

The Weight of Worries, the Warmth of Motherhood: Single Mothers' Perception of their Socioeconomic Conditions

Edwin T. Castro, Lpt

Holy Cross of Davao College, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Single mothers are succumbed to socioeconomic conditions. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of single mothers in poor urban communities, focusing on their daily struggles, available support systems, and coping mechanism. A descriptive-qualitative research design was employed using in-depth interviews with selected participants and this study underwent thematic analysis of the data gathered. This findings revealed that single mothers in urban poor communities perceived their socioeconomic conditions as a complex balance of financial struggles, daily responsibilities, and joy and fulfillment of parenting, reflecting the intertwined realities of hardships and resilience in their everyday lives. Based on the findings, future research may use advanced statistical methods such as multiple linear regression and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) – based questionnaire to identify social support factors influencing the socioeconomic conditions of single mothers, transform qualitative subthemes into measurable variables, and develop validated tools for a clearer, evidence-based understanding of their lived realities.

Keywords: Weight of worries, warmth of motherhood, single mothers' perception, socioeconomic conditions

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Scope

Single mothers are succumbed to difficult socioeconomic conditions, characterized by poverty, limited income, and financial instability. They often struggle to meet basic needs such as foods, housing, healthcare, and education. This situation places them in a continuous cycle of economic and social hardships and vulnerability.

When I further explored, I discovered in several African countries the experiences of single mothers in urban poor communities illustrate similar problematic situations. In Kenya, female-headed households in urban areas are reported to experience greater levels of multidimensional poverty and deprivation in basic services such as housing and sanitation (Mwangi & Wambua, 2024). In South Africa, research highlighted the persistent economic vulnerability and social inequality experienced by single mothers living in disadvantaged urban communities (Raniga, 2022). Likewise, studies in Somalia indicated that women heading households alone in urban poor areas often encounter significant difficulties in accessing healthcare services and stable livelihoods (Abdi et al., 2024).

Here in my own country, the Philippines, single mothers living in urban poor communities also face numerous challenges that shape their everyday experiences. Research showed that many solo mothers experience financial insecurity, emotional strain, and social stigma while raising children independently, particularly in economically disadvantaged urban settings (Lucero-Dueñas, 2024). Despite policies that recognize the rights of solo parents, many still encounter barriers in accessing services and opportunities intended to support their well-being.

As someone who is not a product of a single mother, I can see these experiences may result in significant consequences for single mothers and their families. Persistent financial difficulties, limited support systems, and social pressures may contribute to emotional stress and reduced well-being among single mothers. Such conditions may also influence family stability and the developmental environment of children growing up in urban poor communities (Cruz et al., 2024). It was for this reason that I conducted the study.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it directly aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG 5 (Gender Equality). By exploring the economic stability and psychosocial well-being of single mothers and their children in urban poor communities, the research may provide evidence that can inform programs and policies aimed at reducing poverty, improving mental health, and promoting gender equity. This study embodies the vision and mission of the Holy Cross of Davao College (HCDC) by contributing to the creation of a more humane and Christ-centered society. By focusing on the lives of the less fortunate single mothers and their children in urban poor settings, the research echoes HCDC's commitment to Catholic education that nurtures compassion, justice, and social transformation. It reflects the school's call to serve as a vibrant community of believers and Christ-centered evangelizers who engage in truth-seeking and advocate for the dignity of every person.

Research question

In this study, I explored how single mothers living in urban poor communities faced complex experiences that affected their social and economic well-being. This study sought to explore and describe the experiences encountered by single mothers in urban poor communities, the factors that contributed to their resilience, and the ways in which they navigated daily struggles to sustain their families. Specifically, it aimed to answer this question:

What are the perceptions of single mothers in poor urban communities regarding their socio-economic conditions?

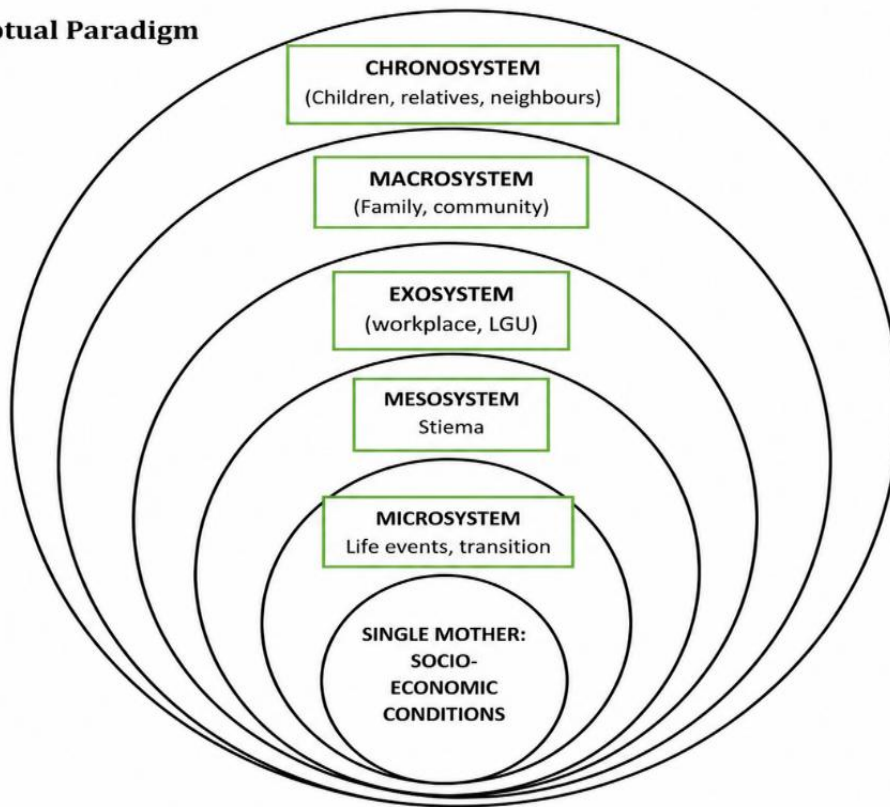
Assumptions

In this study I assumed that single mothers living in urban poor communities face interconnected social, economic, and emotional challenges that significantly affect their overall well-being. Their resilience is influenced by the dynamic interactions within various environmental systems, such as family, community, and broader societal structures. Moreover, the presence of supportive relationships and accessible resources across different ecological levels from the microsystem to the macrosystem plays a crucial role in enhancing their capacity to cope with adversity. By examining these ecological interactions, this research aims to generate valuable insights that may guide the development of more effective community programs and policies tailored to the needs of single mothers.

Theoretical Lens

I anchored this study on Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which explains how human development is shaped by the interaction of individuals with their surrounding environmental systems. The theory highlights five interconnected systems: the microsystem, which includes immediate relationships such as children, relatives, and close friends; the mesosystem, which refers to the connections between family, work, and community; the exosystem, which involves indirect influences such as local government policies or workplace conditions; the macrosystem, which encompasses cultural norms, social values, and economic conditions; and the chronosystem, which reflects changes over time, such as life transitions. This lens provides a framework for examining how these overlapping systems influence the perceptions and socio-economic struggles of single mothers in urban poor settings.

Conceptual Paradigm



METHODOLOGY

In this section, I presented the research design, research locale, sample and sampling technique, Research instrument, data gathering, data analysis and Trustworthiness of the study.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research design to explore the lived experiences of single mothers in urban poor communities. A descriptive–qualitative research design is a qualitative approach that describes phenomena or experiences as they naturally occur, focusing on participants’ perspectives and presenting findings in a clear and straightforward way (Doyle et al., 2023). I used it to explore real-life situations, especially in areas with limited prior studies, and commonly uses interviews, observations, or documents. Its advantages include providing rich, detailed data, being flexible and easy to understand, and generating practical insights for real-world use (Kim et al., 2023).

Research Locale

I conducted this study in selected barangays in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, Philippines, where the presence of female-headed households provided a relevant context for examining the economic and psychosocial experiences of single mothers. These barangays were specifically chosen because many single mothers in these areas experience significant economic hardship, making them suitable settings for exploring issues related to poverty and daily survival. Conducting research in natural community settings is important in qualitative studies because it allows the researcher to understand participants’ experiences within their real-life environments. This approach strengthens the credibility of the findings by capturing the actual social conditions that shape participants’ daily lives and perspectives (Tracy, 2023; Flick, 2023).

Sample and Sampling Technique

My study consisted of eight single mothers who have lived in urban poor communities for at least one year. Purposive sampling was used to select individuals who could provide rich and relevant insights into the

phenomenon. This technique is commonly applied in qualitative research to ensure that participants have direct experience and knowledge related to the topic (Campbell et al., 2023). Through this approach, the study gathered meaningful narratives that strengthened the depth and relevance of the findings (Ames et al., 2023).

Research Instrument

The study employed in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection, allowing participants to share their lived experiences in their own words. This approach enabled the researcher to gather rich and meaningful data that reflected the complexity of their experiences (Adams, 2023). Semi-structured interviews were also conducted using an interview guide to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate. This method helped capture both expected and emerging themes during the data collection process (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Participants were screened using an eligibility checklist and were provided with an information sheet explaining the study's purpose and procedures.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection began, I secured institutional and local approvals, including submission of research documents to the Office of the Holy Cross of Davao – Graduate School and obtaining barangay clearance. Participants were provided with an information sheet and informed consent form, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data security. A protocol for participant distress and reimbursement for expenses was also established.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on set criteria, with recruitment supported by barangay officials. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews lasting 45–90 minutes. It was conducted in private locations with consent for audio recording. The interviews were transcribed, translated, if necessary, de-identified, and securely stored, with access limited to authorized personnel.

Data Analysis

My study employed thematic analysis to interpret data gathered from in-depth interviews, a qualitative method that identifies, organizes, and interprets patterns or themes within data. This approach, valued for its flexibility, provides a rich and detailed understanding of qualitative data, as emphasized by Braun and Clare (2006).

Following their framework, the analysis was conducted in six systematic steps. First, I engaged in familiarization with the data by transcribing, reading, and re-reading the interview response to gain a deep understanding of the participants' narratives. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying significant statements and labeling meaningful segments of the data relevant to the research objectives. Third, I proceeded with searching for themes by organizing related codes into broader patterns that reflected shared meanings. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency, coherence and alignment with the entire dataset. Fifth, each theme was defined and clearly named, capturing the essence of the participant's perceptions. Finally, I produced the report by presenting the themes in a structured manner, supported by direct excerpts from participants to strengthen the analysis. Through this systematic process, I was able to code the data, group similar meanings, and develop themes captured the essence of participant's perceptions.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied strategies addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through member checking, allowing participants to validate the researcher's interpretations, and through peer debriefing to enhance analytical accuracy. I established transferability by providing a rich, details description of my study, including the participants, setting, and context, so others can determine my findings are applicable to their own situations. I maintained dependability by clearly documenting each step of my study process, creating an audit trail that shows how my study was conducted and how decisions were made, allowing others to follow and understand my methodology. Lastly, I achieved confirmability by minimizing my personal biases, practicing reflexivity and support my conclusions with direct evidence form the data, ensuring that my findings are shaped by the participants rather than my own assumptions.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), these techniques strengthen the rigor of qualitative research. Overall, these strategies ensured that the findings were credible and grounded in participants' authentic experiences.

RESULTS

In this chapter, I presented my findings from in-depth interviews with single mothers in poor urban communities, focusing on their perceptions on socio-economic conditions.

Socio Economic Condition of Mothers

1. Single mothers perceived their socio-economic condition as a daily financial struggle, but often people misunderstood this struggle as just simple. For example, she may struggle financially when her income is not enough to cover food, school expenses and unexpected needs.
2. Single mothers perceived their socio-economic condition as daily responsibilities towards their family and work in order to survive; amid this, they receive admiration and unfair assumptions. For example, preparing meals, going to work helping school activities and doing household chores
3. Single mothers perceived their socio-economic condition as moments of joy and fulfillment in parenting; where they are viewed with idealized expectations. For example, when she sees her child grow, learns new things, and feels proud of being able to guide.

The everyday realities life of single mothers in urban poor communities involves juggling multiple responsibilities, from providing for their children and managing household chores to earning a livelihood, often under stressful conditions. The experiences of single mothers in poor urban communities revealed that their everyday lives are shaped by persistent financial struggles and heavy caregiving responsibilities. One mother who is struggling financially, shared:

"Wala kay kwarta ikasupport sa imuhang mga estudyante unya maluoy pud ko. Maluoy gud ko sir kay maghilak jud na sila unya "Ma gusto jud ko mueskwela ma." Ang ilaha jung gusto nga kurso tag as ilang gusto nga kurso. Muingon ko diko kakaya ana nak kay pobre kaayo ta." ("You don't have the money to support your students, and I really feel for them. It's heartbreaking, sir, because they end up crying and saying, 'Ma, I really want to go to school.' They want to take the course they truly like. I have to tell them, 'I can't afford it because we're so poor.") – P6, Line 305-307, page 9.

This mother expressed deep emotional pain when her children aspire to pursue higher education but she lacks the resources to sustain their schooling. As she was sharing, I can almost feel the heartbreak of wanting to support your children's dreams but being unable to because of financial struggles. During the interview, while her elder daughter listened, I can see her hopeless facial aura. Another participant emphasized that financial pressure becomes even heavier when they are responsible not only for their children but also for grandchildren under their care, particularly when it comes to educational expenses. She said:

"Um, pinakalisod labi na jud ang... kay naa kuy mga inadap nga mga apo, diha gyud ta sa panginahanglan, labi na sa pagkonsumo ug sa pagpaeskwela nila. Sa expenses sa eskwelahan, kana jud ang pinakabug at." ("Um, the hardest part, especially, is... because I have grandchildren I take care of. That's really where the need is, especially when it comes to daily expenses and sending them to school. The school-related expenses are really the heaviest burden.") - P1, Lines 1-3, page 1.

Looking in her face, the pressure of trying to meet everyone's needs, especially when it comes to education and daily necessities, and it makes me deeply admire their strength and dedication. With this statement I can really remembered my Mama. Similarly, concerns about health emergencies add to their struggles, as one mother shared the difficulty of finding funds when her children become ill:

"Pinakalisod... kanang magsakit ang imong mga anak kay maglibog kag asa ka mangitag funds." ("The hardest part... is when your children get sick, and you're left wondering where to find the money. - P5, Lines 238-239, page 7.

I felt their stress of not knowing where to find the money for medical care, and it makes me deeply respect their courage and determination to keep going despite such challenges. Because of this response, I found myself reminiscing the time that I was sick and my parents do not have funds to send me to the hospital.

Alongside these financial difficulties, participants explained that managing early daily responsibilities like preparing meals, school materials, and allowances for their children before leaving for work is a problem. As one mother described:

“Lisod jud ang isa ka single mother kay mumata ka ug sayo para atimanon ang mga bata sa eskwelahan. Pagkakuan, makahanda nako nila ug baon, mulakaw nako para sa trabaho.” (“Being a single mother is really hard because you wake up early to take care of the children for school. After that, I prepare their snacks and lunch, and then I leave to go to work.”) - P3, Lines 143-144, page 5.

Similarly, another mother described the demanding routine of caring for multiple children of different ages. She shared:

“Ahm, Oo... Sa isa ka adlaw, ah, magstart ko pagmata sa buntag, mag atiman sa mga bata. Ahm, naa kuy ahm... onse katuig nga dalagita na Grade 5 na siya so, magprepare ug pagkaon, ahm, kay kanang magprepare sa mga gamit. Unya na pud kuy ahm, kaduha nga mag tulo katuig na siya so, maoto magprepare ug pagkaon, magligo sa iyaha.” (“Ah, yes... In a day, I start by waking up in the morning to take care of the children. Ah, I have an eleven-year-old daughter who’s in Grade 5, so I prepare her food and her school things. Then I also have a second child, who’s three years old, so I have to prepare food for them and bathe them.”) - P5, Line 234-237, page 7.

My heart was so happy with her deep respect for the patience, energy, and love it takes to handle so many responsibilities on your own every single day. For your information, during our talk this mother just got home from her job at the Banana Company. And I really saw how tired she was from her work. One mother highlighted the difficulty of having no partner to share responsibilities with, she said:

“Sayo jud mumata kay kaning orasa maoni akong tarbahoon kay pagkahuman ani, kadto napung isa, pagkahuman adto napud sa isa.” (“I wake up very early because this is the time I start working. After finishing this job, I go to another one, and after that, I move on to yet another job.”) -P1, Lines 6-7, page 1.

This really made emotional of single motherhood. Imagining how lonely and heavy it must feel to face challenges with no partner to share the burden, and it makes me admire their courage and strength even more.

Despite the many challenges they face, single mothers often find joy and fulfillment in parenting. A mother expressed that their happiness and sense of fulfillment come from seeing their children grow, succeed in school, and remain close to them despite family hardships. One mother shared:

“Malipay ko makahuman sila, ang mga bata sa pag eskwela gikan Grade 6. Nakahuman sila, naka graduate sila. Malipay ko magka anam anam na sila ug pattern sa ilang edukasyon.” (“I feel happy when they finish school, the children starting from Grade 6. When they complete their studies and graduate, it makes me happy to see them gradually building a pattern in their education.” -P6, Lines 309-310, page 9.

The joy and pride a single mother feel when her children succeed despite all the struggles. I can feel how deeply meaningful it is for her to see her children grow and achieve their education, and it makes me admire the love and perseverance that drive her every day. I like it so much because despite the struggles in money they still send their children to school. Another mother highlighted that even though their family is no longer complete due to the absence of the children’s father, she still finds happiness in seeing her children every day, explaining:

“Unya kanang nindot kaayo sa paminaw kanang bisag dili mi kumpleto na kay wala na ilang papa, malipayon ra gihapon ko nga makita nako akong mga anak sa matag adlaw.” (“And the best feeling is that even though we’re not complete, since their father is no longer around, I still feel happy seeing my children every day.”) - P8, Lines 601-602, page 17.

You know what? it is inspiring how she focuses on the happiness of seeing her children every day, showing that love and presence matter more than anything else. Similarly, another mother reflected that despite the hardships of raising children alone, caring for them brings happiness and hope for the future, particularly the belief that her children will one day care for her in return. She shared:

“Ahm, bisan sa kalisod, malipay lang gihapon kay kani atong gipang atiman, pag abot sa panahon labi na naa kay bation sa lawas makatabang gyud pud sila nga... Ako lang gihandum nga ug muabot na atong edad, naa puy mulingi nato nga makaatiman.” (“Ah, even in hardship, I still feel happy because of what we take care of. When the time comes, especially when you start feeling the effects on your body, they can really help. I just hope that when we reach that age, there will be someone who will take care of us too.”) - P1, Lines 5-7, page 1.

I am struck by her extraordinary strength and perseverance. Their daily lives are filled with both visible and hidden struggles balancing work, household responsibilities, and caregiving while facing financial pressures that often prevent them from fully supporting their children’s needs.

Mesosystem: Support from Social and Institutional Networks

Support from social and institutional networks plays a crucial role in the lives of single mothers, as these connections link the various parts of their immediate environments. Many single mothers received support from neighbors, boss, and church as aid in helping them cope with the challenges of single motherhood. One mother said:

“Magtrabaho sa ilaha, magpadala sila ug bugas, mga sardinas kanang makaon namo sa matag adlaw... Wala najud kuy bana!” (“They work for them, sending rice, sardines... things we can eat every day. I no longer have a husband!”) - P8, Lines 620-621, page17.

Kudos to these employers who gave help to these mothers. And I feel a deep respect for these mothers for their resilience, and it really shows how even small acts of help from neighbors or employers can make a huge difference in supporting their families. Another mother shared her gratitude for neighbors:

“Among silingan halimbawa, maskig wa gud ko nagkuan kanang bugas kanang ila kong gitabangan, “naakoy bugas diria, mais lang hinuon ni.” Ana ko naapaman kuy bugas diri ana sila nga sige lang. Tagaan ko nila. Pasalamat jud pud ko nga naay silingan ing ana.” (“For example, our neighbors—even if I don’t have anything, they help me with rice. ‘I have rice here, just corn though,’ they say. I tell them I also have rice here, but they still keep giving me. I’m really thankful to have neighbors like that.”) - P7, Lines 424-225, page 12.

This kind of employer may be blessed 10,000 folds. Like our family, we also give help to those unfortunate family if we have excess food in our house. In addition, some participants mentioned that churches also serve as important sources of assistance, particularly through the distribution of aid to community members. As one mother noted,

“Sa simbahan, may ning sa simbahan kay nakasabot naman ta. Ug naay ihatag sa simbahan tanan manjud makadawat ug mga tabang.” (“At church, it’s good because we understand each other. And when the church gives something, everyone really receives help.”) -P6, Lines 364-365, page 11.

The comfort and relief she experienced knowing that the church provides assistance, showing how a caring community can make daily challenges a little easier.

Single mothers also shared the importance of receiving government assistance to meet daily need. Several mothers shared that programs such as the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Cash for Work and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) provide financial support that helps them cover educational expenses and basic household necessities. One mother expressed her gratitude for being included in these programs, as she stated:

“Nakaapil ko ug DOLE, aw.. Cash for Work ug 4Ps. Oo, nalipay ko kay nakaeskwela ang akong mga estudyante.” (“I participated in DOLE programs, like Cash for Work and 4Ps. Yes, I was happy because my students were able to go to school.” - P2, Lines 116-117, Page 4.

In addition to financial aid, some participants also mentioned receiving health-related support from local health centers, such as medicines and vitamins, which help maintain their family's well-being. One mother shared:

"Kuan, tambal diha sa center usahay pud vitamin. Naa pud nitabang. Kanang ila kang suportahan sa imog pagtrabaho. Ila kong tabangan sa akong tarbaho ug magka kuan kuan ko. Ba le ug magkalisod ko sa akong trabaho." ("They provide medicine at the center, sometimes vitamins too. They also help support you in your work. They assist me with my work so I can manage. Even when I have difficulties in my job, they help me.") - P3, Lines 153-155, page 5.

It is reassuring to see how local health centers and workplace support can ease the daily burdens of single mothers. Access to medicine, vitamins, and assistance at work highlights the importance of practical help in sustaining both their well-being and their families' needs. One mother emphasized that government support provides relief during times of financial shortage, particularly when household budgets become insufficient. She explained:

"Sa gobyerno, dako kaayung tabang sa akoa uy kay kanang mahutdan ka, makahatag sila, makadungag rapud sa imong kuanpang adlaw adlaw nga budget." ("The government has been a big help to me because when you run out, they can provide assistance and also help add to your daily budget.") -P4, Lines 196-197, page 11.

The assistance they received from neighbors, employers, churches, and government programs does more than provide material resources; it also offers emotional reassurance and a sense of belonging within their communities. Personally, this discussion highlights how collaboration and connection within these networks can significantly reduce the pressures of single parenthood, and it underscores the importance of strengthening these support systems to help mothers and their families thrive despite financial and caregiving challenges.

Exosystem: Access to Government Support

Even when single mothers are not directly involved, social and institutional supports influence their lives. Although social and institutional programs provide important support, several participants shared that they still face challenges in accessing needed social services. Some mothers are struggling to secure essential social services from government assistance programs that are limited and selective, which prevents many eligible individuals from receiving support. One mother shared:

"Pili raman pud ang Cash-for-Work. Pero dili pako ato 4Ps, mmm." ("Cash-for-Work is selective. But I'm not yet part of 4Ps, mmm.") – P4, Lines 211, page 7.

When I heard it, it really broke my heart. This shows how frustrating it can be for single mothers when government programs are limited or selective. Even when support exists, not being able to access it highlights the gaps in social services that leave many struggling despite being eligible. Another mother expressed frustration over the lack of access to government housing and financial assistance programs. She shared:

"Ah siyempre, diba naa man daw tuy mga pabahay para sa mga single parent. mga 4Ps ingun ana na makatabang unta, unya wala. Waley! Hehehe." ("Ah, of course, right? They say there are housing programs for single parents, like 4Ps, that are supposed to help, but there's none. Nothing! Hehehe.") - P5, Lines 266-267, page 8.

It shows how gaps in social programs can add to their struggles, even when help is expected and needed. Similarly, one mother revealed that although she previously received support from the 4Ps program, she was unexpectedly removed from the list of beneficiaries without clear explanation. She stated:

"Kuan sir, kanang naakuy kanang anak nga nag eskwela karon pero ambot unsa puy hinungdannatanggal mi sa 4ps man gud. Wala sad ko kabalo unsay hinungdan sir maulaw man gud pud ko kanang magsukit sukut ba kanang basig unsay ikaistorya maong maningkamot na lang jud ko." ("Sir, I have a child who is currently in school, but I don't know why we were removed from 4Ps. I really don't know the reason, sir, and I feel too embarrassed to ask because I'm afraid of what they might say, so I just try my best.") -P8, Lines 632-634, page 18.

These experiences are evident that while social and institutional supports have the potential to ease the burdens of single motherhood, access barriers often limit their effectiveness. The stories shared by participants highlight how selective program criteria, unclear processes, and lack of information can leave mothers without the assistance they need most. For me, this discussion reinforces the importance of ensuring that social services are not only available but also accessible, transparent, and responsive to the real needs of single mothers in urban poor communities.

Macrosystem: Social Judgment and Stigma

Single mothers in poor urban communities frequently dealing with negative perceptions. A mother shared that they are sometimes underestimated or judged by others simply because they do not have a husband. One mother described how people tend to belittle her situation, stating:

“Dili jud siya malikayan sir naajuy mga tao nga muingon sa imuha nga kanang maliiton ka ba tungod kay wala kay bana... maningkamot rajud kug akoo.” (“You really can’t avoid it, sir—there are people who say that you’re stingy just because you don’t have a husband...I just try my best on my own.”) – P8, Lines 652-653, page 18.

Hearing this response triggers me to listen more while tapping her back. This shows how unavoidable social judgment can be for single mothers, even when they are working hard to provide for their families. Another participant explained that some individuals look down on single mothers and treat them differently, particularly when they perceive them as having no one to defend them. She shared:

“Naa puy uban nga kanang kuan lang kaubos ra ang tan aw gani. Unya walay maglaban sa imo. Unya tahado sila kay siyempre kung naa kay bana kay tahado man sila kontrol ilang batasan kay naa may silbi mudepensa nimo. Murag ubos ilang tan aw. Labi nag pobre ka.” (“There are also some people who look down on you. No one stands up for you. And they are disrespectful, because if you had a husband, they would behave since someone would defend you. They seem to look down on you, especially if you’re poor.”) –P7, Lines 451-452, page 13.

The same with another mother recounted experiencing direct judgment from others because of her status as a single mother, explaining that people sometimes speak negatively about her despite her efforts to provide for her family. She stated:

“Nakatilaw jud ko uy nga kanang murag ijudge gud ko nila abi kay single mother lang ta, Oo ingun ana. Pero kanaang makigbatok lang jud ta labi na sa istorya sa palibot kay himoon ka nilang dili maayo kay abi kay single mother.” (“I’ve really experienced being judged, like they look down on me just because I’m a single mother. Yes, it’s like that. But you just have to stand your ground, especially with what people say around you, because they try to make you feel bad just for being a single mother.”) –P1, Lines 67-67, page 2.

It inspires me how she chooses to focus on her responsibilities and stand strong despite the criticism around her. These narratives reveal how social stigma continues to shape the experiences of single mothers, often creating emotional challenges as they strive to support their families while confronting negative perceptions within their communities. Also single mother is facing verbal judgment from others including gossip, criticism, and negative labeling from people in their communities. Despite these experiences, many participants described developing resilience and maintaining focus on their responsibilities to themselves and their children. One mother explained her approach to dealing with gossip, stating:

“Mga hungihong pero diman ko maminaw... Ang akoo, trabaho lang ko, wa man ko nagpangayo nila.” (“There’s whispering, but I don’t listen... As for me, I just focus on my work. I don’t ask them for anything.”) –P3 Lines 167-168, page 5.

I love it when she neglected this judgment. Another mother reflected that while negative comments can sometimes be hurtful, she prioritizes her mindset and focuses on her children’s well-being, sharing:

“Usahay maabot man jud sa point na makapangutana ka nga na.. ay maapektuhan ka sa mga sakit na istorya pero.. Ah dili man, di kaayo ko. Lahi man gud ko, akong mindset gud, focus rajud ko para sa ako, sa kaayuhan sa akong mga anak ug amoa.” (“Sometimes it reaches a point where you want to ask about it, and... oh, the

hurtful stories affect you, but... not really, not much. I'm different; my mindset is to really focus on myself, on the well-being of my children, and on us.") -P5, Lines 274-275, page 9.

She was smiling while telling this response. Very optimistic. It is impressive how she prioritizes her children's well-being over gossip and negativity, showing resilience and determination in the face of judgment. Another mother noted that some people use judgmental language or stereotype single mothers, yet she acknowledges that not everyone behaves this way, saying:

"Nay uban nga himoon ratag sumsumanan, himuan kag di maayo nga "ah kanang mga byuda, mga kuan na maoni maona", dili man tanan siguro." ("There are some who treat us as gossips, painting us in a bad light, like 'widows, this and that', but not everyone is like that, I guess.") -P6, Lines 368-369, page 11.

This is very unethical. I cannot imagine how heavy it must feel to be criticized just for being a single parent, yet they still prioritize their children and keep moving forward. It makes me admire their courage and resilience even more, and it also reminds me how important it is for society to see and respect their efforts instead of judging them.

Chronosystem: Adapt and Grow Through Life Transitions

Through perseverance and determination, they gradually develop coping strategies that help them manage their responsibilities and maintain stability for their families. This process of adaptation reflects not only survival but also personal growth as they learn to face life's uncertainties with resilience and strength. Getting financial relief through children's supports provides single mothers with much-needed relief from daily economic pressures, helping to reduce stress and improve overall well-being. One mother expressed her relief, stating:

"Medyo naluag luag na akong dughan kay (bakho) ang kinamaguwangan nako naanay tarbaho. Puydi na mangayo ang iyang igsoon nga isa." ("My heart feels a little at ease because my eldest child already has a job. Now their younger sibling can also ask for help if needed.") -P2, Lines 135-137, page 4.

I almost cry while listening to this mother but I remain calm so that she will not be distracted. I really appreciate her older son who helped lighten her responsibilities. Another mother reflected on how her children's contributions now contrast with earlier years when they were younger and unable to provide support. She said:

"Kay sauna gagmay pang mga bata, pulo sila kabook, pait jud! Mmm, pait kaayo jud! Unya karon akong nabantayan dagko na sila murag lahi na kaysa kaniadto. Naa naman silay mga tarbaho. Usahay makatunol man sila sa akoo ug naa ky kawad on diri, diman ko musampit sa ilaha pero agad lang pud ko sa ilang itunol kay pamilyado naman sad, mmm, pero lahi jud kaysa kaniadto." ("Back when the children were small, there were ten of them—it was really tough! Mmm, really tough! But now I've noticed that they've grown up and are different from before. They already have jobs. Sometimes they offer me something if I'm short on money. I don't ask them, but I accept what they give because we're family. Mmm, but it's really different from before.") -P1, Lines 95-96, page 3.

Her reflection shows how children's growth and support can relieve the burdens of single mothers, transforming past struggles into shared family resilience. Another mother shared that her children's small acts of assistance have significantly reduced the weight of household responsibilities, saying:

"Sauna lahi man jud sauna kay murag naipit man jud ko sa mga kuan, pagpaningkamot, suporta sa mga bata. Naana man pud kuy mga anak nga mutabang tabang nako ginagmay maong murag nausab na akong kuan. Murag nakahaw as haw as nako sa kabug aton." ("Before, it was really different because I felt trapped with all the effort and support, I had to give to the children. Now that I have children who help me, even in small ways, it feels like things have changed. I feel like I've finally lifted some of the burden off my shoulders.") -P6, Lines 363-364, page 11.

I am really proud of her children because they did not leave their mother, instead they helped. This shows how even small acts of help from children can ease the daily burdens of single mothers, giving them a sense of relief and shared strength.

Single mothers also progressing through experience. They learned practical skills and applying experiences to improve their livelihood. One mother explained:

“Gumikan sa akong mga experience naa kuy nakat-onan labi na ng pagpangluto... Ang atong kakugi, ato na lang jung gamiton... Makalingi-lingi ka sa palibot nga, ah puydi diay ni ibaligya.” (“From my experiences, I’ve learned a lot, especially about cooking... Our hard work, we just have to make use of it... You look around and realize, ‘Ah, I could actually sell this.’”) – P1, Lines 107-109, page 2.

Her “budbud balanghoy” taste so good. She gave me two pieces while we are talking. She’s a good cook. Then, she asked her child to sell it to their neighbors. It’s inspiring to see how she turns everyday experiences into practical skills, showing that with creativity and perseverance, single mothers can find ways to provide for their families and stay resilient. Another mother shared:

“Sauna lisod kaayo jud as in pagsugod man gud lisod jud kay kanang mangapa paka ba pero pag kanang kadugayan akadiskarte naka, makaya kaya rajud.” (“Before, it was really hard, especially in the beginning because you’re just starting out. You have to struggle a lot, but as time goes on, you figure out ways to manage, and you realize you can handle it.”) -P5, Lines 295-296, page 9.

Her story reminds me how challenging beginnings can be, yet through patience and learning from experience, single mothers gradually find ways to manage and overcome hardships. Similarly, another mother emphasized the importance of perseverance, stating:

“Di gyud diay lalim ang single mom, mmm. Kuan lang, maningkamot lang gyud ko para gyud makasuporta sa mga bata.” (“Being a single mom isn’t easy, mmm. I just have to keep trying so I can really support my children.”) -P3, Lines 180-181, page 6.

It is inspiring how they faced daily challenges with resourcefulness, and determination, finding ways to support their families even when life seems overwhelmingly difficult. I cannot help but feel a deep respect for how they turn hardships into lessons, rely on their children’s help, and draw strength from their spirituality to keep moving forward. Personally, it makes me realize resilience is not just about surviving it’s about creating hope and stability for the next generation, even when circumstances are tough.

Modified Conceptual Paradigm

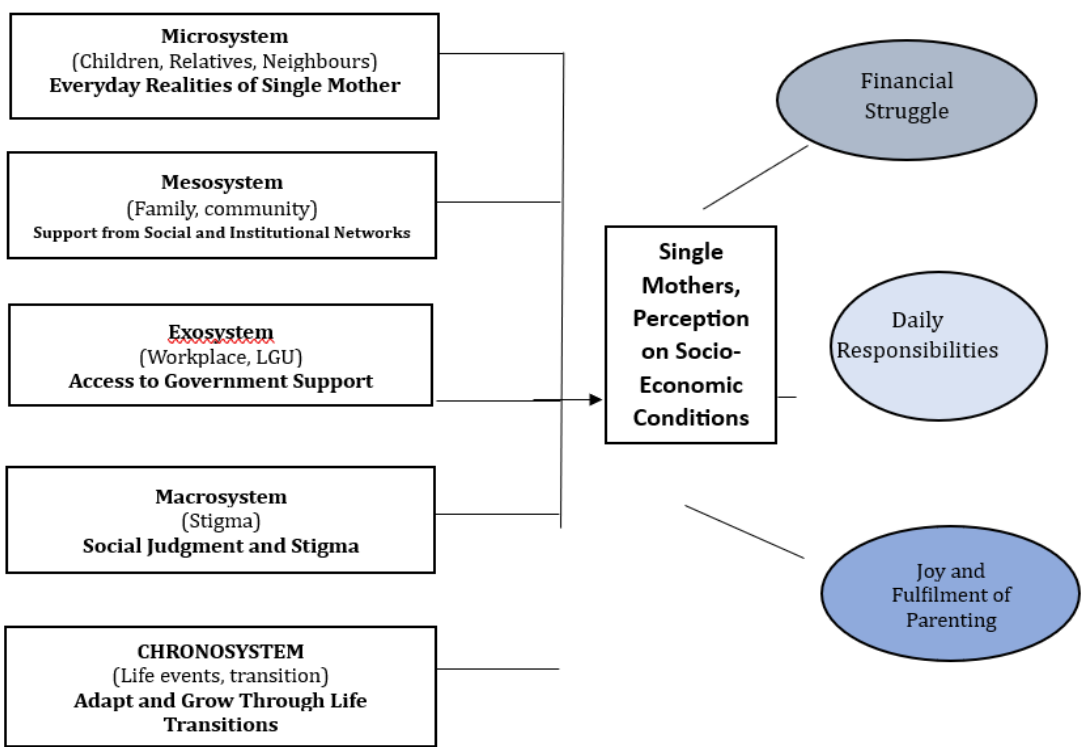


Figure 2: Modified Conceptual Paradigm

SUMMARY OF FINDING

Single mothers in urban poor communities perceived their socioeconomic conditions as a complex balance of financial struggles, daily responsibilities, and joy and fulfillment of parenting, reflecting the intertwined realities of hardships and resilience in their everyday lives.

DISCUSSION

I discussed my finding in this part of the study. Presented in this chapters are implications of the study and future direction of the study.

Everyday Financial Struggles and Social Misunderstanding of Single Mothers' Socioeconomic Conditions

In this study, I found that single mother perceived their socio-economic condition as financial struggle, but often people misunderstood this struggle as just simple. In my conversations with my study participants, I came to realized that single mother perceived their socio-economic condition as a daily financial struggle, but often people misunderstood this struggle as just simple.

My finding supports with the study of Cairney et al. (2003), who indicated that single mothers are more vulnerable to poverty, employment insecurity, and psychological distress that their struggles are far more complex than commonly assumed. In addition, my finding corroborates Stack and Meredith (2018), who stated that financial hardship among single mother is closely linked to emotional stress and reduced well-being, while limited support system further intensifies their challenges.

Balancing Survival and Responsibilities: Socioeconomic Roles and Social Judgments of Single Mothers

In this study I found that single mother perceived their socio-economic condition as daily responsibilities towards their family and work in order to survive; amid this, they receive admiration and unfair assumptions. This finding supports with the study of Kim and Kim, (2020), who stated that socioeconomic condition is closely tied to the burden of daily responsibilities rather than income alone. My finding also aligns with Millar et al. (2016), who emphasized that single mother household are more likely to experience work-family conflict and higher caregiving demands, which shapes their lived experience of socioeconomic hardships as an everyday responsibility rather than a single financial issue.

Joy, Fulfillment, and Idealization: Positive yet Pressured Socioeconomic Perceptions of Single Motherhood

In this study I came to realized that single mothers perceived their socio-economic condition as moments of joy and fulfillment in parenting; where they are viewed with idealized expectations. This finding supports with the study of Jones et.al. (2022), who described deep satisfaction in their relationship with their children, valuing the emotional bond, sense of purpose, and personal growth that come with raising alone. In addition, Golombok et.al., 2022, who stated that single mothers can experience positive psychological well-being and life satisfaction when they focus on parenting success, emotional

Implication of the Study

My study suggests that educational leaders and schools may review and strengthen school polices to better support single mothers who are studying by providing them flexible arrangements such as promissory notes and scholarships programs to ease financial difficulties. Barangays and LGU may also collaborate in providing literacy programs. Further, the gender and development organizations may include program and services to better assist single mothers in managing their financial and caregiving challenges.

Future Direction of the Study

Future research may use advanced statistical methods such as multiple linear regression and exploratory factors analysis (EFA) to identify social support factors influencing the socioeconomic conditions of single mothers.

Future research may also transform qualitative subthemes into measurable variables, and develop validated tools for a clearer, evidence-based understanding of their lived realities.

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