclusion, single fathers face a myriad of financial challenges that can have profound implications for parental and child well-being. From shouldering the burden of sole provider to navigating childcare costs, healthcare expenses, and financial stress, single fathers confront a complex and daunting financial landscape. The findings of this study concerning the economic burden of single fathers should call the attention of everyone. The government should provide comprehensive support and resources to empower single fathers to overcome financial obstacles and create stable and nurturing environments for themselves and their children.

Relatives and Vices as Coping Tools of Single Fathers

Based on the narrative of the participants, they acknowledged the role played by various support systems in helping them fulfill their function as single fathers. All the participants shared that they all received support in different forms, such as from their family and vice.

These single fathers continued to look after their children, regardless of their situation. Although the experiences were difficult, life's challenges persisted. With the help of their brothers and friends, they have something to vent their frustrations about life. When questioned about whom they should confide their troubles to, P2 responded that his siblings and peers helped him. Some participants shared that sometimes all it takes to feel better is to just chat with someone about your situation. According to P6, he has friends and siblings to share his problems with anytime.

When they were left with their children, it was evident to these single fathers that they would be the nurturers and the sole providers of their children. These fathers did not think about anything but hustling just to make money. However, because their daily routines are exhausting and depleting, they tend to hang out with their friends to forget their problems in life. For instance, P2 said that he went to his friends and drank alcohol, after that, he was able to forget even for a while his problem.

Based on the findings of this study, single fathers utilized an ample amount of support systems to mitigate the emotional, financial, and social burden of single parenting. One of the immediate support systems sought by the participants was their family and relatives. They offer help with childcare and household tasks, or simply provide a listening ear during times of stress or uncertainty.

This finding is similar to several studies. For instance, key findings in the research on support systems for single parents indicated that various factors such as faith, family, community support, and employment are crucial for coping with the challenges of single parenthood (Ramos et al., 2020). Additionally, Dela Cruz et al. (2024) found that support networks or their social capital are essential for solo parents to navigate and overcome their daily challenges. Indeed, support networks have been shown to influence parents' feelings of success and to enhance parents' ability to cope with their situations (Easterbrooks et al., 2011; Respler-Hermann et al, 2011). This network can also include forms of community support such as programs within the community that aid, activities, advice, or any of the other forms of support for parents and families (Easterbrooks et al. 2011; Kotchick 2005; Olson & Haynes 1993; Respler-Herman et al 2011).

Moreover, one of the unexpected results of this study would be that single fathers turned to their vices as a coping tool to overcome their challenges. This finding is supported by other studies. For instance, according to Montemayor et al. (2024), many fathers rely on drinking alcohol as a way to temporarily escape their problems. Moreover, D'Aquino and Callinan (2023) found that more stressed adults tend to consume more alcohol to cope with their stress.

By leveraging these support systems, these single fathers accessed the resources, assistance, and encouragement they needed to navigate the challenges of parenting alone and provide a nurturing and supportive environment for their children. These findings imply that policymakers and the government can utilize these findings about solo parenthood to create and enhance laws, policies, and programs to address the assistance they need and to promote a nurturing society.

Nurturing Growth

As the single parents in this study navigate the complexities of raising children alone, they faced a diverse set of obstacles and uncertainties while also forging a path toward a brighter future. This theme explores personal growth in the context of single parenthood, examining the transformative journey of single parents.

Change for the Better

Despite the challenges intertwined with single parenting, it also offers a unique opportunity for self-discovery and empowerment as single parents learn to embrace their strengths, values, and priorities. Participants in this study showcased a level of growth within themselves through the process of raising children alone. Single parents often gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their capabilities, discovering untapped reservoirs of strength, courage, and determination. For instance, P7 said that he became a better father because being one taught him to value life. Moreover, for P5, he felt stronger because being alone made him stronger for his child. Despite the challenges these participants experienced, they still found a way to navigate the ups and downs of parenting alone. They cultivate a sense of self-reliance and self-confidence that empowers them to overcome obstacles and pursue their goals with conviction.

In connection with this, a study conducted by Shaukat and Rashid (2022) suggests that single parents who are growing personally are more resilient. Additionally, the personal growth of an individual can transform a terrible experience into a positive transformation in their life. The participants exhibited these domains of self-awareness or acknowledgment of their parental responsibilities, relationship building, and acceptance of their role.

In addition, the findings of this study would strengthen the concept of contemporary masculinity. The emergence of a flexible and inclusive concept of masculinity is manifested in today's time. For instance, a study found that a combination of the masculine and feminine characteristics would result in a new masculine identity (Lee & Lee, 2018). Caregiving and child rearing are attributed to feminine qualities; in this study, single fathers embrace these qualities, hence, contemporary masculinity. This would reject the stereotypes about traditional masculinity that would lead to having pride about being a single father (Jóhannsdóttir and Gíslason 2018). The emergence of contemporary masculinity suggests that policymakers to develop and enhance policies that would help and strengthen the capability of single-parent households. Hence, the inclusive masculinity would benefit the individual and society as well (Connor et al., 2021).

Overall, the journey of single parenthood experienced by the participants was a transformative one marked by personal growth, resilience, and empowerment. As these single parents navigate the challenges of raising their children alone, they embrace opportunities for self-discovery, build support networks, and cultivate a vision for the future that reflects their aspirations and ambitions. While the road ahead may be uncertain, single parents face the future with courage, determination, and an unwavering commitment to nurturing their growth and the well-being of their children.

Conclusion and Future Works

This present study aimed to explore and understand the lives of single fathers in the local context, in Cuyapo, Nueva Ecija. Upon interviewing eight single parents, several findings were collected regarding the single parents' challenges, providing the

child's needs, parenting styles, financial difficulty, support systems, and personal growth. Single fathers struggled to navigate parenthood alone, such as managing financial burdens and nurturing children, which would contribute to the growing discussions of Role Strain Theory. These individuals have multiple roles that they simultaneously play. Despite this, they still tend to have a close bond with their children while utilizing a network of support.

The present study contributes to the growing discussions of single fathers, especially from rural communities and marginalized sectors. It offers realities about the condition of solo parenthood that would impact policymakers and the government. For instance, this study suggests that our society should have support services within the community. Parenting classes, support groups, and counseling services are essential to strengthen solo parenthood; hence, the government should provide these services. These resources provide valuable guidance, emotional support, and practical assistance, helping single fathers navigate the complexities of parenthood with greater confidence and resilience. In terms of academic research, this study adds novel discussion to deepen the current discourse about contemporary masculinity. These single fathers' experiences foster personal growth, resiliency, and self-discovery. Single parenthood is a journey fraught with challenges, yet it can also offer opportunities for profound personal growth, resilience, and inclusive masculinity.

The researcher suggests that further research on additional factors influencing life quality and a comparison between single mothers and fathers can be conducted in the future. Also, a study from the perspective of the child on the effectiveness of single fathers as providers can be conducted. Observing the emotional capacity and development of children raised by single fathers can also be conducted.

References

- [1] American Psychological Association. (2019, October 31). Single parenting and today's family: Life in a single-parent household—though common—can be quite stressful for the adult and the children. *American Psychological Association*. <https://www.apa.org/topics/single-parent>
- [2] Baron, R. A., & Byrne, D. E. (1991). *Social psychology: Understanding human interaction* (6th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- [3] Baršić, M., & Jevtic, A. (2019). Social opinion on single-father families and their influence on child education. *Proceedings of ICERI 2019*. <https://doi.org/10.21125/iceri.2019.0196>
- [4] Brown, M. (2019, November 25). Single moms vs. single dads: Examining the double standards of single parenthood.
- [5] Capacio, L. J. A., Mier, K. J. B., Superales, J. R. A., Falcon, E. B., Miñoza, J., Dayundunan, I. M., Siacor, J., & Omandam, M. J. (2024). Understanding the silent struggles: The lived experiences of single fathers. *Edukasiana: Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan*, 3(4), 465–478. <https://doi.org/10.56916/ejip.v3i4.905>

- [6] Caulfield, J. (2023, June 22). How to do thematic analysis | Step-by-step guide & examples. *Scribbr*. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>
- [7] Cleland, J. A. (2017). The qualitative orientation in medical education research. *Korean Journal of Medical Education*, 29(2), 61–71. <https://doi.org/10.3946/kjme.2017.53>
- [8] Coles, R. L. (2009). Just doing what they gotta do: Single Black custodial fathers coping with the stresses and reaping the rewards of parenting. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(10), 1311–1338.
- [9] Connor, S., Edvardsson, K., Fisher, C., & Spelten, E. (2021). Perceptions and interpretation of contemporary masculinities in western culture: A systematic review. *Men and Masculinities*, 24(6), 1557–1577. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15579883211061009>
- [10] D’Aquino, S., & Callinan, S. (2023). Drinking to cope as a mediator of the relationship between stress and alcohol outcomes. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 31(5), 516–523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687637.2023.2236291>
- [11] Dela Cruz, H. F., Domingo, P., Lim, M. E., & Del Rosario, A. (2024). Resilient bonds: Social capital, coping strategies and challenges of Filipino single mothers in Umingan, Pangasinan. *Linker: Journal of Education, Social Sciences and Allied Health*, 1(2), 1–12. Retrieved from <https://www.isujournals.ph/index.php/jessah/article/view/121>
- [12] De Castro, M. A. (2023, May 7). ‘NayTay’. *PhilStar Global*. <https://www.philstar.com/business/2023/03/07/2249742/naytay>
- [13] Deivita, M. (2023). Family communication between single father and daughter in affection exchange. *Jurnal Ilmiah LISKI (Lingkar Studi Komunikasi)*. <https://doi.org/10.25124/liski.v9i2.6435>
- [14] Dufur, M. J., Howell, N. C., Downey, D. B., Ainsworth, J. W., & Lapray, A. J. (2010). Sex differences in parenting behaviors in single-mother and single-father households. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(5), 1092–1106.
- [15] Eagly, A. (1987). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social role interpretation*. Erlbaum.
- [16] Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Diekmann, A. B. (2000). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal. In T. Eckes & H. M. Trautner (Eds.), *The developmental social psychology of gender* (pp. 123–174). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [17] Easterbrooks, M. A., Chaudhuri, J. H., Bartlett, J. D., & Copeman, A. (2011). Resilience in parenting among young mothers: Family and ecological risks and opportunities. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(1), 42–50.

- [18] Foley, G., & Timonen, V. (2015). Using grounded theory method to capture and analyze health care experiences. *Health Services Research, 50*(4), 1195–1210.
- [19] Gasse, D. V., & Mortelmans, D. (2020). Single mothers' perspectives on the combination of motherhood and work. *Social Sciences, 9*(5).
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9050085>
- [20] Greif, G. L., & DeMaris, A. (1990). Single fathers with custody. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 71*(5), 259–266.
- [21] Jóhannsdóttir, Á., & Gíslason, I. V. (2018). Young Icelandic men's perception of masculinities. *Journal of Men's Studies, 26*(1), 3–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826517711161>
- [22] Kotchick, B. A., Dorsey, S., & Heller, L. (2005). Predictors of parenting among African American single mothers: Personal and contextual factors. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*(2), 448–460.
- [23] Lanza-León, P., & Cantarero-Prieto, D. (2024). The loud silent side of single parenthood in Europe: Health and socio-economic circumstances from a gender perspective. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-024-09954-y>
- [24] Lee, J. Y., & Lee, S. J. (2018). Caring is masculine: Stay-at-home fathers and masculine identity. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 19*(1), 47–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000079>
- [25] Lopez, M. R., Santos, P. J., & Gomez, L. S. (2018). Socioeconomic conditions of single-parent households in Zamboanga City. *Philippine Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 26*(2), 45–63.
- [26] Mabuza, N., & Thwala, S. K. (2014). Single parenting and its effects on the psychosocial development of children in Swaziland. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5*(23).
- [27] Maldonado, L. C., & Nieuwenhuis, R. (2019). Single parents in context. *Sociology*
- [28] Malolos, G. Z. C., Barón, M. C. R., Apat, F. A. J., Sagsagat, H. A. A., Pasco, P. B. M., Aportadera, E. T. C., Tan, R. J. D., Gacutno-Evardone, A. J., & Lucero-Prisno, D. E. (2021). Mental health and well-being of children in the Philippine setting during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Health Promotion Perspectives, 11*(3), 267–270.
<https://doi.org/10.34172/hpp.2021.34>
- [29] Manalo, M. (2022, December 11). How much does an online consultation cost? *Eva Teleconsult*. <https://evateleconsult.com/blog/how-much-does-an-online-consultation-cost/>

- [30] Measom, C. (2019, December 12). What are some financial problems single parents face? *Pocket Sense*.
- [31] Montemayor, A., Agbing, E., & Agbing, R. (2024). Burnout and work-related stressors in gastroenterology: A protocol for a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Open*, *14*(2), e080933.
- [32] Nishioka, D., Saito, J., Ueno, K., & Kondo, N. (2021). Single-parenthood and health conditions among children receiving public assistance in Japan: A cohort study. *BMC Pediatrics*, *21*, Article 214.
- [33] Olson, M., & Haynes, J. A. (1993). Successful single parents. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, *74*, 259–267.
- [34] Pew Research Center. (2013, July 2). The rise of single fathers. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2013/07/02/the-rise-of-single-fathers/>
- [35] Ramos, E. S., & Tus, J. (2020). Beating the odds: An exploratory study on single mothers' lived experiences in childrearing practices. *Asian Journal of Current Research*, *5*(1), 58–70. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13377443.v1>
- [36] Respler-Herman, M., Mowder, B., Yasik, A., & Shamah, R. (2009). Parenting beliefs, parental stress, and social support relationships. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *18*(2), 190–198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-011-9462-3>
- [37] Salo, A. E., Junntila, N., & Vauras, M. (2020). Social and emotional loneliness: Longitudinal stability, interdependence, and intergenerational transmission among boys and girls. *Family Relations*, *69*(1), 151–165.
- [38] Saputra, M., & Krisnatuti, D. (2022). Level of stress, self-adjustment, and quality of life for single father. *Journal of Child, Family, and Consumer Studies*, *1*(3), 166–174. <https://doi.org/10.29244/jcfcs.1.3.166-174>
- [39] Sawhill, I. V. (2022). Single parents in high-income countries: What the United States can learn from others. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *702*(1), 226–235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162221123446>
- [40] Shaukat, A., & Rashid, S. (2022). Personal growth, resilience and burden of care among single parents. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, *16*(2), 86–97. <https://doi.org/10.51709/19951272/Summer2022/6>
- [41] Shaw, M. E., & Costanzo, P. R. (1982). *Theories of social psychology* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- [42] Sierminska, E. (2018). The 'wealth-being' of single parents. In R. Nieuwenhuis & L. C. Maldonado (Eds.), *The triple bind of single-parent families: Resources*,

employment, and policies to improve wellbeing (1st ed., pp. 51–80). Bristol University Press.

- [43] Sison, E. A., Doloque, E. M. C., Francisco, C. D. C., Villanueva, G. T., & Tus, J. (2024). Tahanang walang ilaw: A case study exploring the single fathers' lived experiences in child-rearing practices. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 22(1), 39–60.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12738863>
- [44] Sluss, D. M., van Dick, R., & Thompson, B. S. (2011). Role theory in organizations: A relational perspective. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology, Vol. 1: Building and developing the organization* (pp. 505–534). American Psychological Association.
- [45] Thomas, E. J., & Biddle, B. J. (1979). *Role theory: Concepts and research*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [46] Williams, L. (2015). *Experiences of single fathers whose children have used mental health services* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgement

The authors extended their sincere appreciation to Central Luzon State University for providing an environment for academic growth. Moreover, this research paper would not have been possible without the participation of the participants. This study is dedicated to the institution and all single fathers in the country.