

Lived Experiences of Solo Parents of Barangay Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga

Leverrier Arellano, Kaymay P. Assudo, Kennzsu Bas-il, Lea Joy L. Ramos, Shekinah G. Roga, and Maridel P. Tawao

International School of Asia and the Pacific-Kalinga, Bulanao Norte, Tabuk City, Kalinga, Philippines
leverrierarellano030@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Solo parenthood presents complex social, economic, emotional, and psychological realities that influence the ability of individuals to provide care and maintain family stability. This study explored the lived experiences of solo parents in Barangay Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga, focusing on their demographic characteristics, challenges encountered, coping strategies, support systems, and overall well-being. A mixed-methods descriptive research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Thirteen (13) solo parents participated voluntarily in the study. Data were gathered through a researcher-developed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means, while qualitative data were examined through thematic

analysis. Findings revealed that solo parents experienced various challenges affecting their daily lives, with economic difficulties emerging as the most prominent concern. Health-related and emotional challenges were also identified as significant experiences. Despite these difficulties, participants demonstrated resilience through faith, positive thinking, perseverance, effective management of responsibilities, and reliance on family and community support. The study highlights that solo parents should not only be viewed through the lens of vulnerability but also through their capacity for adaptation and resilience. Strengthening livelihood opportunities, psychosocial interventions, and community-based support programs may contribute to improving their overall well-being and quality of life.

Keywords: *solo parents; lived experiences; resilience; coping strategies; social support; mixed-methods research*

INTRODUCTION

Single parenthood has become an increasing social concern worldwide due to separation, parental mortality, abandonment, and individual decisions to raise children independently. International evidence indicates that millions of children live in single-parent households, with women representing a substantial proportion of single caregivers (United Nations, 2022). In the Philippines, solo parents continue to face interconnected economic, social, and emotional difficulties despite legislative recognition through Republic Act No. 8972 and subsequent policies supporting their welfare.

This study aligns with UN's no poverty goal since it examines the economic challenges experienced by the solo parents, thus, knowing their livelihood concerns and recommending strengthened social assistance will support the efforts to reducing poverty and improving social protection initiatives for vulnerable sectors.

The present study focused on solo parents in Barangay Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga. The research sought to document their realities and provide evidence for responsive social interventions. The original study

identified economic, social, emotional, health-related, and parenting-related challenges as major dimensions influencing the lived experiences and well-being of solo parents.

Research Gap

Although previous studies have examined single-parent families and their socioeconomic conditions, limited research has focused on the lived experiences of solo parents within rural Philippine communities. Existing evidence often emphasizes challenges without sufficiently exploring how individuals cope, adapt, and maintain family functioning despite adversity.

This study contributes localized evidence by integrating measurable patterns of challenges with personal narratives describing the realities of solo parenting.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to:

1. Describe the demographic and socioeconomic profile of solo parents.
2. Identify the economic, social, emotional, health-related, and parenting challenges experienced by solo parents.
3. Explore coping strategies and support systems utilized by solo parents.
4. Examine their lived experiences in terms of well-being and resilience.
5. Propose interventions to strengthen support mechanisms for solo parents.

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundation

The study is anchored on the concept of resilience, emphasizing the capacity of individuals to adapt and continue functioning despite difficult circumstances.

The conceptual framework recognizes that solo parents experience interconnected challenges that influence their overall well-being. These challenges include economic concerns, social difficulties, emotional struggles, health-related concerns, and parenting responsibilities.

The study further examines how coping strategies and support systems influence the lived experiences of solo parents, including physical well-being, emotional well-being, social relationships, financial stability, ability to provide for children, resilience, and quality of life.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods descriptive research design. This approach was selected to provide both measurable descriptions of participants' experiences and deeper understanding through personal accounts.

The quantitative component identified patterns related to participant profiles, challenges, and experiences. The qualitative component provided meaningful explanations regarding how solo parents understood and managed their situations.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga

Sampling Technique

The study involved thirteen (13) solo parents from Barangay Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga. Participants voluntarily participated in the research process.

Data Gathering Instrument

Data were collected through:

1. Researcher-developed questionnaire
2. Semi-structured interview guide

The questionnaire gathered quantitative information, while interviews allowed participants to describe their experiences, struggles, and coping mechanisms.

Data collection and ethical safeguards

Administrative permission was obtained from the Dean or Program Coordinator of the College of Medical Laboratory Science. The Google Forms link was distributed through official communication channels. The first page contained an informed-consent statement explaining the study purpose and assuring voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Only respondents who agreed proceeded to the questionnaire. The source document does not report the name of a research ethics committee or an ethics approval number.

Statistical analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means. Qualitative responses were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Characteristics

The study involved thirteen (13) solo parents from Barangay Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga. The participants represented individuals who independently carried parental responsibilities while managing economic, emotional, social, and household demands.

The demographic profile examined in the study included age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, employment status, number of dependents, and monthly income. These characteristics provided the contextual background necessary for understanding the circumstances influencing the experiences of solo parents.

Challenges Experienced by Solo Parents

The findings revealed that solo parents encountered multiple and interconnected challenges affecting different aspects of their lives. These challenges were categorized into economic, social, emotional, health-related, and parenting-related concerns.

Economic Challenges

Economic difficulty emerged as the most prominent challenge experienced by participants. Solo parents described financial concerns associated with providing daily necessities, supporting children's needs, and sustaining household expenses. The responsibility of being both caregiver and provider created additional pressure, particularly when income sources were limited or unstable.

The findings suggest that financial limitations influence not only material conditions but also emotional well-being and family functioning.

Health-Related Challenges

Health-related concerns were identified as another significant difficulty among participants. The responsibility of managing household needs while fulfilling parental duties may create physical and emotional exhaustion. Participants experienced challenges related to maintaining their own well-being while prioritizing the needs of their children.

Emotional Challenges

Participants also experienced emotional struggles connected with the demands of solo parenting. The absence of a partner in shared decision-making and caregiving contributed to feelings of pressure, stress, and emotional burden. However, participants demonstrated adaptive responses that enabled them to continue performing their parental roles.

Social and Parenting-Related Challenges

Solo parents experienced challenges related to social participation, community involvement, and parenting responsibilities.

Managing childcare, education, discipline, and daily family concerns required significant adjustment. These experiences demonstrate that solo parenting involves continuous negotiation between personal needs and parental obligations.

Coping Strategies and Support Systems

Despite the challenges encountered, participants demonstrated various coping mechanisms that helped them manage their responsibilities.

Faith and Spirituality

Faith emerged as an important source of strength among participants. Spiritual beliefs provided encouragement, hope, and motivation in facing difficult circumstances.

Positive Thinking and Perseverance

Participants demonstrated resilience through maintaining positive perspectives and continuing their efforts despite hardships.

Time and Financial Management

Effective organization of responsibilities and careful management of available resources assisted participants in balancing parental and personal demands.

Family and Community Support

Support from family members and community networks contributed to participants' ability to cope with challenges.

These findings emphasize that resilience is not solely an individual characteristic but is also shaped by available social support systems.

Lived Experiences of Solo Parents

The Weight of Multiple Responsibilities

Solo parents described the experience of carrying responsibilities traditionally shared between two parents. They managed financial obligations, childcare, household duties, and emotional support for their children.

Resilience Through Adversity

Participants demonstrated determination and adaptability despite difficult circumstances. Their experiences reflected persistence, acceptance, and the ability to continue fulfilling parental responsibilities.

Support Networks as Sources of Strength

Family and community relationships served as important sources of assistance. These networks helped reduce the burden of solo parenting and provided emotional encouragement.

Growth Through Challenges

Participants developed independence, improved problem-solving abilities, and greater appreciation of their personal strengths.

DISCUSSION

The respondents were primarily female solo parents. Most participants belonged to the middle-aged category, reflecting the period when parental responsibilities and economic pressures are often intensified. The findings showed that financial constraints were among the most persistent concerns, including unstable income, limited resources, and difficulty meeting children's needs.

Economic challenges among solo parents are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that single caregivers frequently experience greater financial vulnerability due to the combined responsibilities of income generation and childcare (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Limited economic resources may affect not only household stability but also children's access to education, health services, and other developmental opportunities.

The respondents also experienced emotional challenges, including stress, exhaustion, and feelings of loneliness. However, they demonstrated resilience through adaptive coping mechanisms. Resilience theory suggests that individuals can develop protective processes that enable them to maintain functioning despite adversity (Masten, 2014). In this study, faith, perseverance, family relationships, and community support served as important protective factors.

Social support emerged as a significant element in helping solo parents manage daily responsibilities. Support from relatives, community members, and government programs can reduce parental burden and improve psychological well-being (Thoits, 2011).

Limitations

This study involved thirteen (13) participants from a specific rural community; therefore, findings should be interpreted within the context of Barangay Bulanao Centro, Tabuk City, Kalinga.

The qualitative nature of participants' experiences provides valuable insight but may not represent the experiences of all solo parents in other communities.

Implications of the Study**Social Work Practice**

Social workers may utilize the findings to design interventions addressing the practical and emotional needs of solo parents. Programs may include counseling services, parenting support groups, and resource referral systems.

Community Development

Local communities may strengthen support networks through organized assistance programs, peer groups, and community-based activities that reduce isolation among solo parents.

Policy Development

Government institutions and local authorities may consider strengthening livelihood opportunities, social protection mechanisms, and accessible services for solo-parent households.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that solo parents experience significant economic, emotional, health-related, and parenting challenges. Nevertheless, participants demonstrated resilience through faith, perseverance, adaptive coping strategies, and support from family and community networks.

Solo parents should be recognized not only as individuals facing difficulties but also as capable individuals demonstrating strength, responsibility, and resilience. Effective programs should therefore address both their challenges and their existing capacities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Local government units may strengthen livelihood programs that provide sustainable income opportunities for solo parents.
2. Community organizations may establish psychosocial support programs addressing emotional stress and adjustment concerns.
3. Social service providers may develop parenting support initiatives that assist solo parents in managing childcare and family responsibilities.
4. Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger populations and different geographic settings to expand understanding of solo-parent experiences.

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