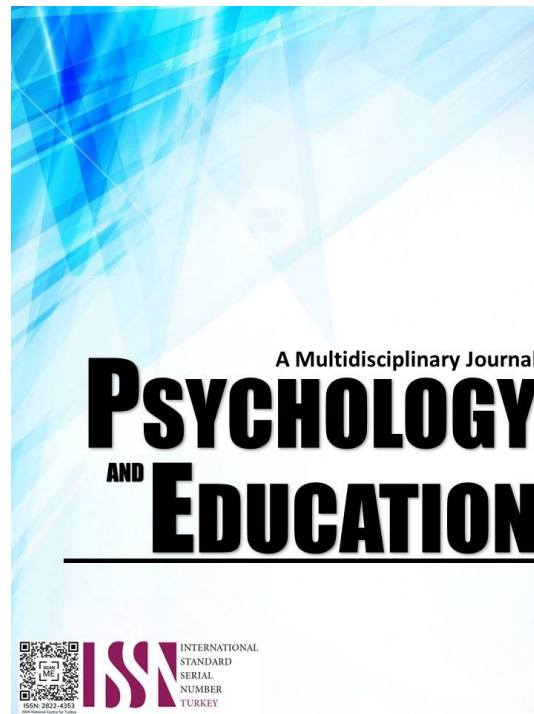


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Kinsenas, Katapusan: The Lived Experiences and Challenges Faced by Single Mothers

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Abstract

A single mother is a person who is accountable for raising their children alone because they do not have a husband or live-in partner. Single mothers claim to have no co-parenting relationships at all, comparing single parents to those who are married, cohabiting, or without children, single parents experience the worst work-life balance. A single parent may feel overwhelmed by the demands of juggling child care, a career, paying bills, and maintaining household responsibilities. Single-parent households frequently deal with several extra obligations and possible complications that other families would not. The study also emphasizes the difficulties and coping mechanisms faced by contractual single parents as well as their lived experiences. The study's findings, which were based on an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, were as follows: (1) Work-life balance can be difficult for single parents. They struggle to keep their jobs while taking care of their family because they are the only ones in charge of the children. (2) Single contractual mothers face particular difficulties due to a lack of resources for basic expenses. (3) Contractual single women lean on their kids, the good people in their lives, and their faith in God to get through problems

Keywords: *challenges, lived experiences, psychological well-being, work-life balance, single mother*

Introduction

Single parenting is described as a practice of one parent with the absence of another parent, it is usually the mother or father, caring for and raising children (Mabuza et al., 2014). However, contractual workers are typically employed for a brief project at a fixed salary. They could be paid weekly, biweekly, monthly, or only after the project is finished (Elton, 2021). Moreover, most people in today's society struggle to balance job and family obligations. Yet not everyone experiences this battle in the same way. During the Pandemic, many have also experienced job loss or financial loss. The pandemic has been especially tough for women who have families. Many solitary parents are struggling to manage their children's education while still trying to find a job. Due to being sole wage earners, most of them have fewer available funds as well as less psychological and social support. (RAPID, 2020)

Furthermore, According to Mortelmans et al. (2019) single parents have the worst work-life balance when compared to their counterparts who are married, living with a partner, or childless. For Thielemans and Mortelmans (2019) this is mainly because, even after a divorce or separation, more time must be spent at work. In a recent World Health Organization (WHO) survey, there are 15 million solitary parents in the Philippines, with more than 14 million or (95%) of

these are women, showing women seem to have a greater need for work.

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2019) states that despite being common, living with a single parent may be very stressful for both the adult and the kids. The pressures of managing child care, a job, paying the bills, and keeping up with domestic duties may make a single parent feel overburdened. Additionally, after the parents' breakup, the family's finances and resources are often substantially diminished. Families with a single parent often encounter a variety of additional demands and potential issues that other families might not experience.

What concerns this study is the lived experiences and challenges faced by single parent mothers on contractualization. According to the Women's Committee of Nagkaisa Labor Coalition (as cited in Purugganan, 2022), while contractualization has an equal impact on men and women, the effects on women are more severe. The illegal practice of recruiting fixed term employees typically for a period of 5-6 months or less, and repeatedly renewing their contracts to deny workers the benefits of regular employment, also known as "endo" (end of contract), has permeated the nation's employment system. Based on the study of Garcia et al. (2021), the results indicated their primary areas of difficulty were finding stable financial and emotional support. They find it

difficult to support themselves because they don't have spouses and proper job. Therefore, the sources for meeting the child's requirements include work and the support of the participants' families is discernible.

One more extrusive concern is that the abusive labor practices associated with it are problematic. Filipino workers, in particular, do not give tenure as much consideration as they once did. Better pay, benefits, and healthcare are what they are concerned about. Suppose employers continue to take advantage of or deny workers their entitlements to real benefits like healthcare and social security. In that case, it will lead to a sick, disengaged, and inefficient worker that, over the long term, might be fatal to enterprises. (Cruz, 2021)

In particular, during this pandemic, the study wants to determine and comprehend what is the most challenging thing that single contractual parents are encountering and enduring. This study seeks to learn more about the wants and complaints of a single contractual parent. This paper can be used as proof or information and analyze the prospects for helping single parents who work as contract employees.

This study focuses on contractual single parents' lived experiences, as well as their challenges and coping mechanisms amidst the Pandemic. Moreover, this study significantly contributes to policy-making by addressing certain needs and challenges faced by the contractual single parent which are real and seriously experienced. Presenting research findings to policy-makers, will aim to engage them in the policy-making process, drive action in adequate directions, and encourage policy-making on research to support for contractual single parents.

Research Questions

The study aims to explore the lived experiences and challenges faced by contractual single parents. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of contractual single parents?
2. What are the challenges faced by contractual single parents?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of contractual single parents?

Methodology

This study employed Heideggerian phenomenology to explore the participant's lived experiences.

Participants of the Study

This study examines the difficulties single mothers encounter and their coping strategies in the face of contractualization. That aims to explain and comprehend a single mother's predicament. The study is also conducted in Bulacan. Its goal is to choose participants between 18 to 55 who meet the criteria of being a contractual single mother. The participants in this study consisted of 12 contractual single mothers. These factors—separated, divorced, widowed—and the fact that they have contracted to their jobs—have validated their status as single contractual parents. Thus, the researchers used face-to-face interviews to interview participants.

Instrument of the Study

The study used an interview guide to gather responses in a methodical and coherent manner. The interview guide's questions were subjected to content validation to confirm their validity. The interview questions were initially some of the single contractual workers made an attempt to respond, and through the data collection process, the responses were verified in compliance with the research topic and study parameters. An academic consultant conducted the evaluation. Before the interview session with the twelve participants in this study, the instrument was reviewed and updated after it had been accepted.

Data Collection Process

To gather coherent data for the study's assessment, a systematic and structured, step-by-step methodology was used in the study. Following the selection of twelve (12) respondents who met the requirements for this study, they were immediately given a consent form asking for their permission to participate in the study as well as permission to record the entire interview discussion. Face-to-face, Google Meet and Messenger are mediums of communication used for the interview, and the interviewer and interviewee's discussion was recorded using a different device. To ensure the respondents' confidentiality and for the purpose of collecting they had experienced compassion, which has encouraged them to reply to

questions and share more honestly in their narratives.

While the interview was being audio recorded, a series of questions were asked in compliance with the interview protocol to uncover the participants' perspectives and excavate a meaningful justification for their real life experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms. The respondents were given the opportunity to express a phenomenon to the world in accordance with their beliefs, attitudes, and level of self-awareness through interviews. To identify precise and significant themes that were appropriate to the participants' experiences, the recorded interview process was turned into texts and carefully examined. The researcher was able to get information from this interview about the experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms of single contractual mothers.

Ethical Considerations

The approval of the data collection method and tool by the research professor ensures that consent is obtained and that ethical guidelines have been rigorously adhered to. Participants who were selected and qualified to participate based on the defined criteria were requested to give explicit consent via informed consent with the professor's aid.

The methodology for data collection was followed as the consent form was discussed. The participants' research objectives regarding their voluntary involvement were defined, and they were informed that they could withdraw at any time. The study's aim and objectives were also given to them. Participants were reassured that all information gathered during the study's development would be utilized only for academic and research objectives, without regard for their identities, and under code names. Confidentiality was also covered. As mandated by Republic Act 10173, participants' voluntarily provided personal information will be kept private and will not be utilized in a manner that violates the Data Privacy Act.

Data Analysis Procedure

Numerous techniques can be used to collect qualitative data. One of the best ways to prevent content inconsistencies is to record and transcribe interviews. Making sense of the data gathered from experiences and challenges of single contractual parents. Each participant's exact remarks will be included in the interview transcripts verbatim and will go through a careful review.

In this study, the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which was developed on the modified

Van Kaam technique made well-known by Moustakas, was employed. Horizontalization, breaking down experiences into their invariant parts, thematic clustering to develop core themes, comparison of different data sources to validate the invariant parts, crafting of individual textural descriptions, construction of composite structural descriptions, and synthesis of texture and structure into an expression are the seven key steps.

Results and Discussion

Based on the data collected, the following themes were identified in this study; namely, (1) Struggle is real, and (2) Unwavering care. Also, as shown in Table 1, the sub themes were identified from the data-gathering and are based on their perspectives.

Struggle is Real

Self-employment inevitably involves struggle. When single mother work to achieve their goals, nothing is ever simple. Their everlasting companions will be challenged and hardship. Some individuals like single contractual mothers are currently dealing with it. Single mothers must seek something more to keep going because they know it will be difficult for a while. Something that will continue to provide them with energy, inspiration, and motivation over time. During this dilemma, single mothers, who seem to be frequently the main patriarchal and laborers for their families, may be particularly prone to mental health and stress issues (Taylor et. al, 2022)

Child rearing and Work Conflict

Pag nag ta-trabaho ako umuwi ako pag-uwi ko kapag break time ko, bali, ang ginagawa kong tulong sa kanila, uuwi ako na may dala akong pagkain sa kanila kasi minsan sila 'di sila na kapag luto dahil gumawa sila assignment nila. Uuwi ako para sa kanila. Asikasuhin ko pa rin sila gano'n. (During my work, I go home whenever I have a break time. Sometimes, I do this to help them. I usually go home with food on my hand for them because sometimes they aren't able to cook because they are doing their assignments. I will come home for them really quick. So, I still have time to take care of them. (P8)

Mothers still handle the most of house work pertaining to children, family functioning and work, which indicates that their emotions while spending time with their children may be more important for the wellbeing

of the children than anything else and may also make them more sensitive to their employment or partnership status. In spite of the fact that parenting is typically associated with positive emotions, mothers show less happiness, more stress, and particularly more exhaustion than fathers. (Meier, et. al, 2016)

Making Sacrifice

Yes, kasi ang katulad nyan yung source of income natin hindi ganun kalaki, kaya I need to do extra work para maka survive maka provide at the same time sa family. Si nanay ang nag aalaga kay tatay dahil na stroke sya, na dating sya yung nag p provide tas yung responsibility naging akin na. (Yes, of course for example in my work my income is insufficient it is not enough, that's why I need to have and extra income and work to survive and to fulfilled our needs, because my mother taking care of my father who have stroke, before when my father was healthy hew was the provider however the responsibility is now in me.) (P2)

Single mothers typically worked alone and made less money than single fathers, many of the single parent homes were headed by women, which made their financial struggles much worse. The balance between job and family responsibilities was one effect of this financial load. (Delmonte et. al, 2014) A mother who had all major custody duties for the children and family was understood as being the parent with the biggest financial pressure. Being independent and not having enough money to support their children were described as stressful and worrying. Mothers described themselves as stuck and helpless, and created their situation being one in which they were in continuous struggle with finances; where they had to work for most everything. (Stack & Meredith, 2018)

Bearing All in One

Ang nagiging problema lang kasi minsan yung sa pinansyal nga, kaya pa ng isip mo, pero ang bumibigay talaga madalas katawan eh. Ikaw din ang kawawa, syempre kakaisip mo, "paano ko ito pagkasyahin sa mga bata. Tapos mag kakaroon pa ng mga extra pang problema. Sabay-sabay mong gagawan ng paraan para lang maayos at ma resolve problema mo. (The only problem is financial. Our mind can really handle the struggle, but too often the body really gives up.. You are also feeling pathetic to yourself, of course you will have to think, "how can I budget it with the children?" Then there will be extra problems. Together it all, you will find a way to fix and

resolve your problem.) (P9)

Mothers reported feeling so weak that they struggled to eat, mostly with stress associated at work as well as the necessity to bring in good income leading to fatigue. A major part of illnesses have all been related to fatigue, stress, as well as experiencing fall down which have been defined in aspects that primarily connected these physical illnesses to overall wellbeing. For instance, it has been proposed that the cumulative effect of stress caused by financial problems and legal responsibility can cause sleep disruption and insomnia. Parenting responsibilities and financial difficulties are to blame for the distress and exhaustion felt. These matters, such as paying bills, maintaining the home, and caring for the kids, are specific in describing the cause of their distress. (Stack & Meredith, 2018)

The Unwavering Care

Single mothers, like mothers with partners, care deeply for their children and families. Everything will be done to ensure that the needs of those who rely on him are felt, fulfilled, and established properly. Our single contractual mothers in this study have the characteristic of "Unwavering Care," which demonstrates their willingness to support and sacrifice for their families. How brave they were to face their trials, how dedicated to their work, and how willing to fight for survival daily. There is an emerging concept of unconditional love that demonstrates its potency in our lives (Marci, 2012)

Fighting Battles

According to the data and responses, children are one of the sources of a strength to fight and continue. When the interviewer asked about if they feel exhausted, most participants had the same answers as Participant 12. She described herself as the family's fighter because he provided everything his family needed.

Mapapagod katawan mo. Kailangan laban ka lang nang laban kahit na minsan gusto mong mag-pahinga, hindi ka na makakapag pahinga dahil kailangan kong kumayod para sa mga anak ko. 'Pag napapagod ako, umiiyak ako. Umiiyak ako nang umiiyak tapos kinakausap ako ang Diyos kasi kailangan 'yon eh. Pag tapos, laban ulit dahil gano'n ang buhay. Kailangan lang lumaban. (Your body will feel worn out. You simply have to struggle; even if you want to take a break, you can't because I have to support my family. When I'm tired, I cry. I cry and I cry, and then I talk to

God because that's what's needed. When it's over, fight again because that's life. Just have to fight.) (P12)

Mothers are the most unselfish people in the world because they begin to love their children before they are even born. A mother's love is the purest form of love there is, and nothing in this world can compare to it. Mothers are like angels to their offspring, providing unfailing love and support. The debate has always been difficult, and it appears that the tension between women who work is still present. They tend to fight every single day if their lives provide the needs of their children despite physical fatigue still enduring to them. Difficult to find stable financial and emotional support, because they don't have spouses and proper jobs. (Garcia et. al, 2020)

The Hard working

As shown, Participant 7 perceives that her children are the number 1 source of motivation to continue.

Ahh, yo'n, yung inspirasyon ko talaga yung mga anak ko kasi kailangan mo kumayod para makatapos sila, para hindi sila ma tulad sa akin na walang gaanong natapos, ayoko rin po na magaya sila sa akin na walang pinag aralan. (Ahh, that's it, my children are my inspiration because you have to work hard for them to finish school, so they don't end up like me who didn't finish much, I don't want them to be like me who did not graduate.) (P7)

Parenting is difficult even in the best of circumstances. The difficulties increase when there is only one parent present. Isola et al. (2022), stated that along with surviving financial distress, educating their children to be responsible citizens was the most crucial task, in their eyes, for single mothers. In addition to that in order to make up for their poor wages, single parents, especially mothers, frequently put in extra hours, which took time away from their kids and other household duties (Delmonte et. al, 2014).

Ensuring Survival

As the study proceeded, the interviewers asked the last question about what is the best thing they have learned in their life. They came across handling money (Participant 8). With her excellent dependability, she has said that when the money comes, spend it wisely.

Maging masinop sa pera. Ang pinaka malaking mali ko lang na kapag meron ako, 'di ako madamot eh, yun nga lang sa pagiging hindi ko ma damot, yung luwag

ko sa pera, 'di ko napansin na ako na ang lumulubog and yung mga naka paligid sa akin, umaangat pero ako wala. Ang kailangan talaga, ang lesson na kahit maliit na bagay lang meron ka, itabi mo dahil iisipin mo may anak ka pang bubuhayin. Naging problem ko talaga sobrang luwag sa pera. (Handle your money with care. The lesson I learned is that even if it's just a small amount of money you have, put it aside or save a little because you'll think you have a child to support. My biggest lesson is that I really had a problem with too much of money.) (P8)

Indeed, all of us cannot predict what will happen in the future, and one of the most common lessons of a single mother with their journey is to save especially money. Among single mothers, loneliness was the most common feeling and that financial issues (including battles to provide for the basic necessities of the family and children) were experienced frequently. In order to cope with their circumstances and ensure their survival, they rely heavily on their faith, the support of their family and community, and their job. As a result, they felt good about themselves and were able to raise their kids on their own with confidence and independence. (Ramos & Tus, 2020)

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion were derived:

1. Due to the experiences of struggle in work and life balance, the contractual single mothers are still unable to keep their children cared for and continue to have difficulties with their daily needs. The sacrifices of each single mother that affects their health, is not incomparable because the genuine love of a mother is endless amidst hopelessness. In addition, through the times of feeling stressed, contractual single mothers are still relying on their families when no one else would.
2. Contractual single parents are still facing the real challenge of lack of money. We discovered that the vast majority of single mothers are focused on either having no money at all or having a little of money but cannot manage to save for their children's future. Moreover, the concern and worry of completing and ending the contract is also a challenge since these single mothers will have to start to survive again by looking for another job.
3. One of the concerns of single mothers is not being able to finish or complete their tasks due to being a single parent who does not rely on any help, and has to

be in the responsibility of a mother and father.

4. Finally, even though contractual single mothers face different and numerous problems. Through the contractual single mothers' positive thinking, we have discovered that the only way for them to cope is their children, being surrounded by genuine people, and God. They believe that the only strength comes from their children's good health, genuine people, and God because they know it is only the best for them.

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