

CHALLENGES SINGLE PARENTS FACE IN THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN CATIGBIAN, BOHOL

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ABSTRACT

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Children from single-parent households often face unique challenges that can influence their academic outcomes, including financial constraints, reduced parental involvement due to work commitments, and emotional stress associated with family dynamics. This study explores the challenges single-parent families face and the impact on children's learning and development, as perceived by teachers, principals, and single parents. Employing a phenomenological qualitative research design, the study explored the lived experiences of 30 single parents and the perspectives of 21 teachers and school leaders regarding children's learning and development in single-parent households. The study aimed to examine the current living conditions of single parents, their challenges, their coping mechanisms, and the effectiveness of school programs and interventions designed to support them. Data were collected through interviews and key informant interviews (KII), revealing key themes that underscored the financial, emotional, and logistical struggles experienced by single parents and the gaps in existing support systems. Findings indicated that although schools offer



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various programs, including counseling, financial aid, and after-school care, significant areas for improvement remain. Single parents expressed the need for more flexible educational options, enhanced mental health support, and livelihood opportunities. Teachers and principals emphasized the importance of community collaboration and holistic programs to address the multifaceted needs of single-parent families. The study highlighted the critical role of schools in bridging resource and support gaps, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the interdependence of family, school, and community environments in shaping children's development. Based on these findings, the study proposed enhancement measures to improve financial assistance programs, expand mental health services, and strengthen community partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

During a child's formative years, parents and teachers are generally considered among the most important individuals in a child's learning and development. The family is the milieu that provides the earliest and most formative environment for fostering cognitive, emotional, and social development. This is because the family is the environment that sets the stage. Schools provide structured chances for learning and supporting relationships that boost students' prospects for development. Ecological models of human development assume that children's outcomes depend on continuous interactions within the contexts in which they are raised (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Building on this perspective, examples of contexts in this category are family, school, and community. Along the same lines, parenting styles have been associated with children's academic engagement, social competence, and overall well-being for a considerable time (Baumrind, 1991).

Amid these developmental influences, single-parent families are becoming increasingly common in many countries and are among the current family patterns seen in societies. Single parents can raise well-adjusted children, but they may face conditions that increase the demands of their caregiving responsibilities. Research has shown that single parents often have limited access to support systems, face financial and time constraints, and experience work-family conflicts as they try to meet their children's developmental needs (Amato, 2010; Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis, 2015). These problems can be hard to overcome. These conditions are likely to affect the extent to which parents participate in their children's school-related activities, provide emotional support, and monitor their children's academic achievement.

Despite these challenges, many single parents demonstrate considerable resilience in balancing caregiving responsibilities and supporting their children's educational needs. For instance, Crosier et al. (2007) and Dela Luna et al. (2023) both report that many parents use adaptive techniques to

continue supporting their kids' learning goals while also meeting the financial and caregiving responsibilities of raising them. According to Jeynes (2012), when parents are more involved, their kids do better in school, are more motivated, and are more interested in what they are learning.

This form of resilience is especially important in school contexts, given its link to higher levels of school involvement. Furthermore, teachers are partners in the educational journeys of elementary school pupils and play an important role in their educational encounters. Aside from teaching, teachers often observe how learners' family backgrounds affect their behavior, attendance, performance, and adjustment to social and emotional environments. Teachers are often among the first individuals to observe indicators of academic, behavioral, or emotional difficulties among learners.

Previous studies have shown that kids who live with only one parent may have trouble with school, behavior control, and participation in school activities (Amato, 2010; Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018). Having social support from family and friends can have a big effect on these results, but the degree to which it varies greatly. Living in a single-parent family has a significant impact on a child's social, cultural, and economic situation. Asian societies, such as that of the Philippines, have depended on extended family networks for support since time immemorial. Parents have found that these networks have helped them manage the responsibilities of caring for their children. In addition to changes in household arrangements, economic problems, migration patterns, and social situations, these other factors have also affected how families access resources (Yeoh et al., 2024).

As a result, the facts of single-parent families may differ from town to town. Therefore, there is a need for local context-specific questions. Research in the Philippines has identified the financial, emotional, and social obstacles faced by single parents, especially regarding child-rearing and educational support (Dela Luna et al., 2023; Cruz et al., 2024). The studies took place in the Philippines, but there is little qualitative information on how such events are happening in small regions like Catigbian in Bohol. Thus, creating interventions responsive to the actual needs of families and learners within unique community contexts requires knowledge of these local realities, which is vital to their development.

For the most part, this research investigates teachers' viewpoints and single parents' experiences in Catigbian, Bohol, regarding the learning and development of children from single-parent households. In this study, a qualitative investigation is conducted to analyze the specific challenges single parents face, the coping strategies they adopt, and the school and community support systems available to assist them. The findings of this study are intended to inform educational and community activities aimed at meeting the needs of children and families in this demographic. These programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of this demographic. Fair learning

opportunities and improved support structures will be encouraged through the implementation of these initiatives.

The goal of this study, conducted in Catigbian, Bohol, from May to October 2024, was to examine the unique challenges single parents face regarding their kids' intellectual growth and development, given that their kids live with only one parent. In this study, the researchers wanted to find out where these people live, the biggest problems they have with school, how these problems affect their children, how they deal with them, and what schools and towns have done to help them. The study examines how these traits affect kids who grow up in single-parent homes. The study was primarily about the challenges single parents face in helping their kids learn and grow. The study also took place from May to October 2024. The main purpose of the study is to identify which factors significantly affect single parents' ability to help their kids with their schoolwork. The information gathered from this study enabled the development of practical ways to improve outcomes, so that single-parent families can get more help and their kids can do better in school. Along these lines, the study wants to answer the following:

1. How do single parents talk about the things they have done to help their kids learn and grow?
2. What problems do they run into when they try to do their schoolwork?
3. How do these problems affect the learning and growth of children?
4. How do these problems affect single parents?
5. What do teachers and school leaders think about the needs and support systems of kids who live with only one parent?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design. This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of single parents and the perspectives of teachers and school leaders regarding children's learning and development in single-parent households.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenology is the study of and description of the meanings that individuals ascribe to their lived experiences, as well as the manner in which these meanings are understood within their social contexts. It was decided to take this approach to collect personal narratives, opinions, and coping mechanisms of single parents, as well as observations from teachers and school administrators who work with children from single-parent families.

A phenomenological study was conducted to identify themes and meanings that single-parent families shared regarding their mental, social, economic, and financial situations. The design enabled close examination of the participants’ events, problems, coping strategies, and support systems.

Environment. The study took place in the Philippines, in the Municipality of Catigbian, Province of Bohol. Catigbian is a mostly rural town composed of several barangays with varying levels of poverty and wealth. Five public primary schools run by the Department of Education (DepEd) serve the municipality. These schools serve students from a wide range of families, including those raised by a single parent.

Catigbian was chosen as the study site because it was easily accessible and had many single-parent families whose experiences could help researchers better understand the phenomenon under investigation. Schools in this municipality were important places for studying how children’s family situations affect their schooling and future development.

Research Participants. Participants were divided into two groups: single parents and education stakeholders. The first group included thirty (30) single parents solely responsible for raising one or more school-aged children enrolled in public elementary schools in Catigbian. The second group consisted of twenty-one (21) teachers and school principals with direct experience working with learners from single-parent households. Nonprobability sampling, or purposive sampling, is often used in qualitative research to identify people with extensive, meaningful experience with the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). Single parents had to be the primary caregiver for a school-aged child and live in the town during the study to be included. The principals and teachers were chosen based on their work experience and their knowledge of students from single-parent families.

The sample size was considered adequate because information richness is more important in qualitative studies than statistical representation. As soon as topic saturation was reached, no additional themes of great importance to the research emerged in later interviews (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020).

Table 1. *Distribution of Participants*

Single Parents	30
Teachers and Principals	21
Total	51

Research Instrument. Data were collected through semi-structured Key Informant Interview (KII) Guides developed specifically for this study. Different interview guides were prepared for teachers, administrators, and single parents. The study’s goals aligned with the questions, which were intended to elicit thorough accounts of participants’ experiences, thoughts, coping strategies, and observations on how children learn and grow in single-

parent homes. A researcher reviewed interview guides, a representative from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and a specialist from the Department of Education (DepEd) who has worked on child welfare and family-related educational issues. These experts' suggestions were used to clarify, make more relevant, and make more complete.

Data Gathering Procedure. Before collecting the data, the University of Bohol Research Ethics Committee approved it, and the Schools Division Office and the appropriate school officials also approved the data collection. After these permits were granted, people who might be interested in participating in the study were identified and asked to take part.

Each person who took part in the study was told the study's purpose, that they were not required to participate, that their privacy would be respected, and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. People who knew about the talks were asked for written permission in advance.

In-person interviews with important sources were done at times and places that worked for everyone. Interviews with the people being studied were recorded on tape, and field notes were taken to capture their thoughts and body language as they talked about what was going on. Records were kept from May to October 2024. The study followed the ethical guidelines typically used for this kind of research. Participants were informed about the study's goals, how it would be conducted, its benefits, and any potential risks. Before taking part, permission was requested and granted.

By giving out fake names and participation codes, privacy and anonymity were protected. Recordings, transcripts, and research papers were kept safely, and only the researcher could view them. People who took part in the study were told they could refuse to answer any question and quit at any time without any negative consequences. The University of Bohol Research Ethics Committee approved the study before any data were collected.

Data Analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach was used to look at the collected data. Interviews that were taped were typed up word-for-word and reviewed several times to ensure the data was correct. The information was first coded using a standard approach, and then similar codes were grouped into broader themes. Then we went over, refined, and defined the emerging themes to ensure they accurately reflected what the guests had said. People understood the themes through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which explains how family, school, neighborhood, and broader social systems influence a child's development. Family resilience theory (Walsh, 2016) was also used to look at the results. This theory explains how families can change, address problems, and do well even when things go wrong.

Thematic analysis made it easier to identify recurring patterns and shared meanings, and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties, coping strategies, and support systems that affect children's schooling in single-parent homes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Living Conditions of Single Parents. According to the results, a lot of single parents in Catigbian are at different levels of social and economic risk. The housing conditions ranged from stable homes to makeshift buildings that offered little protection against natural hazards. Also, not all families had equal access to toilets; some had to make do with simple or creative solutions. These events show that living conditions remain strongly tied to the amount of money and community support available.

One issue that kept coming up was a lack of money. Many of the people who took part said they had trouble meeting their nutritional needs, school costs, and household expenses. Similar findings have been reported in studies showing that economic instability makes it harder for single-parent families to consistently support their kids' schoolwork and growth (Dela Luna et al., 2023; Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018).

Even with these problems, the competitors showed considerable strength. Many said that their parental duties gave them strength and that they kept a positive view of their children's future. This result supports the idea that single-parent families can be more resilient if they are determined, have close family ties, and have access to community tools (Walsh, 2016). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory can help us understand these results. This theory posits that family, neighborhood, and broader social structures interact to affect a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Problems with money, housing, and getting social support are all examples of environmental factors that affect both parents' health and their children's growth.

Challenges Faced by Single Parents. Financial stress was consistently named the biggest problem by those who took part. Many single parents said it was hard to balance school costs, household duties, and daily living expenses when they had only one or two steady sources of income. These problems often made it hard for them to be fully involved in their kids' schoolwork and other educational activities.

Participants also talked about the mental burdens that come with being a single parent, such as stress, fatigue, loneliness, and worries about their children's health. Some people said that not having a co-parent made caring for children and enforcing rules more difficult. It has been found that Filipino single parents, who often have to deal with a lot of tasks and social and economic pressures, also experience similar effects.

Having limited time makes being a parent even more difficult. Many of the participants said it was hard to balance work, caring for their homes, and being involved in their children's schooling. Institutional barriers, such as rigid school schedules and financial needs, also sometimes made it hard for parents to be involved in school events.

Social shame was another theme. A number of the participants talked

about being judged or misunderstood in their groups, which could happen to both parents and children. Even though it seems like more people are accepting of different family arrangements, there are still clear signs of social exclusion.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the challenges faced by single parents extend beyond financial concerns and encompass emotional, social, and institutional dimensions. Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's framework, these interconnected pressures influence family functioning and children's educational experiences through multiple ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Impact on Children's Learning and Development. Participants thought that children's ability to afford school supplies, access to activities that would help them learn, and opportunities to do fun things outside of school were all affected. Parents were often worried that a lack of resources might limit their kids' educational goals and future chances. Studies that link children's family income to their academic engagement and educational attainment (Dela Luna et al., 2023) have found similar results.

There were also problems at school, especially when family issues stressed people out. Some parents said their kids were doing worse in school, losing drive, and having trouble staying focused. However, these things did not happen to all the kids; some continued to show drive and persistence even when things got hard.

Another important theme that came up was socio-emotional issues. Some children said they felt sad, missed a parent, and sometimes isolated themselves from other kids. These feelings were especially clear during school events that focused on families or times when family comparisons were more obvious. Cruz et al. (2024) found similar things and said that kids who live with only one parent may have mental problems because of the way their family is structured and how other people see them.

At the same time, many kids kept their hopes for the future alive. People often said their kids were driven to get good jobs and improve their lives. Parents' support, close family ties, and help from distant family members often helped kids reach their goals. Often, grandparents, relatives, friends, and community networks were also there to offer emotional and practical support.

Overall, the results show that children's learning and growth are affected by a mix of economic factors, emotional experiences, family relationships, and social support networks. Even though there are problems, it seems that having helpful relationships makes people stronger and helps them keep their educational goals. This result aligns with ecological and resilience theories that emphasize the importance of family and community resources in helping people grow and develop despite problems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Walsh, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the growing body of Philippine literature on single-parent households by demonstrating that educational challenges are not solely economic but are also shaped by interconnected emotional, social, and institutional factors. While single parents continue to encounter considerable barriers, resilience emerges through family commitment, extended kinship support, and community engagement. These findings highlight the importance of integrated educational and social interventions that address both structural constraints and psychosocial well-being.

The findings suggest that the educational experiences of children from single-parent households are shaped by the dynamic interplay among family resources, emotional support systems, school responsiveness, and community engagement. While challenges remain substantial, participants' experiences demonstrate that resilience and educational aspiration can be sustained when supportive networks are in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the need for stronger, more holistic support systems to address the financial, emotional, and educational challenges faced by single-parent families. Schools can ease financial burdens by expanding assistance programs, offering discounts or fee waivers, and ensuring access to supplies, uniforms, and extracurricular activities. Flexible after-school schedules, online or hybrid learning, and virtual parent-teacher interactions can also accommodate the demanding work schedules of single parents.

Equally important is prioritizing mental health through counseling, support groups, and workshops for both parents and children. Schools should also collaborate with local organizations to provide livelihood opportunities, childcare, healthcare, and legal aid, while ensuring children have access to extracurricular activities and mentorship. By combining financial aid, emotional support, flexible learning, and community partnerships, schools can help single-parent families foster resilience, independence, and improved educational outcomes.

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