

The Multiple Burdens: Navigating Experiences of Solo Parent Mothers in Davao City Water District

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7647>

Received: 16 May 2023; Accepted: 25 May 2023; Published: 02 July 2023

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study was conducted with the purpose of analyzing the multiple burdens of solo-parent mothers. It revealed the various challenges they experienced and coping mechanisms that they employ to manage their day-to-day roles and responsibilities. The study participants were eight (8) solo-parent mothers employed in Davao City Water District (DCWD) who underwent an in-depth interview. Narratives taken from the interview were transcribed, translated, and coded to extract themes. Dominant themes in the manifestations of multiple burdens were absenteeism, tardiness, and extended working hours or getting a second job. As to the effects of their multiple burdens, the themes include health issues, missed opportunities, resilient and independent, sense of fulfillment. When it comes to their coping mechanisms, the themes include time management, a strong support system, strong faith, and stress management. The results contribute to increasing the understanding of the perspectives and challenges experienced by solo-parent mother, it also provides insight on how workplace policies can be more responsive.

Keywords: Multiple burdens; Solo Parents; Coping Mechanism; Manifestation of Multiple Burdens; Navigating experiences, Davao City Water District

INTRODUCTION

The plight for women's liberation from their traditional domestic roles is gradually progressing. Through the years, their participation in the formal economy increased and along with it rose the issue of the multiple burdens, especially for solo-parent mothers. It manifests in various forms and affects them in different ways. These women juggle multiple roles and employ coping mechanisms to manage them on a daily basis.

This study is relevant as it would widen the perspective on the multiple burdens of solo-parent mothers, leading to a further understanding of the challenges they face, how they cope, and what more could be done to ensure their well-being. Women's work in both productive or economic, reproductive or unpaid domestic labor and voluntary community work is identified as the triple roles of women [1]. Responsibilities involving children are still a prevalent struggle for women globally [2], this happens even to mothers with permanent jobs or those struggling to maintain several jobs just to ensure their bills and expenses are covered [3]. Women, throughout their lifetime, are engaged in both vigorous work for employment and nurturing responsibilities, this often results in exiting the workforce.

Nowadays, women raising their children single-handedly is slowly becoming a norm, they are caregivers and the same time breadwinners of their children. Commonly, five (5) families in at least forty-five (45) countries is a solo-parent household [4]. Currently, the estimated number of solo parents in the Philippines is 14 to 15 million, of which 95% are women [5]. Mothers have to pay considerable attention to the household, family members, and work, and it is deeply affecting their mental and psychological health [6]. They face challenges and struggles in integrating their work commitments with their dedication to family. In the absence of a husband, their responsibilities and burdens are doubled [7]. Furthermore, the multiple

burdens of women manifest in different forms such as adverse health issues, according to ‘the role strain theory’ the combining of various roles, such as in a solo-parent mother’s role as a parent and an employee increases work strain and leads to sickness [8]. General stress is also found to be higher in solo parents [9]. Responsibilities along with parenting issues cause psychological distress and exhaustion to solo parents. In addition, as much as they are extremely self-reliant and excellent time managers, they often feel loneliness, grief, hurt, guilt, sadness, and depression [10].

This is a phenomenological study of the personal experiences of solo-parent mothers working in Davao City Water District (DCWD), particularly on the multiple burdens they are facing and their coping mechanisms, results will contribute to the existing studies on women living through these circumstances.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to collect insights on the lived experiences of solo-parent mothers employed in Davao City Water District (DCWD), Davao City. It aims to navigate the respondents’ perceptions and experiences to learn about multiple burdens they carry, its various manifestations, and their coping mechanisms. The analysis will provide in-depth understanding for those that are interested in the event of a particular time and situation [11]. However, it is to be noted that the experiences of solo parent mothers from a different sector or those with different socio-demographic profile may not fully coincide with the results of this study.

The study employed a semi-structured interview method, to understand the participants’ discernment of a phenomenon [12]. In exploring imperative topics freely an interview guide was prepared, this is to ensure a semi-structured questioning but free free-flowing interaction as well. A total of eight (8) solo-parent mothers employed in Davao City Water District were identified as research participants following the recommendation the author [13] that a minimum sample size of between five (5) and twenty-five (25) is required in a semi- structured/in-depth interview. Purposive sampling was utilized as participants were deliberately chosen to explain in their own perspective a particular concept, idea, theme or phenomenon. Selection was based on the criteria related to the research, unmarried women who were left by their spouse/partner due to several reasons such as demise, neglect or separation who have a child under their care [14]. Guide questions were sent to them in advance and, all of the participants consented to the conduct of interview after communicating with them the purpose and scope of the study. For privacy purposes, names and identities of the participants were omitted. In analyzing the data gathered, a thematic analysis utilizing Lichtman’s (2013) three (3) Cs: coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts were employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of participants

Participant Code	Age	Highest Educational Attainment	Monthly Income	Number of children	Number of years being a solo parent
Participant 1	36	College Degree	Between ₱9,520 to ₱21,194	1	11
Participant 2	31	With Masters Degree	Between ₱9,520 to ₱21,194	1	11
Participant 3	40	With Masters Degree	Between ₱43,828 to ₱76,669	1	9
Participant 4	42	College Degree	Between ₱9,520 to ₱21,194	2	6
Participant 5	44	College Degree	Between ₱21,194 to ₱43,828	1	9
Participant 6	39	College Degree	Between ₱21,194 to ₱43,828	1	9

Participant 7	43	With Masters Degree	Between ₱43,828 to ₱76,669	1	18
Participant 8	44	College Degree	Between ₱21,194 to ₱43,828	1	16

Socio-demographic profile of participants

The socio-demographic profile of the participants namely their age, highest educational attainment, monthly income, number of children, and number of years of being a solo parent, were presented below. The youngest participant was 31 years old, while the oldest was 44 years old. Majority of them were college graduate, with income ranging from ₱9,520 to ₱21,194, and between ₱21,194 to ₱43,828. Majority of them had only one (1) child. The lowest number of years being a solo-parents was six (6) years, and the longest being sixteen (16) years.

Themes

Based on the participants' narratives several themes were identified relevant to the characteristics of their experiences and perceptions as solo-parent mothers.

Manifestations of Multiple Burdens.

The research resulted into two (2) major themes representing the manifestations of multiple burdens they encounter: absenteeism and tardiness; extended working hours or getting a second job. As solo parent mothers, the respondents have been playing multiple roles. First, the reproductive roles or the caregiving responsibilities, they take care of their child and ensure household matters are attended to. Next, the productive roles, most of them are sole providers of their children, they are involved in the labor force to ensure financial stability for them. Lastly, the community roles, they are the ones that attends to community related activities as they do not have a spouse or partner that will serve as an alternate. These multiple burdens manifest in solo parents in various forms.

Absenteeism and tardiness

Being in the workforce requires presence at work and punctuality. Employees in Davao City Water District are required to render eight (8) hours at work on a daily basis and with regular working days from Monday to Fridays. Failure to show up at work on the prescribed time and rendering time less than the required time of work on daily basis are called absenteeism and tardiness.

Participant 5

Yes, most of the time you're really going to be absent from work, especially when they're sick, when they need something at school, because there's no one else to go there. You really have to go during their activities.

For example, her first communion, I really have to file for leave for that, I really need to prioritize it because she's my only child and we do not know what time holds for us.

Participant 7

Yes, it has a big impact, because we prioritize our kids, right? One time, my manager really wanted me to become one of the model employees because of my work achievements, but I got disqualified because of my lates, because I get late. It has an impact to me because I need to file for leave because of school activities, I've exhausted my allowable leave.

Participant 8

There is really a need to file for leave for the kids. Our senior citizen officemates or grandmothers also file for leaves because no one's going to watch over the children.

One of the major causes of unplanned absences at work is family matters or balancing work and family roles [17]. The participants have expressed that when they became solo parents they somehow incurred absences and had recorded tardiness because of the absence of a partner or immediate family member to take on their parental roles [16][17]. The author [18] also found that incurring absences is one of the results of being a solo parent. This usually occurs when their child is sick or whenever there are activities and milestones on their children's development that they wished to be a part with. Without a spouse or partner, solo-parent mothers are forced to file for leave or render less time at work because there is no one to attend to their children's needs aside from them. Subsequently, these absences and tardiness sometimes become hindrances for women to be acknowledged for their good working performance, especially when one of the indicated criteria to qualify includes the most basic factor, punctuality.

Moreover, it is the grandmothers who felt the need to make more time for their grandchildren even if they are working [19]. The nurturing roles of a mother does not end at a certain age, it is continuously practiced by a lot of women even in old age. There are instances where the grandmother takes time off from work to attend to the child's needs.

Extended working hours or getting a second job

While some parents render less time at work due to circumstances that need their presence, some solo-parent mothers extend their working hour by rendering overtime at work, working on weekends and engaging in another job.

Participant 4

Yes, there are lots of experiences and struggles in being a single mother. First, there is this financial struggle. Although I get assistance from the father of my child in relation to her school fees, there are miscellaneous needs that a child needs that I cater alone. It was hard to ask for child support, I keep chasing him (the father). I really told them what the children need, for their studies, and God forbid if they get sick. I was a Job Order employee during that time so I only earn so little, even now, I still have a small salary grade. That's why I seeked for a lawyer, and went to their regional office. That's why he was forced to provide for the children, even just for the tuition fees.

Participant 7

I render overtime because aside from the fact that I have a lot of workloads, I also need extra income because I am the main provider. Although I have my family who assists like for my child's uniform, except for the tuition, my pride won't let me, I want to be able to say "I sent my child to school."

Participant 3

I work sidelines to earn more money, it's one of the reasons, but my ultimate goal is to learn. I am the type of person that does not see things like you stop learning because you're already in this state.

One of the identified major sources of stress for solo mothers is financial problem [20]. Hence, they tend to spend more time at work to earn more since their children only rely upon them for financial support. As sole

providers they feel the constant need to hustle, even then, it is hardly enough. To ensure adequate provision for their child's basic needs, some take on several jobs to earn a higher income. Accordingly, families headed by solo parents have higher probability of belonging to low-economic homes [21], and they simultaneously struggle with the dual responsibilities of childrearing and earning a livelihood [22]. They strive to provide for their children, especially those who belong to the minimum wage earners group. One of the respondents even shared that she had to resort to legal processes just to ensure financial support for her children as she is not financially capable of providing for them alone. This is relevant with the author [15] statement that one of the aspects that change in a solo mother's life is economic difficulties. There is a notion that as primary income earners, they must do their best to make ends meet by rendering more hours at working. This usually leads to difficulty in combining family, work, and leisure [23]. They worry that they do not have enough financial resources to cover their and their children's expenses [24]. This proves to be a reality to most solo-parent mothers who does not have anyone to depend on in raising their children. They juggle with their child rearing and nurturing roles while at the same time ensuring their children's needs are adequately covered.

Effects of Multiple Burdens

Multiple burdens carried by solo parents affect the different aspects of their lives. The task and responsibilities they do to accomplish both their domestic and career life sometimes affect them adversely. These usually affect them in terms of health issues, and missing opportunities. They tend to have a higher tendency of experiencing health issues than those with spouses given their hectic schedules and activities coping up with their family and work life. It is not just their physical health that is compromised at times but also their mental health. On the other hand, being a solo-parent mother also made them resilient, independent, and it provided them with a sense of fulfillment. They share the common feeling of being able to accept changes whether it may be favorable or not to their current circumstances, choosing the right attitude and keeping their perspective positive. They do not depend in other people for survival as they have learned to provide for themselves and their children.

Health issues

Accordingly, solo-parent mothers have higher likelihood of being affected by chronic stress and depression incidents than married mothers [25]. Their psychological and emotional well-being is also affected by the multiple responsibilities they play, they face greater psychological and physical strain since they manage both without the help of a co-parent [26]. They encounter special stress arising from the increasing demands of single-handedly upbringing a child, their economic situation and the little social support they are getting [27]. With everything going on in their daily lives they are reported to be more prone to being unhealthy or having ill health conditions. This case is not limited to their physical attributes but as well as their psychological state.

Participant 1

I am the primary caregiver of Ethan, because his dad is not here, so I do everything, physically, maybe all the taking care that ends with "ly"; physically, spiritually, emotionally because I am the ones who's here, where always together. In other words, it is my role as a mother to always be by his side, it is my obligation to take care of him. It's like all the roles a parents should do, I do that, although we do not have any financial issue because his dad provides for it. It's like I am the "Ina-tay"(mother-father), especially now, that it's like I got triple responsibilities because I am studying, he'd really ask when I would not be busy. That's why I really try to make him understand that I just need a little more understanding. They would really seek for activities that would tire them physically since he's a very active kid. It's really exhausting, especially on my part that I do the laundry, then I have to cook. Physically, there were times that I would ask my son to give me time to sleep.

Participant 8

I got burned out from the work, where I was assigned before, we were so busy, stress with the people around, we have a lot of feasibility study. We always go out to visit other agencies, then when I get back at the office there's piles of documents on my table. I was really toxic with myself and with other people, I'm not verbally expressive, I just don't speak at all and my face looks like it's been squeezed by seven (7) demons and it really affects the working environment. It resulted to having hair loss, headaches, I go home agitated. Those were the manifestations of my burnout.

Participant 6

There is this emotional and mental stress, sometimes depression, that a single mother experiences. There will always be that nagging thought of "how come I am in this situation (a single mother) right now? What did I do wrong to go through this state of life?"

Participant 4

Before, I was really lonely because I am alone in everything, I really got sick. I got some sort of skin allergy that takes a long time to heal, I think it's because of the stress. The doctor said, one reason could be stress, that's why now, I just work then go home, I enjoy being alone, or with the kids, I don't think of anything else.

Being the primary caregiver, while earning a living at the same time proves to be a challenging feat. A participant who is currently earning a master's degree expressed how she's juggling her roles with the addition of her study requirements. There are even times when her child would deliberately ask her when she'll be available for him due to her hectic schedule. She stated how exhausting it could get, but does not have a choice but to do her maternal duties and academic requirements after her daily work because she sees it as her job alone. In the absence of husband or support system a solo parent mother faces a lot of challenges that may become detrimental to her health. They even resort to questioning why they were subjected to such challenges and what have they done to deserve them. They question the reasons behind the circumstances they were dealt with, the daily struggle that they have to get through.

In a book [28] entitled the triple bind of single-parent families empirical evidence demonstrates that while the majority of single parents are doing well in many respects, it should still be promptly acknowledged that a lot of them still face risks and challenges of impaired wellbeing. They experience loneliness and stress and this leads to stress-induced health issues as stress may alter the immune system [29]. One participant stated that she had stress rashes, and another said she experienced headaches and falling hair. It is also not limited to physical health, but mental health as well, at some point they become burnout and express they become toxic to themselves and the people around them. The roles and responsibilities of parents intensify when you're a solo parent [30].

In addition to their own wellbeing, they also worry about their children who are growing up without the presence of a father. Participants expressed the turmoil they went through trying to understand and process the emotions their children are experiencing.

Participant 7

Other than the role of a mother, the very struggle is how to tell the child the entire truth, how would you make him understand. We were already in rocky relationship before the it (the separation) happened, we were in an LDR, we see each other once in two (2) weeks. Once, he took the child with him for bonding, the child saw the other woman and asked who she is.

Participant 4

I feel bad for the children, because when they hear a motorcycle outside, they would go to window. They are really looking forward for their father to get home.

Participant 3

At some point I admit that I envy families that has a mother, father, but I do not mind it that much because this already happened. I cannot always dwell on what already happened, we really need to move forward. On the child's side, I'm not sure if he's already used to it or he already accepted set-up, because I always tell him that you can do this on your own, there will really be events that I would not be around, I told him that he should mature on that part.

During a separation their children also gets affected by the circumstances. In the case where the separation happened even before the child is born, the mothers struggle to explain to their children why they were born in a not traditional family structure. Children tend to look for their father and ask why that person was not there for them. On the other hand, a separation that happened when children are already able to remember their father they would instinctually look forward to seeing him at home. On both events, it is the mother's role to provide emotional support to their children and help them understand the absence of their father and what led to their current situation. They explained that it was challenging to explain to their children the status of their marital relationship. This affects their mental health in a way they feel sadness, hurt, loneliness, and guilt [10] not just for themselves, but also for their child or children.

Further, there are also instances where they feel envy towards people that have a traditional structure, a biological mother, father, and children. Although they do not dwell much on it as they already accepted the circumstances they are in, but they also think what their child feels about it. It is also to be noted that even at present discrimination still exist towards solo-parent mothers.

There are and there will always be people who will judge you because of your status, regardless of your profession. I once had an interview with a big construction/developer firm, wherein the Project Manager who interviewed me did not accept me because I am an unmarried single mother. Yet, it was a blessing in disguise because I got accepted in another prestigious construction/developer firm who cares more of the knowledge I can offer and impart to the company."

Participant 3

You would really here things like "oh, she got pregnant!", why did my parents let me be like this, then when I gave birth, during the postpartum period, there were instances where I would cry for reasons I don't know. It felt like I was in a stage where, I don't know, what decisions to make.

Despite the rising number of solo-parent mothers who are successful in their respective fields, they are still being discriminated. They are placed in vulnerable situations where they experience stress, discrimination, lack of social support and insecurity [31]. They experience prejudicial treatment from the society that affects not just their emotions but as well as employment. Although some employees are very accepting of applicants from different backgrounds, there are still some that treat having a child outside wedlock as taboo or unacceptable.

Missed opportunities

Due to the weight of nurturing and raising a child alone, there are opportunities they missed, as they put their children's welfare as their priority. There were times when they are presented with an ideal offer, yet they have to decline as it may be less beneficial to their children.

Participant 1

When he was younger, a lot of my colleague enrolled in masters programs, but I could not do so because if I do I would not be able to work on Saturdays, and he is my priority. My boss that time asked me why I did not enroll, she says it was such a waste. I told her that I cannot enroll yet, and she made me commit that I would have myself enrolled soon, and so I did.

Participant 3

Like when I applied for a job at the DA, I take into consideration the office's option from Caleb's school, if I got employed there and he's still in elementary. My goal at that time was to be able to accompany him to school, and my brother or mother would just fetch him from school when class ends. I refused the DA's offer at that time, although it offers a quite big salary, I chose to work here even with the minimum salary, just so I could accompany him to school every day.

These mothers' reasoning can be linked to the social role theory [32] where career-minded mothers experience tension that results from the competing social role of being a mother and a career individual. They are faced with double responsibility which is supposed to be divided by two parents. Hence, they experience work-family conflict where role pressures from their work and family domains are analogously incompatible [33]. Along these parents' lives are opportunities and offers that are favorable if they do not have children or if they have someone reliable to care for their children. A job offer with a good salary and pursuing higher education are things that are very ideal for an individual who seeks personal development. However, solo-parent mothers may be restricted to do so as they have their children's welfare as their priority and not themselves.

Resilient and independent

Nevertheless, even with the numerous roles these mothers play, they still perceive good things in the circumstance they are in. Some of them do not see their roles as burdens since they consider it innate for a mother to nurture their children. They have adapted well in their situation and are able to be self-sufficient.

Participant 7

What's unique to solo parent moms is you have no other choice but to be strong because no one's going to do things for you. About fixing stuffs at home, if you have money it would be done and you do not have to do it on your own. That's why quitting my job and being a full-time mom is never an option because who's going to pay for the expenses, especially when it was just me, my partner has left me with a lot of debts to pay.

Participant 2

Parents have the same instincts, whether you're a solo parent or not. On a positive note, I like being a solo parent because I can decide about things alone.

They put things in positive perspective and make the best of the situation they were dealt with. The resiliency of these mothers goes beyond merely coping with their current situations, it rather evolved into creating new outcomes or new behaviors that involve going through constant adaptation [34]. Their minds are conditioned in a way that they only have themselves to rely on, and this gives them the motivation and drive to strive harder compared to mothers with a spouse. They even consider the absence of a husband as a positive thing because it provides them with the autonomy to do decisions for them and their children.

Sense of fulfillment

Being a solo-parent mother also brings immense happiness and satisfaction. These mothers know they are doing something very important and they are maximizing their abilities and capacities to play all the roles handed to them.

Participant 3

It's fulfilling to be a mother, but there's also fulfillment in terms of career development and personal development. I also get a feeling of fulfillment in what I do, I can be a mother and at the same time a career mom.

Participant 1

There's a sense of pride in it, you're just one person but you were able to take the role of a mother, father, you were able to do all those roles, as a friend to your child, as a playmate. Especially since he's a boy, it's not very easy because he's so active, good thing I'm also an active mommy, although there are also certain activities that I would really tell him that "I do not know how to do that son." But I try to learn it, then we'll agree to only do this once. It's fulfilling, especially when you see that he's satisfied with what you did for him. It's like you're really proud of it, you feel like a superhero.

Participant 8

What I am very proud is that my son never let me experience troubles like those other teenagers made their parents go through. He's not a meek child, if we have disagreements we're able to take it out and fix it, we discuss, we can talk about everything without being awkward.

Participant 7

Right now, it's my son that I share and discuss my decisions with. I also explain to him things like why I get home late, like that.

Amidst the challenges solo parents are facing they also feel a certain level of pride and fulfillment in performing their roles at work and in the family [7]. They also feel more satisfied managing their dual roles [35]. They expressed that they feel a sense of fulfillment whenever they think about the things they went through and what they have become. They may have experienced times where they are at their lowest but they were able to rise up stronger and be the best version of themselves. According to them, raising their children as good and responsible people, and seeing them achieve their dreams is the most rewarding thing for them as mothers. Also, another outcome of being a solo-parent mother is that they claimed to have a closer relationship with their child. They become each other's confidante, where they can talk about anything matters pertaining to their personal and family relationship, and they ensure that decisions are discussed with their children also.

Coping Mechanisms

Given the high level of stress solo-parent mothers are experiencing, they have developed coping mechanisms for themselves so they can still function properly and maintain good health. They adopt methods of adjustments whether consciously or unconsciously to reduce that anxiety and tension in their circumstances. The coping mechanisms employed by the participants of this study were time management, strong support system, strong faith, and stress management.

Time management

Time management has been identified by the respondents as a coping mechanism where they plan, organize and divide their time between their various activities. They set reasonable time limits for specific activities and do prioritization to avoid being overwhelmed by their work and being stressed out.

Participant 2

Time management always plays a significant role. I am even currently doing my thesis writing for the completion of my master's degree in Business Administration.

Participant 3

I think what to do first, what are the priorities, deadlines, that's what I practice now.

Participant 6

I'm good at multi-tasking and with proper time management, all can be manageable. Of course, it is also an advantage to have a child who is independent and understands your situation, and is self-sustaining.

One of the identified solutions for single mothers to function effectively and allow balance in their day-to-day activities is to extricate caring from working [36]. They allocate time specifically for family and for work-related activities. At work, they prioritize what are the most urgent and important tasks to be done, and set realistic schedules when to accomplish it. It is efficient as it allows them to do their work on time and at the same time allot time for personal growth. It was also notable that they are raising children who are independent and does not rely to them for all their needs, this is a way is unloading them of the burdens they carry.

Strong support system

Having a network of individuals that can provide solo-parent mothers with much-needed emotional and practical support is one of the things that helped them cope in the absence of a partner or spouse. Some of them may be family members, relatives, and friends that offers encouragements, money, or extra arms in raising their children.

Participant 1

I also have a support system, I have my family, if I need their assistance on something physically, they are there. When I need assistance I ask my cousins if they could look after and accompany my son and father, especially if I have overnight activities. So it's really important to have a strong support system.

Participant 3

As of now, I see myself as a provider, So whoever is left at home should tend to the house. When I get home, I just take a bath and eat, that's their role in the house, but during Saturdays I am the one who does the laundry sometimes.

One of the things that cause solo-parents mothers' stress is the reality that they do not have the luxury of spending time with their children even if they wanted to [37]. With the circumstance they are in, they need to work, hence, having a strong support system is beneficial to them. Most of the participants primarily get support from their parents and siblings, they often ask these people to watch over their children during the times they cannot due to the nature of their work. The authors [24] [31] found that having emotional and

social support from family and friends, participation in creative activities, having faith and being spiritual, and exercising are some of the coping methods of single mothers. Help in child-rearing duties are often extended by family members as a social support to solo-parent mothers [38]. Culturally, Filipinos are close-knit families, it is the parents of single mothers who often embrace their situation and accept the child after an initial stage of shock. Most of the time it is the solo mother's own mother who acts as the secondary caregiver of the child or other relatives. This is true with most of the respondents, according to them, when they have to be away or late at work they ask their parents, siblings or cousins to look after their children. Some even have family members who assist them financially and covers certain expenses continuously.

Strong faith

Having a firm belief and trust that there is a powerful being behind all the things happening to one's life also helps these mothers cope. Their belief that some things happen for a reason and for the greater good aids in their continuous hustle.

Participant 8

I am a rational person, I have initial reactions but I try to find reasons why they happened, like what positive thing resulted from it. I also learned to let go of things that I cannot control, because before when I want something done, it should be according to how I expected it and it should be finished immediately.

Participant 7

When we broke up I kept reading inspirational books and listening to inspirational content. I believe God would not give us challenges that we cannot overcome, so that's okay, there's a burden, but it's just manageable. I cry, maybe that's why I feel my son matured early. Whenever I feel burnout, we pray. In fairness, God gives us challenges, but nothing we cannot manage.

They believe that God will not give them challenges that they cannot overcome. They also came into terms that their current situation is a consequence of their own action, hence, they need to deal with it. The idea of religion and God do not solve their problems but provided them with a sense of security and hope that a Greater being caring for them and everything is happening for a greater purpose and for better outcome. These mothers are manifesting emotion-focused coping through accepting responsibility, taking conscious efforts to change their emotional response to circumstances, and turning to religion for comfort and sense of security. Emotional-focused coping also utilizes spirituality as a source of strength and care for one's self such as treating themselves to something or engaging in activities and events that promote de-stressing and good health [38]. Some of them practice staying positive and focusing on providing for the family, faith in God also give them strength to go through all the challenges they face, family and friends' moral support and encouragement are also vital for their wellbeing [22]. With this in mind, they are positive that even though being a solo-parent mother is challenging, they will believe that they can counter all obstacles with the help of God.

Stress Management

Employing various strategies that helps them deal with stress and challenges better is also an effective coping mechanism. They engage in various activities alone, with their children or friends to manage the adversities in their life. Their methods of managing stress comes in different forms.

Participant 1

I am used to working under pressure since I've experienced being a secretary of a boss that is so particular with the work, in other words, the level of stress was high but I was able to manage it. I do not dwell much

on the emotions and stressors that are not directed toward me, I only focus on what needs to be done. I do stress management, I choose on which matters to react to, I evaluate whether I need to pay attention to some matters or not.

Participant 1

I do climbing, running, and dancing, those are my stress reliever, I have to be active.

Participant 5

I play volleyball, and play on my cellphone, I always bring her to PTA interschool leagues during weekends before, if she wants me to cook something, I cook it.

Participant 7

Food, we eat outside, when he was young we really have our UBE (Ultimate Bonding Experience), it could be as simple as going to People's Park, play in the arcade, going to church. We go home to his grandparents in GenSan every weekend. We have spontaneous travels.

Research shows that parental stress is higher in solo parent mothers compared to married ones [39]. Generally, parental roles are challenging to carry out for single mothers due to their assumption of all role and responsibilities relevant to their child which entails not only provision of basic needs, but as well as instilling discipline and nurturing daily. Moreover, the authors [40] cited that planning and taking steps to change the source of stress in one way of doing problem-focused coping. The authors [40] stated in their Stress and Coping Theory that there are two (2) categories of coping strategies; problem-focused coping the deals with addressing the main source of distress; and emotion-focused coping where emotions are delimited through altering the way they would react to the situation or how they would relate meaning to a situation. On the other hand, some cope with their work-family role conflict through time management, prayer and meditation, open communication, and engaging in productive activities such as physical exercises and gardening [7].

In line with these, some of them do recreational activities such as engaging in sport, dancing, and mountain climbing, while others prefer to just relax while watching movies or chilling in places with good ambiance. They also take time to ponder if the matter at hand is worth stressing out or they could just change their focus and take it from a different perspective. Taking a break and a breather is also found to be beneficial whether alone or with their children. Like most parents they find pleasure in spending time with their children, and make sure that no matter how hectic their life gets they still manage to spend time with the person that matter the most for them, their children.

Furthermore, they mentioned that the government's implementation of the RA 11861 which amended RA 8972 or the Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000, a law in the Philippines that aims the promotion of Filipino solo parent rights and ensuring suitable social protection programs for them from the government has helped them.

Participant 7

It's a big help since we have an option if we want to avail of the money value for our leaves. When I availed of the solo parent ID, I was able to save since I now have solo parent leaves, so my other leaves would not be used anymore.

Participant 1

It really helps when you're already utilized your MC-6 leaves, forced leave and other leaves, it really helps. Especially now that they have a lot of activities.

Accordingly, the implementation of this law had reduced the multiple burdens they are carrying as it allows them to have more time to attend to the needs of their children. They are able to file for leave of absence without the needs to use the other leave privileges. With the added leave credits they can attend to matters pertaining to their children without so much worry that their leave benefits will be exhausted. All these, once again proves that solo mothers easily cope in stressful circumstances and respond better and faster. They have a drive for a lifelong progress and improvement to ascend to support their children's growth.

CONCLUSION

The narratives of the participants revealed many notable insights regarding the daily experiences of solo-parent mothers who are working in DCWD. It affirms that they carry multiple burdens, especially in the absence of a partner or spouse to share the roles and responsibilities with. These multiple burdens are manifested in two (3) major forms which are, absenteeism and tardiness; and extended working hours or having a second job; and experiencing. It shows that the complex roles and responsibilities of solo-parent mothers can affect employees' time spent at work, it may lessen or increase due to parental roles and responsibilities that they need to attend to. These solo-parent mothers vary in priorities, some focus on being present-parents, hence acquiring absences and being late at work to ensure they are able to attend to their children's day-to-day needs such as school-related necessities and attend school-related activities. On the other hand, some mothers prioritize earning more to ensure their finances are covered. Although their priorities and means may differ, it all boils down to one purpose, to ensure their children's welfare.

Furthermore, the multiple burdens these mothers carry have a two-edged effect. The duties they do in line with their domestic and career life sometimes affect them adversely in terms of physical health, mental health, and missed opportunities. They experience health issues because of the high demand of responsibilities of being a solo parent, the amount of work they do in the workplace combined with their roles at home overwhelms them at some point and leads to stressors and sickness. The absence of a spouse to supposedly share parental roles with takes a toll on their health, they experience both physical and mental exhaustion. They consider themselves as the primary caregiver of their children therefore they feel the need to fill in all the needs of their children, which often leads to stress and burnout. Also, some of these mothers have missed career opportunities as they tend to prioritize what would benefit their children most. When choosing for a job or deciding which should come first, it's always their children.

On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that even with the amount of pressure and burdens the participants' experience given their circumstances, they share a common feeling of resiliency and independence and a sense of fulfillment. The idea that they are in their situation as a result of their previous actions motivated them that they should embrace it and become stronger because of it. Not having someone else, such as a partner or spouse to rely on when it comes to their needs also contributes to this. In addition, the fact that they are striving on a day-to-day basis to provide for their children gave them a sense of fulfillment, as mothers who provide caregiving, as career individuals who are climbing the corporate ladder, and as a person pursuing personal growth. These mothers take pride in various endeavors they undertake, may it be because of establishing a close relationship with their children and raising them into responsible and good individuals, getting promoted in their work because of exemplary performance, or acquiring a certain degree of self-empowerment, even with the circumstances they are in. There is a great sense of satisfaction in being able to successfully manage multiple roles.

Moreover, the dominant coping mechanisms employed by the participants were time management, having a strong support system, strong faith, and stress management. Since these solo-parent mothers are all employed they develop a habit of specifically allocating time spent for their children and for work. They became time managers to ensure time for their children were not compromised, particularly, weekends or time after work is dedicated to quality time with them. Consequently, balancing their career and parental roles without jeopardizing one. Subsequently, it was also found that having a strong support system that primarily consists of parents and siblings helps them a lot as they provide helping hands in raising their children and act as guardians in the event the mother is not available. Also, their strong faith and prayers helped them cope with the circumstances they are in, believing that there is a greater being behind all the events happening in their lives and everything happens for a reason provide them with the assurance that everything will turn out fine. Furthermore, having to juggle a lot of responsibilities they are experts in stress management, they identify what causes their stress, weigh if it's worth the thought and engage in physical and recreational activities to relieve stress.

Hence, it is clear that there is a disparity between married women with children and solo-parent mothers. It has highlighted the multiple burdens they carry as mothers, its manifestations that affect not just their personal life but as well as their working life. They may be good at coping with the various roles and responsibilities that they do, but interventions can still be done to aid them in their day-to-day struggles. This calls for more inclusive policy-making to ensure the equity in the workplace, with consideration to the different circumstances of women in the workforce.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Davao City Water District for allowing me to conduct this study with its employees. To the research participants, for sharing your time with me graciously, the completion of this paper will not be possible without your participation. To my co-author, thank you for assisting me and providing wisdom in undertaking this research.

Also, special thanks to my husband Jorwin Bresenio and my family as a whole for the continuous understanding and support in the duration of this research.

Lastly, I thank God for guiding me through all the challenges.

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