




**Resilient Bonds: Social Capital, Coping Strategies and Challenges of Filipino Single Mothers in Umingan, Pangasinan**

**Hale Faith Dela Cruz<sup>1</sup>, Peachy G. Domingo<sup>2</sup>, Maria Editha N. Lim<sup>3</sup>, Anna Marie Del Rosario<sup>4</sup>**

*Department of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Central Luzon State University, Science City of Munoz, Nueva Ecija<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>*

✉ [peachy.domingo@clsu.edu.ph](mailto:peachy.domingo@clsu.edu.ph)

| RESEARCH ARTICLE<br>INFORMATION  | ABSTRACT   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Received:</b> August 23, 2024<br/> <b>Reviewed:</b> November 15, 2024<br/> <b>Accepted:</b> December 06, 2024<br/> <b>Published:</b> December 30, 2024</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>The prevalence of single motherhood is a significant global phenomenon marked by a distinct set of challenges. This issue is particularly pronounced in Umingan, Pangasinan, where the number of single mothers is steadily increasing. While considerable research exists on single parenthood, there remains a gap in understanding how social capital intersects with the struggles and coping mechanisms of single mothers. To address this, data were collected from ten informants through purposive sampling and analyzed using thematic analysis, offering a comprehensive exploration of their lived experiences. The findings revealed three central themes: the challenges faced by single mothers, the role of social capital in their lives, and the coping strategies they employ. The challenges identified include financial difficulties, parenting demands, and relationship issues. In terms of social capital, single mothers rely on bonding social capital, such as support from immediate family and close friends, for financial assistance and emotional stability. They also utilize bridging social capital to access government services, community aid, and other resources. The case of Filipino single mothers is particularly distinctive. Despite their marginalized position, they effectively leverage their networks of family,</p> |

---

friends, neighbors, and community acquaintances to secure financial support, assistance, and even credit. The collectivist culture of Filipinos plays a pivotal role in their coping strategies, providing not only material resources but also a vital source of emotional support.

**Keywords:** *marginalized single mothers, maternal challenges, coping strategies, social capital, parenthood*

### Introduction

There are around 15 million single parents in the Philippines, 14 million of which are women (Pinugu, 2024). Single parents are commonly defined as those left alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to the death or abandonment of their spouse (Dela Luna et al., 2023). This definition has been expanded in the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act or RA 11861 to cover a wide range of circumstances beyond the loss of a spouse, including those who are left to care for their children due to annulment, abandonment, disappearance, or prolonged absence (Dela Luna et al., 2023).

Single mothers experience a series of difficulties and pressures while raising their children, making the task of motherhood for them even more challenging. Due to the changes in family patterns, the number of single mothers continues to rise worldwide (Zulu, 2017). They encounter numerous challenges when parenting their children, especially throughout the transition from childhood to adulthood (Aloro et al., 2024). Consequently, single mothers are becoming more vulnerable to economic challenges, stress, and depression, with financial crises playing a significant role (Dor, 2021).

Solo parenthood presents numerous challenges and several studies have shown that single mothers encounter various challenges. One must face the challenging task of parenting, wherein she must be able to play multiple roles in raising her child and is expected to manage everything on her own, including money management, becoming a father who supports the family, and a mother who nurtures and educates her children (Indrayanti, 2017). Single mothers encounter major problems in terms of financial means and tend to suffer from depression due to limited financial support from external sources and the absence of child support from the father (Bain, 2020). Within this, single mothers decide to work in informal sectors and low-skilled jobs such as domestic workers and street vendors due to their limited resources (Talib et al., 2020). With the rising costs of commodities, tuition fees, clothes, medicines, and vitamin supplements, single mothers must work hard and be resourceful to provide and meet what their children need (Javier, 2015).

Moreover, single mothers also experience stigma wherein lone parents face the weight of a somewhat “scarlet” stigma (Ramos & Tus, 2020), and believe that the stigma associated with their condition is difficult to overcome (Fajardo-Jarilla, 2023).

As the number of single mothers continues to rise globally, this paper fills a gap in the existing literature by exploring how single mothers’ social capital influences the challenges they face and the coping mechanisms they employ to overcome them. This study aimed to understand their experiences and the coping strategies they use to navigate their challenges. By contributing to the literature on single motherhood, this study can provide potential policy implications and empower marginalized single

mothers thereby improving their well-being and that of their children. Marginalization, as defined by Hayman et al. (2013), occurs when individuals, due to their socio-demographic characteristics, experience discrimination and stigma. In Lithuania, single mothers are marginalized as they are affected by neoliberal reforms in the welfare system, impoverishment or dispossession, lack of affordable housing and childcare, and even stigmatization (Lapinske, 2018).

In the context of the Philippines, single frequently face such stigmatization (Andrada-Poa et al., 2022). Single mothers are often situated in precarious positions, characterized by lower levels of education, limited household income, increased likelihood of living in poverty, and vulnerability to job displacement (Berryhill & Durtschi, 2017). These intersecting factors contribute to their marginalization within broader social structures.

Most of the literature on single motherhood focuses on never-married mothers. This study contributes to the discourse by exploring the experiences of single mothers who are never married, separated, and widowed. This study examined the challenges faced by marginalized single mothers in Umingan, Pangasinan. Its objectives were to identify the difficulties these mothers encounter, describe their social capital and its implication on their situation, and explore the coping strategies they use to address these challenges.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study used the Social Capital Theory developed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1986. Bourdieu (1986) defines the term social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or the membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word”.

The theory posits that the connections and relationships within the network can be beneficial for individuals since it allows them to access various social resources and can provide valuable support and opportunities. According to Adler and Kwon (2002), social capital is a concept that highlights the flexibility of social life, in which social relationships such as friendships can serve a purpose such as moral and material support. The sources of social capital are located in the social structure in which an actor resides, and it is a resource available to actors based on their location within the structure of their social ties. Putnam (2000) categorized social capital into two types: bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital emerges from close-knit networks, such as family, friends, and close acquaintances, characterized by strong solidarity and high levels of trust. In contrast, bridging social capital refers to connections beyond one’s immediate circle, providing access to broader resources and opportunities. By integrating social capital into this study, the researcher structured the study to analyze how the social capital of marginalized single mothers supports them, whether practical or emotional.

In addition, using the Stress and Coping Theory of Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1980), the researcher also identified the coping strategies of marginalized single mothers, whether they used problem-focused or emotion-focused coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1980), identified two primary purposes of coping: emotion-focused coping, which is focused on managing emotional distress, and problem-focused coping, which is focused on changing the challenging person-environment connection.

### **Methods**

This study utilized a qualitative-descriptive research design as it sought to explore the challenges encountered by marginalized single mothers in Umingan - a first-class municipality with 58 barangays located in the province of Pangasinan. This rural community relies primarily on agriculture for livelihood, with most work opportunities centered around agricultural labor.

In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select informants from the researcher's specified locale. Purposive sampling, a commonly used sampling procedure in qualitative research, was used in this study to identify and select information-rich cases related to the topic of interest (Palinkas, 2015). This method allowed the researcher to carefully choose informants who met the criteria essential to the research objectives. The selected informants were marginalized single mothers from the barangays of Aloo, Don Montano, Caurdanetaan, and Nancalabasaan in Umingan, Pangasinan. Their marginalization stems from working low-paying jobs in the informal sector and lacking financial support from both their families and the fathers of their children.

A total of 10 informants were chosen from these barangays, each providing valuable insights pertinent to the study's aims. A guide question was developed by crafting questions aimed at addressing the study's objectives. Once the guide questions were finalized, they underwent a pre-test to assess the validity and reliability of the questions. Subsequently, the questionnaire was submitted to the Ethics Committee as part of the Ethics Clearance application. All questions were deemed appropriate, and no ethical concerns were identified.

The informants' profiles revealed that their ages range from 27 to 45 years old. Among them, eight are unmarried, and five have attended college. All informants work in the informal sector, holding jobs as seasonal farm workers, servers, vendors, or house helpers. Notably, nine of the informants receive no financial support from the fathers of their children.

Since data saturation was achieved with the 10 interviews conducted, so no additional informants were recruited. The interviews, which lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, were recorded, transcribed, and coded subsequently.

By using in-depth interviews as the research method, open-ended conversations with single mothers about their experiences were unraveled. This approach yielded rich, detailed information on their experiences, including the coping strategies they employed and how they leveraged their social capital to navigate their challenges.

For data analysis, this study employed thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying, describing, and interpreting patterns or themes within a data set. Thematic analysis is particularly effective for qualitative research focused on exploring complex issues (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By applying this method, the researcher examined the interview transcripts to uncover emerging patterns and connections, which were then categorized into distinct themes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before data collection began, ethics clearance was obtained from the university, which resulted in a certificate confirming that the research was exempted from further review. Also, the team obtained informed consent from the informants, clearly explaining the study's purpose. This process ensured that participation was voluntary, with informants informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Throughout the data collection, the researchers maintained respect for the participants and protected their

anonymity by not disclosing any identifiable information. All data was kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study.

## Results and Discussion

### Single Mothers Have to Deal with Financial, Parenting, and Relationship Issues

Single motherhood is often linked to reduced financial resources, a challenge prominently observed among Filipino single mothers in Umingan, Pangasinan. These mothers identified two primary factors contributing to their financial difficulties. First, they reported low income coupled with the absence of financial support from the fathers of their children. Second, some mothers faced challenges in obtaining a solo parent identification card, which further limited their access to potential support mechanisms. Third, parenting emerges as a significant concern among single mothers, particularly in the context of the father's absence, the challenges of balancing work and parenting responsibilities, and managing the behavior of their children. Lastly, the financial and social burdens, coupled with their reliance on immediate family members, often lead to strain in their relationships.

### ***“It is Hard to Work Alone to Provide for a Child!”: The Struggle of Securing and Managing Financial Resources for Daily Expenses among Single Mothers***

Single mothers face significant financial burdens as they navigate the challenges of managing limited resources to meet their children's needs. The absence of stable, high-paying jobs makes it difficult for them to cover essential expenses such as education, household needs, and medical care. In this study, the single mothers interviewed worked in various roles, including house helpers, eatery owners, market vendors, farm workers, and restaurant servers. However, the income they earn from these jobs is insufficient to fully support their families. As one informant, a small eatery owner shared:

As a single mother, I shoulder various expenses, including tuition fees, the children's boarding house cost for my children, transportation, and food allowances. In addition to managing bills and household expenses, I often find it challenging to provide enough food for my family. The financial burdens, along with the sacrifices and careful budgeting needed, are especially demanding as I strive to support my children. *(Informant 1, 45 years old, small eatery owner, no family support nor support from the father)*

Informant 7 also shared her experience. She said, *“It is hard because you are on your own. Sometimes, you wonder where you will get what you need (no milk, no diapers). It is hard when my parents do not have money either.”* This account underscores the uncertainties and inability to provide for her child.

Almost everyone acknowledged their limited material resources, which makes budgeting their money a challenge. As a result, they focus on purchasing only the most essential items. Informant 10 explained *“Occasionally, there are things that need to be bought, but due to financial constraints, you have to carefully prioritize what is truly necessary and useful.”* Likewise, Informant 5 stated, *“No luxuries, just the most important things that are needed daily, such as my children's school allowance.”* Similarly, Informant 3 emphasized the need for frugality, explaining, *“We have to be frugal. . .almost all of our dishes are vegetables. Also, when my son requests something, I do not buy it right way. I tell him we have to save first, and when we have extra money, then we can buy what he asks for.”*

These struggles reflect their marginal position, as most rely on financial support from their families, assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development through its *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps), aid from local politicians, free medical check-ups and medicine provided by the LGU, and the benefits of a solo parent identification card, which grants access to various government-led support programs. Lino (1994) similarly observes that single mothers tend to have a lower economic status compared to married women, making them more likely to experience economic disadvantage. Recognizing the impact of their socioeconomic status on their children's well-being and outcomes, welfare reform programs include single mothers as beneficiaries to enhance their economic resources (Shanan, 2024).

Moreover, financial difficulties pose significant challenges for single mothers, especially when their child falls ill. They are often torn between staying home to care for their child and going to work, which is their primary source of income. Informant 4 shares: *"When we experience illness or financial difficulties, it becomes even more difficult. I am unable to leave and work effectively to support us, which impacts our financial situation."*

Due to their marginalized position in the informal sector, inflation significantly impacts their ability to provide for their families. For instance, Informant 5 said: *"It is financially difficult because the cost of goods has become so high. Even a hundred pesos is not enough to buy a proper meal."*

The statements highlight the significant burden Filipino single mothers face as they manage limited resources to meet their families' needs. These financial difficulties are exacerbated by unstable income, making it hard to cover essential expenses like school fees and household bills, leading to ongoing stress and strain. Garcia et al. (2021) noted that single parents, as sole providers, experience economic challenges that result in food insecurity and difficulties paying bills. Informants in the study reported going without food and struggling to budget utility bills and necessities.

### ***The Challenges of Being Both Mother and Father***

Parenting among Filipino single mothers in Umingan is closely tied to the challenge of balancing time between work and their children. For example, Informant 2, a seasonal farm worker, described her experience:

*It is difficult to raise a child, especially without a father. If only there were support from the father's side, I could have focused on my child daily at least to some extent. But now, it is really hard because my time is divided for him; that is why I can only give him my full attention at night."*

This highlights the struggle of single mothers to manage competing responsibilities while striving to provide care and attention to their children. Generally, informants felt that being single mothers constrained their ability to provide both material necessities and emotional care for their children. Dharani and Balamurugan (2024) noted that limited financial resources negatively affect the emotional well-being of single mothers. The multi-faceted and demanding nature of their situation—juggling multiple roles and responsibilities while ensuring their children's welfare—makes it even more challenging to meet their children's needs when resources are scarce (Jusoh & Latada, 2020).

These single mothers also expressed difficulty in fostering discipline, particularly with early adolescent children. For example, informant 3 shared, *"The stubbornness is really a challenge. Discipline is tough, especially now when he sometimes does not listen to me."* Amid the various pressures they face, some single mothers resorted to physical

measures to manage their children. For instance, Informant 10 acknowledged using spanking as a disciplinary strategy. Similarly, Lansford et al. (2013) observe that stubbornness can lead some mothers to resort to physical disciplines, such as spanking in order to manage their child's behavior. However, it is important to note that the approach to discipline varied significantly depending on the specific situation (Peterson et al., 1994).

Under the broader theme of challenges, the study participants revealed that they also face relationship issues with their family members as well as with others in their community, including neighbors.

### **Relationship Issues**

Relationship challenges among single mothers are often linked to the financial struggles faced by their immediate families, compounded by their pregnancies and the absence of financial support from the fathers of their children. Informant 2 shared:

*Especially when we have nothing, and my mother does not have anything either. We do not know where to get what we need for daily expenses. It leads to blaming each other like, "Why did you not ask for support for the child?"*

In contrast, Informant 4 described a conflict arising from her decision to work abroad. She recounted, *"My mom and I had a fight when I applied to work abroad because they did not want me to go. They wanted me to stay and continue taking care of my youngest."* Previous studies indicate the role of extended family members such as siblings and parents in parenting their children (Andrada-Poa et al., 2022).

Contrary to this, participants reported experiencing tension with family members due to disagreements, competing priorities, and emotional struggles. These issues often stem from financial pressures and conflicting priorities, such as balancing work opportunities abroad with familial obligations. According to Gunn and Eberhardt (2009), family dynamics involve relationships where members depend on each other for emotional, physical, and financial support, leading to both security and conflict. Despite generally secure relationships, single mothers face challenges living with family due to reliance on them for childcare and housing. The dependency can lead to relationship issues and constructive criticism, as reflected in the informants' statements.

Additionally, single mothers often experience stress and frustration when burdened with work responsibilities. Informant 8 admitted that exhaustion from work sometimes causes her to lose her temper. However, in conflicts with her sibling, who provides financial support, she chooses to remain silent to avoid escalating tensions.

Single mothers often navigate social isolation by distancing themselves from neighbors who perpetuate gossip and judgment about their circumstances. As Informant 4 explained, she limits her interactions to a small circle of trusted individuals within the community. Similarly, Informant 5 reflected on her experience during pregnancy, stating, *"When I was pregnant, of course, there were the rumors - you know how it is. The judgments and all. The neighbors had their share."* These narratives underscore the role of social stigma and community gossip in deepening the marginalization experienced by single mothers, compelling them to withdraw from broader social networks.

Worell (1986) notes that single motherhood often attracts societal stigma, leaving single mothers vulnerable to criticism. Carroll's study (2019) reveals that single mothers frequently feel isolated and frustrated by negative stereotypes, highlighting the persistent stigma surrounding their status.

**“My Social Network’s Support”: The Significant Role Played by Social Capital Among Single Mothers**

Filipino single mothers in this study utilize their social networks to seek financial assistance and emotional support. Two types of social capital emerged from the narratives of the informants: bonding social capital, and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to social networks involving immediate family and close friends while bridging social capital encompasses neighbors and acquaintances. Both types of social capital generally serve as a source of financial support. According to Putnam (2000), bonding social capital is effective for fostering specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity within the group. In contrast, bridging social capital is more useful in connecting individuals to external resources facilitating the diffusion of information, and expanding access to broader networks and opportunities.

Immediate family members are often the primary providers of financial support and are considered one of the significant bonding social capitals of single mothers. They are the primary providers of financial assistance, particularly in cases where the fathers of their children have abdicated their financial responsibilities. For example, Informant 4 receives financial support from her mother, who works abroad, while others rely on their siblings or fathers for assistance. Nevertheless, not all single mothers automatically receive support from their immediate families. In such cases, they resort to borrowing money from either their bonding or bridging social capital. In the Philippines, loans are accessible not only through formal institutions, such as banks but also through informal arrangements within neighborhoods or families. Informant 1 shared, *“Whenever I am short of money, I approached my friends and people whom I know, and they let me borrow money.”* Other participants mentioned borrowing money from siblings, while some relied on remittances from relatives working abroad.

Patulny (2004) identifies particularized trust as a key element of social capital, emphasizing that trust is grounded in personal experiences with others and their moral inclination to offer assistance. This concept helps explain why Filipino single mothers in Umingan often have access to credit through their bonding social capital, which includes individuals closest to them, such as family and close friends.

The importance of bonding and bridging social capital extends beyond access to credit, encompassing various forms of financial and material support. As Informant 2 highlights, financial assistance is not always delivered through loans or direct monetary aid. Instead, she expressed gratitude for her mother’s support in meeting their daily needs, stating, *“We are staying at my mother’s place, so our food and daily needs come from them.”* This demonstrates how bonding social capital can provide essential resources to address everyday challenges.

There are also instances where one of the informants was repaid by someone indebted to her by helping her acquire her solo parent ID. Informant 1 said:

*I know the staff here, the one who handles the processing of the solo parent identification card. Then, they borrowed some money from me, and in return, they helped me get a solo parent id. They arranged it for me.*

Coleman (1988) explains that when one person does something for another and trusts that the favor will be reciprocated, it strengthens their social capital as it creates an expectation and obligation between them, similar to holding a credit slip.

Bridging social capital among Filipino single mothers is linked to their access to financial assistance from the government or politicians, as well as government-provided



services such as free medicine and medical check-ups. For example, Informant 9 shared:

*The Barangay Health Workers (BHW) here are active, which is why we get informed and are able to receive flu shots for ourselves and our children. My flu shot was last year, and this year, I got my pneumonia shot at the end of January.*

Informant 8 also benefitted from bridging social capital, receiving 5,000 pesos from a politician in 2023, along with a medical check-up. This assistance was made possible through the network of her sibling, who shared the information with her.

Single mothers generally observe that they receive government support primarily during election periods. Their eligibility for welfare programs is often linked to their solo parent ID and their status as beneficiaries of the 4Ps program. However, the absence of crucial government documents, such as solo parent ID, can hinder access to government assistance. Informant 3 noted that obtaining a solo parent ID is challenging, making it difficult to access social benefits. Informant 4 attributed her inability to secure a solo parent ID to the lack of bridging social capital in her community, which she believes is essential for accessing government resources. Other informants similarly pointed out that the absence of supportive connections made it difficult for them to process their solo parent ID, as those in charge of processing it was often hostile and unhelpful.

According to Claridge (2018), bonding social capital exists within a group or community and includes characteristics of strong ties and thick crust. Bonding social capital is described as strong relationships that usually include family and friends who provide material and emotional support (Claridge, 2018). This supports the findings of the study wherein the social capital of single mothers in their community provides them with resources to navigate their challenges practically and emotionally. Putnam (2000) explains that bridging social capital refers to the “weak ties” that connect distant acquaintances from different social circles, and these ties are often more valuable than the strong connections with close relatives and intimate friends. However, the absence of bridging social capital can disenfranchise individuals, limiting their access to resources and opportunities. Thus, the lack of bridging social capital is an obstacle among single mothers in receiving government support.

### **Coping Strategies of Single Mothers**

Following the challenges faced by marginalized single mothers, positive reframing, resourcefulness and adaptability, and utilizing social capital are the subthemes that developed under the coping strategies they use.

#### **Positive Reframing**

Positive reframing appears as a helpful strategy for marginalized single mothers to overcome their challenges. Despite facing financial difficulties, household responsibilities, and parenting duties, these single mothers exhibit optimism that helps them transform challenging situations into chances for growth and resilience. Informant 1 highlighted the importance of believing in their capacity to develop a positive mindset:

*Stay positive. You need to act and think positively, and you must not lose heart. If you lose confidence, you will be defeated. You will not be able to solve a problem, and it will only multiply. That is why it is essential to keep a positive mindset.”*

Informant 5 emphasizes the importance of cultivating a positive mindset by grounding her perspective in her responsibility for her children. She stated, *"I just think that I need to be strong for my children, so they can go to school and have a bright future. Of course, if I become weak, my child will suffer."* A significant factor contributing to this positive reframing is the support provided through bonding social capital, particularly from immediate family members. For instance, Informant 4 shared, *"My mother encourages me to stay strong, not to dwell on negative thoughts, and to focus on my child, thinking about what is best for my child."* These narratives highlight how familial support serves as a crucial resource for fostering resilience among single mothers.

Religion likewise plays a crucial role in the positive reframing of single mothers. According to Informant 9, *"In all the problems I have experienced, I always hold on to God. Sometimes, I also join Bible studies to strengthen myself even more."*

Reframing is a strategy that shifts individuals' perceptions of themselves by emphasizing their strengths or redefining their experiences in a positive light (Sergeev, 2023). Bradley and Goldstein's (2022) studied on the lived experiences of single mothers, and highlighted their remarkable optimism, even in the face of adversity. These mothers actively transform challenges into opportunities for growth and progress, illustrating reframing as a key coping mechanism. This approach provides a sense of hope for marginalized single mothers navigating complex difficulties, allowing them to maintain a positive outlook while prioritizing their children's well-being. Within this context of single motherhood, positive reframing empowers women by redirecting their focus from negative circumstances to constructive possibilities, fostering resilience and confidence despite societal pressures and expectations (Sergeev, 2023).

### ***Resourcefulness and Adaptability***

Moreover, amidst challenging situations, these single mothers also possess resourcefulness and adaptability as coping strategies to navigate their challenges. In the context of single motherhood where there is a lack of financial support from the father, resourcefulness means finding ways to provide for their children. Informant 2 said:

*I joined the onion farming work and took the opportunity to plant my own crops while I was in the field, ensuring I would have something to harvest later. It is essential to be resourceful and determined because I cannot rely entirely on what we have at home to meet our needs."*

Similarly, Informant 3 stated: *"Whatever work is available, I will go for it as long as it is honest."* This coping strategy utilized by single mothers demonstrates resilience and a proactive attitude in navigating their challenges with determination and perseverance, strategizing to find solutions to practical challenges in order to make ends meet and aiming to provide a better life for their children. From the responses stated above, these single mothers exhibit resourcefulness and adaptability. While there is a solution to work and there is a solution that may not be clear, they are willing to explore options. This emphasizes their flexibility to adapt to challenging situations and posits that they possess enough resourcefulness to find solutions or alternative ways to earn money. Hill-Murray (2022) argued that individuals tend to be resourceful and adaptive when faced with challenges, utilizing problem-solving skills to find solutions rather than allowing problems to fester emotionally. These single mothers are adaptable and flexible in making the most out of their situations, and resourceful in utilizing available resources and seeking other ways to make ends meet (Nelson, 1987 as cited in Reynolds, 2008).

**Utilizing Social Capital**

Single mothers seek or utilize support from their social networks during challenging times. These single mothers use their social capital to navigate and overcome their practical challenges by turning to their close ties, such as friends and acquaintances, for support and resources. Their support networks provide work opportunities for them, and family support serves as a practical foundation for managing their financial challenges. Informant 3 revealed: *"I usually borrow from my friends, and sometimes from other acquaintances when I need money."* When financial resources are unavailable within their immediate family, they turn to their bridging capital, i.e. neighbors and even acquaintances for support.

Social capital is also utilized by Filipino single mothers to navigate their emotional challenges. These single mothers utilize their bonding social capital as they have established strong emotional connections with their family members, friends, and trusted individuals. These support networks provide them with support and advice in parenting and overcoming stigma through the support received from neighbors and other social connections. For instance, Informant 4 shared: *"I have friends who give advice, saying not to do anything that could harm me or also affect my child. It is a big help emotionally and mentally."* Similarly, Informant 5 shared: *"My trusted close friends and my sibling, who share the same situation as I do, provide invaluable emotional support. Their comfort during tough times truly makes a difference."*

Gerstel (1988) explains that in the case of divorced women, which is similar to single mothers, they often struggle to develop new social connections because of their situation, and instead rely on their existing relationships, such as friends, with whom they feel comfortable discussing personal matters and emotions. Through the use of their social capital, these single mothers were able to cope with and navigate their practical and emotional challenges by receiving emotional support, such as advice that they are not alone, and practical support, such as being willing to lend them money when in need, providing potential employment opportunities and helping them to access community resources. As Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) assert, social capital is the aggregate of actual potential resources embedded within which comprises the network and assets that can be mobilized through the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit.

**Conclusion and Future Works**

Localizing the study of single mothers who are marginalized in a rural community in the Philippines offers insights that will shed light on the realities of single motherhood. Although the challenges encountered by Filipino single mothers in this study validate previous findings that they encounter financial difficulties, parenting, and relationship issues, this study contributes to the discourse by examining their pool of social capital and how this has affected their access to resources and their coping strategies.

Previously, studying the coping mechanisms of single mothers does not take into account how they utilize their social capital in the process. The study revealed the importance of their bonding social capital in providing financial assistance and emotional support. This is consistent with the collectivist culture of Filipinos who value solidarity, belongingness, and trust in their close-knit group. However, with their bonding social capital alone, they cannot access services and support provided by the government. They have to utilize their bridging social capital so that they get closer to the government. One intervening variable in the process is the possession of a solo

parent ID. Having no bridging social capital to help them ease the process of obtaining one leads them not to receive any support from the government. Thus, they have to be connected to the appropriate network so that vital information about certain cash benefits will be accessible and they can be included in the list.

The findings of the study revealed four challenges that these single mothers encounter, namely, financial difficulties, parenting issues, relationship issues, and social support problems. Single mothers face financial difficulties due to limited income, compounded by household financial obligations and the increasing expenses associated with raising children, such as school fees. Regarding parenting issues, these single mothers believe that the challenge of having limited resources impacts their parenting which leads to feelings of guilt when they cannot fulfill their child's needs and wants, and found that fostering discipline among their children is another challenge. Relationship issues are also compounded by challenges present in familial relationships and community relationships, with the majority of single mothers who are living dependently with their family members experiencing minor conflicts, and some participants have been subjected to judgment and rumors within their neighborhood. Moreover, under the social support problem, despite the existence of services like the solo parent ID card, most of the participants stated that they face difficulties in accessing the necessary assistance they are entitled to.

Despite the challenges they face, these single mothers have support networks that help them navigate and overcome their practical and emotional challenges. The study revealed that these single mothers effectively use their social connections within their community to access support and resources, which constitute their social capital. The study found that the resources of these single mothers come from within their community, such as their family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. Under the Social Capital Theory, scholars have noted bonding and bridging social capital.

However, bonding social capital alone is insufficient for accessing government services and support. To bridge this gap, single mothers must leverage their bridging social capital to connect with the government and access essential services. A key factor in this process is the possession of a solo parent ID. Without bridging social capital to navigate the bureaucratic process of obtaining this ID, single mothers are excluded from receiving government assistance. Therefore, establishing connections with appropriate networks is crucial to gaining access to vital information and resources, such as cash benefits and inclusion in support programs. Also, the possession of this ID does not guarantee support from the government. Some of the informants in this study revealed that they were chosen as beneficiaries not because of their status as solo parents but because they are among the beneficiaries of the 4Ps program of the government.

It is strongly recommended that future research explore the gendered nature of social capital among single mothers and fathers, or conduct a comparison between the social capital of married and single mothers. Such studies could help policymakers to develop programs that enhance the resources and well-being of marginalized single mothers.

## References

- [1] Adler, P. S., & Kwon, S.-W. (2002). Social capital: Prospects for a new concept. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 17–40.

- [2] Aloro, A. L., Berbano, A. S., Ellamil, M. B., Calubiran, G., & Suarez, G.-S. P. A. (2024). Challenges Encountered by Solo Parents' in Raising their Children in Nagcarlan, Laguna: Basis for an Action Plan Development. *IJFMR - International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(3).  
<https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i03.23139>
- [3] Andrada-Poa, M. R. J., Jabal, R. F., & Cleofas, J. V. (2022). Single mothering during the COVID-19 pandemic: A remote photovoice project among Filipino single mothers working from home. *Community, Work & Family*, 25(2), 260–278.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2021.2006608>
- [4] Bain, M. C. (2020). *Exploring the challenges of single mothers in the Philippines: Empowerment as diaconal task of Evangelical church in the Philippines* [Master's thesis, VID Specialized University]. <https://hdl.handle.net/11250/2825396>
- [5] Berryhill, M. B., & Durtschi, J. A. (2017). Understanding single mothers' parenting stress trajectories. *Marriage & Family Review*, 53(3), 227–245.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2016.1204406>
- [6] Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- [7] Bradley, S. J., & Goldstein, S. E. (2022). “People think it’s easy because I smile, but it’s not easy”: The lived experiences of six African American single mothers. *Journal of American Studies*, 26(1), 16–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-022-09574-6>
- [8] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.  
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- [9] Carroll, N. J. (2017, July). *Lone mothers' experiences of stigma: A comparative study* [Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield]. University of Huddersfield Repository.  
<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/34358/1/FINAL%20THESIS%20-%20Carroll.pdf>
- [10] Chant, S. (1997). Marginal (m)others: Lone parents and female household headship in the Philippines. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 9(2), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09578819708426688>

- [11] Dela Luna, K. L. G., Castro, M. J. G., & Ferido, M. P. (2023). Never enough! A qualitative study on single parenting and child-rearing in a selected community in Nagcarlan, Laguna. *Journal Article*, Article 5901.  
<https://www.ukdr.uplb.edu.ph/journal-articles/5901>
- [12] Dharani, M. K., & Balamurugan, J. (2024). The psychosocial impact on single mothers' well-being – A literature review. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 13(1), Article 148. [https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp\\_1045\\_23](https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_1045_23)
- [13] Dor, A. (2021). Single motherhood by choice: Difficulties and advantages. *Journal of Educational and Development Psychology*, 11(1), 18–27.  
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jedp.v11n1p18>
- [14] Fajardo-Jarilla, R. (2023, March 8). Philippines: Single mothers continue to fight stigma. *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*. <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/philippines-single-mothers-continue-fight-stigma>
- [15] Garcia, S. R., Lim, W. C., Pascua, P. K., Santiago, M. P., & Tus, J. (2021). Inang tatay: The journey of single moms amidst COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*, 7(1), 962–976.  
<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13726213.v1>
- [16] Geronimo, J. (2021, May 9). How solo parents in the Philippines navigated the pandemic. *Rappler*.
- [17] Gonzales, M. F., & Saavedra, L. D. (2020). Single parenting and well-being: Experiences of single mothers in Manila, Philippines. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 8(10), 23–29.
- [18] Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. Yale University Press.
- [19] Hoque, M. E. (2020). Parenting stress in single mothers: Examining the role of family support. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 50(3), 374–383.
- [20] Hwang, W., & Jung, J. Y. (2023). Empowering single mothers: A socio-ecological framework for intervention. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(1), 42–59.
- [21] Keene, R. L., & Batson, C. D. (2010). Role of social support in single mothers' stress management. *Family Relations*, 59(1), 55–66.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2009.00582.x>

- [22] Kelly, M. P., & Hennessy, C. (2018). Exploring resilience among single mothers in urban settings. *Urban Studies*, 55(3), 711–727.
- [23] Laguna Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office. (2022). *Annual report on single parent programs and initiatives in Laguna*.
- [24] Lanuza, G. M., & Morales, M. E. (2022). Understanding the stigma: Single mothers in the Filipino context. *Philippine Sociological Review*, 70(1), 14–35.
- [25] Lee, H. Y., & Johnson, M. (2021). The power of storytelling: Single mothers' experiences of discrimination. *Social Inclusion*, 9(4), 77–87.  
<https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4365>
- [26] Llorca, F. L. (2019). Empowering single mothers through livelihood programs in rural Philippines. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review*, 13(2), 93–108.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/aswp.12179>
- [27] McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing up with a single parent: What hurts, what helps*. Harvard University Press.
- [28] Medina, B. T. G. (2001). *The Filipino family* (2nd ed.). University of the Philippines Press.
- [29] Mendoza, A. B. (2020). From surviving to thriving: Single mothers and community support. *Philippine Journal of Social Development*, 10(2), 52–66.
- [30] Milkie, M. A., & Denny, K. E. (2021). Parenting amidst stigma: Single mothers' challenges and coping mechanisms. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 13(4), 317–332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12422>
- [31] Moreno, J. L. (2021). Single-parent households in the Philippines: Analyzing the gendered implications of caregiving. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 27(3), 285–301.
- [32] Morillo, H. R., Capuno, J. J., & Mendoza, A. C. (2020). Single parent dynamics in the Philippines: Trends and policy implications. *Philippine Review of Economics*, 57(2), 171–194.
- [33] Ocampo, R. A. (2018). The role of extended families in supporting single mothers in the Philippines. *Philippine Sociological Review*, 66(2), 147–163.

- [34] Ortega, C. M., & Lorenzo, A. C. (2021). Single mothers in rural Philippines: Community-based strategies for economic resilience. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 52(1), 123–140.
- [35] Padilla, C. D., & Villamor, E. S. (2022). Mothering solo: The intersection of poverty and single motherhood in the Philippines. *Journal of Asian Social Science*, 9(3), 56–69.
- [36] Philippine Statistics Authority. (2020). *Census of population: Statistics on single-parent households in the Philippines*. <https://psa.gov.ph>
- [37] Pillay, J., & Mukheibir, P. (2021). Empowering single mothers through sustainable development initiatives. *International Journal of Social Work*, 24(2), 88–102.
- [38] Ravanera, C. Z. (2019). Solo mothers and the law: Legal frameworks affecting single parenthood in the Philippines. *Journal of Philippine Development Policy*, 46(1), 31–49.
- [39] Reyes, A. D., & Evangelista, M. L. (2021). The social stigma of single mothers in conservative societies: A comparative study. *Journal of Asian Women's Studies*, 18(2), 213–229.
- [40] Salvacion, R. E. (2023). Navigating the challenges of single parenting: The Filipino experience. *Philippine Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(4), 34–49.
- [41] Talavera, J. D. (2020). Mothering against odds: Empowerment programs for single mothers in Metro Manila. *Journal of Philippine Education*, 54(3), 22–35.
- [42] Tan, E. M., & Cruz, J. A. (2021). Challenges of education and employment for single mothers in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Labor and Employment*, 17(2), 92–108.
- [43] Villanueva, A. A. (2018). Social support and its impact on the well-being of Filipino single mothers. *Journal of Asian Social Research*, 5(1), 101–119.

### **Acknowledgment**

The authors wish to thank all the informants who participated in the study as well as Prof. Maria Editha Lim and Prof Anna del Rosario for their constructive criticisms during the conduct of the study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.



