



Parenting Through Widowhood: Measuring Self-Efficacy in Raising School-Age Children

Rubelyn E. Isidro¹, Joy Patrice P. Infante¹, Shela C. Dejados¹, Jessa L. Fausto¹, and Khyla O. Reyes^{1*}

Department of Elementary Education, College of Teacher Education, Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan City, Philippines.

*Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800496>

Received: 24 August 2026; Accepted: 29 August 2026; Published: 10 September 2026

ABSTRACT

Widowed parents must continue meeting their children's developmental and educational needs while adjusting to the loss of a spouse, making parenting self-efficacy an important concern. This study measured the self-efficacy of widowed parents in raising school-age children and examined differences and relationships according to age, sex, educational attainment, number of school-age children, and year of spousal death. A correlational survey design was used with 43 widowed parents whose children attended six elementary schools in urban and rural areas of Bayawan City, Philippines. The Widowed Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale was used, and data were analyzed using weighted mean, one-way ANOVA, independent-samples t-test, and Pearson correlation. Urban and rural respondents both reported "mildly agree" levels of self-efficacy, with mean scores of 4.03 and 4.30, respectively. No significant differences were found by age, sex, educational attainment, number of school-age children, or year of spousal death, and no significant relationships were found for age, number of children, or year of spousal death. Widowed parents generally perceived themselves as capable of raising their school-age children, suggesting that parenting self-efficacy may depend more on personal and contextual experiences than on basic demographic characteristics.

Keywords: Parenting, Widowhood, Self-Efficacy, Widowed Parents, School-Age Children

INTRODUCTION

Parental self-efficacy refers to parents' beliefs about their ability to perform their parenting responsibilities successfully and positively influence the development and well-being of their children (Albanese et al., 2019). These beliefs are important because parental self-efficacy has been associated with parenting competence, parental psychological well-being, the quality of parent and child relationships, and different aspects of child development and adjustment (Jones & Prinz, 2005). Among parents of school age children, confidence in parenting ability has also been associated with parenting satisfaction and with characteristics of both the parent and the child, indicating that self-efficacy is shaped by actual experiences within the parenting role (Coleman & Karraker, 2000). More recent evidence from 35 empirical studies further shows that parental self-efficacy and positive parenting practices are closely related during the school age and adolescent years (Glatz et al., 2024). The importance of such confidence may become greater following the death of a spouse because widowed parents must continue fulfilling their responsibilities to their children while adjusting to the psychological and practical consequences of partner loss (Yopp et al., 2019). Research among recently bereaved adults with minor children has likewise shown that parenting efficacy is significantly related to parents' grief, depression, and overall adjustment following the death of a co parent (Park et al., 2021).

The death of a spouse can transform parenting from a shared responsibility into a role in which the surviving parent assumes greater responsibility for the emotional, practical, and developmental needs of the children (Anderson et al., 2023). Widowed parents have described difficulties associated with managing new parenting responsibilities, making decisions alone, attending to their children's grief, and dealing simultaneously with their

own bereavement (Ellis et al., 2025). A systematic review of the experiences of families following parental death similarly found that surviving parents must adjust to their changed parental role while determining how best to support their bereaved children (Wray et al., 2022). These difficulties are important because concerns about one's parenting, relationship with the child, and ability to respond to the child's needs constitute measurable concerns among grieving caregivers (O'Leary et al., 2024). Studies of widowed fathers have further shown that grief and depressive symptoms may remain elevated after spousal loss and that poorer psychological functioning is associated with lower parenting self-efficacy and lower parenting satisfaction (Yopp et al., 2019). Likewise, lower widowed parenting self-efficacy and greater parenting concerns have been associated with poorer adjustment to bereavement, indicating that support for widowed parents should address not only grief but also their perceived ability to continue parenting effectively (Park et al., 2021).

Existing research establishes the importance of parental self-efficacy, but much of this literature involves parents from general populations rather than parents experiencing widowhood while raising children (Albanese et al., 2019). Although studies specifically involving school age children have examined parenting self-efficacy, these investigations have generally focused on mothers or parents without identifying widowhood as the central parenting condition (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Glatz et al., 2024). Research on widowed parents with school age children is not entirely absent, as Worden and Silverman (1993) examined grief and depression among 70 newly widowed parents with school age children, but parental self-efficacy was not the primary construct investigated. A measure specifically designed for widowed parenting self-efficacy was subsequently developed and tested among 244 recently widowed fathers with dependent age children, rather than a population restricted specifically to parents of school age children (Edwards et al., 2018). Later research has continued to study widowed parents using broader categories such as parents of children younger than 18 years or has concentrated on widows with young children instead of isolating the school age developmental period (Park et al., 2021; Williams, 2025). Thus, while widowhood, parenting self-efficacy, and parenting school age children have each been investigated, limited research has brought these three areas together to specifically measure the self-efficacy of widowed parents in raising school age children (Edwards et al., 2018; Glatz et al., 2024).

The study is primarily anchored in Bandura's Self Efficacy Theory, which explains that people's beliefs about their capabilities influence the choices they make, the effort they exert, and their persistence when confronted with difficult situations (Bandura, 1997). Applied to parenting, the theory suggests that parents who believe they are capable of managing parenting demands are more likely to persist, use constructive parenting practices, and respond effectively to challenges. Research on parents of school age children supports this theoretical assumption by showing reciprocal relationships between parental self-efficacy and positive parenting practices (Glatz et al., 2024). Bandura (1997) further proposed that self-efficacy develops from mastery experiences, observing others, social encouragement, and interpretations of emotional and physiological states. In widowhood, these sources may become particularly important because the surviving parent must develop confidence in carrying out responsibilities that were previously shared while coping with grief and changed family circumstances. The theory therefore provides an appropriate framework for understanding differences in widowed parents' beliefs about their ability to raise their children effectively.

The findings of this study may be utilized as a basis for identifying the specific areas in which widowed parents demonstrate strong or limited self-efficacy in raising their school age children. The results may guide the development of parenting support programs, counselling services, bereavement interventions, peer support activities, and family assistance programs that respond to the actual needs of widowed parents. Guidance counsellors, social workers, psychologists, teachers, school administrators, community organizations, and government social welfare agencies may use the findings in planning appropriate services and interventions for widowed families. The results may also help these stakeholders identify widowed parents who may need additional support in managing parenting responsibilities, making family decisions, providing discipline, and responding to the developmental and emotional needs of their children. More importantly, the findings may provide practical evidence for strengthening the support systems available to widowed parents as they continue fulfilling their responsibilities while adjusting to the loss of a spouse. Ultimately, the study may contribute to the development of more responsive programs and services that strengthen the confidence and capacity of widowed parents in raising their school age children.

This study aimed to measure the self-efficacy of widowed parents in raising school-age children. The following research questions served as a guide during the investigation: (1) What are the demographic characteristics of the widowed parents in terms of: age, sex, educational attainment, occupation, number of schoolchild/schoolchildren, age of schoolchild/schoolchildren, and year the spouse died? (2) What is the perceived level of self-efficacy among widowed parents in raising children who are attending school in the urban and rural areas of Bayawan City, Philippines? (3) Is there a significant difference in the respondents' level of self-efficacy when they are grouped according to their profile? (4) Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of self-efficacy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The death of a spouse requires the surviving parent to adjust not only to personal loss but also to significant changes in family roles and parenting responsibilities (Anderson et al., 2023). Widowed parents may suddenly assume responsibilities that were previously shared with their spouses, including household management, decision making, discipline, financial concerns, and the emotional care of their children (Ellis et al., 2025). This transition can be particularly demanding because surviving parents must manage their own grief while simultaneously responding to the grief and developmental needs of their children (Park et al., 2021). Studies of families following parental death indicate that surviving parents often need to reorganize family routines, communication patterns, and relationships as the family adapts to the absence of one parent (Wray et al., 2022). Despite these difficulties, parenting can also provide widowed parents with a continuing sense of responsibility, meaning, and purpose during their adjustment to bereavement (Anderson et al., 2023). The ability to successfully manage these new demands may therefore become an important part of how widowed parents develop confidence in their capacity to continue raising their children (Edwards et al., 2018).

Grief and psychological distress are major challenges that may influence how widowed parents perceive their ability to continue parenting effectively after the death of a spouse (Yopp et al., 2019). Among recently bereaved adults raising minor children, greater grief and depressive symptoms have been associated with lower levels of widowed parenting self-efficacy (Park et al., 2021). Earlier research involving newly widowed parents with school-age children also found substantial levels of depressive symptoms following spousal death, particularly during the early period of bereavement (Worden & Silverman, 1993). Parenting concerns can further intensify this emotional burden because surviving parents may worry about their ability to meet their children's needs without the assistance of the deceased parent (Edwards et al., 2018). The psychological condition of the surviving parent is especially important because parental well-being and parenting behavior are closely associated with children's adjustment following parental death (Haine et al., 2008). Consequently, grief and emotional distress may affect not only widowed parents personally but also their confidence in performing the parenting responsibilities required by their children (Albanese et al., 2019).

School-age children require parental involvement in areas such as education, behavior, social relationships, emotional development, discipline, and increasing independence, making parenting during this period different from parenting children at other developmental stages (Jones & Prinz, 2005). Parental death may also contribute to emotional and behavioral difficulties among children, which can add to the responsibilities faced by the surviving parent during the bereavement period (Hoppe et al., 2024). Research involving widowed parents with school-age children has shown that family adjustment can be influenced by factors such as the number and ages of children, available support, financial circumstances, and the surviving parent's emotional condition (Worden & Silverman, 1993). Parental self-efficacy may also change as children grow because parents continually evaluate their ability to respond to new developmental demands and child behaviors (Glatz et al., 2024). These developmental demands make the school-age period an important context for examining how widowed parents perceive their ability to perform their parenting responsibilities effectively (Edwards et al., 2018).

Social and family support can provide important resources that help widowed parents adjust to their new responsibilities and maintain effective parenting after the death of a spouse (Wray et al., 2022). Research on newly widowed parents with school-age children found that difficulties in mobilizing support and limited peer support were associated with greater psychological difficulties during bereavement (Worden & Silverman, 1993). Positive relationships with relatives, friends, peers, and community members can reduce some of the

practical and emotional demands experienced by surviving parents as they reorganize family life (Anderson et al., 2023). Open communication within bereaved families is also important because children benefit when surviving caregivers provide clear information, listen to their concerns, and allow them to express feelings about the deceased parent (Haine et al., 2008). Positive parenting characterized by warmth, effective discipline, and supportive parent-child relationships has been identified as an important protective resource for children who have experienced parental death (Haine et al., 2006). These forms of support may indirectly strengthen parenting self-efficacy by providing widowed parents with resources, encouragement, and successful parenting experiences that reinforce their belief that they can manage their responsibilities effectively (Albanese et al., 2019).

Existing literature establishes that widowhood involves significant changes in parenting responsibilities, psychological adjustment, family functioning, and the need to support children while coping with personal grief (Ellis et al., 2025). Studies also demonstrate that parental self-efficacy is important because parents' beliefs about their capabilities are related to their psychological well-being, parenting behavior, and interactions with their children (Albanese et al., 2019). However, much of the research on widowed parents has concentrated on grief, depression, bereavement adjustment, psychological functioning, and general parenting concerns rather than specifically measuring self-efficacy in raising school-age children (Park et al., 2021). Although the Widowed Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale provides a direct measure of perceived parenting capability following spousal loss, its original development involved recently widowed fathers with dependent-age children rather than widowed parents specifically raising school-age children (Edwards et al., 2018). Likewise, studies focusing on parental self-efficacy during the school-age period have generally examined broader populations of parents rather than widowhood as a distinct parenting condition (Glatz et al., 2024). Thus, there remains a need to specifically examine the self-efficacy of widowed parents in raising school-age children to better understand their perceived parenting capabilities and identify areas where additional family, social, or professional support may be needed.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study utilized a correlational survey design. The researchers deemed this design appropriate for this kind of study as it intends to establish the relationship between the widowed parent's demographic profile and their level of self-efficacy.

Setting

This study was conducted in six elementary school in Bayawan City, Philippines: three schools in the urban area, and three schools in the rural area. The schools in the urban area consisted of School A, School B, and School C. The schools in the rural area included School D, School E, and School F. The researchers chose these schools to conduct the study because they have a large number of pupils among the schools around the City of Bayawan.

Participants

The respondents to this study who answered the questionnaire included 43 widowed parents, of whom 72.1% have children attending school in urban areas and 27.9% have children attending school in rural areas.

Instrument

For the quantitative aspect of this study, the respondents answered a two-part questionnaire. The first part was the demographic profile, and the second part was the Widowed Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale (WPSES), adapted from the study of Edwards et al. (2018), which contains nine questions, but only eight were used.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers sought approval from the Department of Education, Bayawan City Division, after the College of Teacher Education at Negros Oriental State University, Bayawan – Santa Catalina Campus approved the conduct of this study. The widowed parents who fit the inclusion criteria for this study were consulted by the researchers. The researchers personally visited each school included in the study to seek permission from the school's principal in order to communicate with the teachers and the students whose parents are widowed for the distribution of the questionnaire. After two days, the researchers conducted a follow-up for the retrieval of questionnaires. The data collection took place in April 2023.

Analysis

In analysing the quantitative data in this study, the weighted mean was used to determine the level of self-efficacy of widowed parents who are raising schoolchildren in both urban and rural areas. In addition, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to check if there is a significant difference between the level of self-efficacy when they are grouped according to their age, educational attainment, number of schoolchildren, and the year when the spouse died. A t-test was used to determine if there is a significant difference in their level of self-efficacy when grouped according to their sex. Further, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine if there is a significant relationship between the level of self-efficacy when grouped according to their age, number of schoolchildren, and the year when the spouse died.

Ethical Considerations

The study's participants read and signed an informed consent form before they participated voluntarily. The participants' identities were protected by presenting the results generally and not individually, which may lead to their identification. Participants' decisions were respected if they decided to withdraw, even if they had signed the consent. Any information provided by the participants was kept anonymous. Nobody except the study team had access to the information from the participants. Lastly, the Negros Oriental State University Research Ethics Committee granted ethics approval before the start of fieldwork to ensure that no ethical standards would be violated when conducting research with participants (REA-2023-EXE-S-0034).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in urban and rural areas, where the respondents in urban areas make up 72.1% of the total population and 27.9% in rural areas.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Urban (N=31)		Rural (N=12)	
	f	%	f	%
Age				
26 – 31 y.o.	3	9.68		
32 – 37 y.o.	7	22.58		
38 – 43 y.o.	11	35.48	8	66.67
44 – 49 y.o.	6	19.35	4	33.33
50 – 55 y.o.	3	9.68		
62 – 67 y.o.	1	3.23		
Sex				
Male	5	16.13	2	16.67
Female	26	83.87	10	83.33
Educational Attainment				
Elementary level	3	9.68	2	16.67
Elementary graduate	2	6.45	1	8.33

Highschool level	3	9.68	4	33.33
Highschool graduate	10	32.26	1	8.33
College level	3	9.68	4	33.33
College graduate	6	19.35		
Post baccalaureate	4	12.90		
Occupation				
Service and sales workers	10	32.26	8	66.67
Elementary occupations	6	19.35	1	8.33
Professionals	5	16.13		
Others	5	16.13		
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	3	9.68	2	16.67
Technicians and associate professionals	1	3.23		
Craft and related trade workers	1	3.23	1	8.33
Number of schoolchild/schoolchildren				
1 – 2	14	45.16	4	33.33
3 – 4	12	38.71	7	58.33
5 – 6	5	16.13	1	8.33
Age of schoolchild/schoolchildren				
5	3	3.90		
6	4	5.19	2	6.45
7	8	10.39	3	9.68
8	4	5.19	2	6.45
9	5	6.49	4	12.90
10	9	11.69	3	9.68
11	11	14.29	3	9.68
12	8	10.39	1	3.22
13	4	5.19	2	6.45
14	5	6.49	2	6.45
15	2	2.60	3	9.68
16	2	2.60	1	3.22
17	1	1.30	2	6.45
18	5	6.49	1	3.22
19	1	1.30		
20	2	2.60		
21			1	3.22
22	1	1.30		
23	2	2.60	1	3.22
Year when spouse died				
2019 – 2021	20	64.52	7	58.33
2015 – 2017	6	19.35	2	16.67
2016 or earlier	5	16.13	3	25

Note: N = 43. The categorization of occupations is based on the 2012 Philippine Standard Occupational Classification (PSOC).

Table 2.1 indicates the perceived level of self-efficacy of widowed parents in raising schoolchildren who are attending school in urban areas. The mean WPSES score of these parents (N=31) was 4.03, which falls within the range of description "Mildly agree". Moreover, Table 2.2 reveals that widowed parents who are raising schoolchildren attending school in rural areas "strongly agree" with item number five: ([NAME/My wife or husband] would be proud of how I am raising our children.) The mean WPSES score of these parents (N=12) was 4.30, which falls within the range of description "Mildly agree".

Table 2.1 Perceived level of self-efficacy of widowed parents in urban areas (N=31)

	Strongly disagree (1)	Moderately disagree (2)	Mildly disagree (3)	Mildly agree (4)	Moderately agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am doing an excellent job raising my child (ren) since my wife/ husband died.	6	1	3	3	7	11	4.19	Mildly agree
5. [NAME/My wife or husband] would be proud of how I am raising our children.	5	0	0	2	6	18	4.87	Moderately agree
7. My child(ren) listen to me as well as they did before their mother/father died.	4	1	2	3	11	10	4.48	Moderately agree
8. I meet my own expectations for being a parent.	6	2	5	2	11	5	3.81	Mildly agree
	Strongly disagree (6)	Moderately disagree (5)	Mildly disagree (4)	Mildly agree (3)	Moderately agree (2)	Strongly agree (1)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
2. I am unsure how to discipline my children since their mother/father died.	9	7	4	3	4	4	2.94	Mildly disagree
3. I feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of being a parent.	3	6	2	6	4	10	4.03	Mildly agree
4. I am less strict with my child(ren) since their mother/father died.	5	8	1	5	10	2	3.42	Mildly disagree
6. Caring for my child(ren) takes up all my time and energy.	5	2	1	2	7	14	4.48	Moderately agree
Total	43	27	18	26	60	74	4.03	Mildly agree

Note: Strongly disagree (1.00-1.82); Moderately disagree (1.83-2.65); Mildly disagree (2.66-3.48); Mildly agree (3.49-4.31); Moderately agree (4.32-5.14); Strongly agree (5.15-6.00)

Table 2.2 Perceived level of self-efficacy of widowed parents in rural areas (N=12)

	Strongly disagree (1)	Moderately disagree (2)	Mildly disagree (3)	Mildly agree (4)	Moderately agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
1. I am doing an excellent job raising my child(ren) since my wife/ husband died.	1	2	1	2	0	6	4.33	Moderately agree

5. [NAME/My wife or husband] would be proud of how I am raising our children.	1	0	0	2	1	8	5.17	Strongly agree
7. My child(ren) listen to me as well as they did before their mother/father died.	0	1	1	2	3	5	4.83	Moderately agree
8. I meet my own expectations for being a parent.	0	1	1	2	3	5	4.83	Moderately agree

	Strongly disagree (1)	Moderately disagree (2)	Mildly disagree (3)	Mildly agree (4)	Moderately agree (5)	Strongly agree (6)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
2. I am unsure how to discipline my children since their mother/father died.	3	4	0	1	4	0	2.92	Mildly disagree
3. I feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of being a parent.	2	1	1	3	3	2	3.83	Mildly agree
4. I am less strict with my child(ren) since their mother/father died	1	3	0	2	4	2	3.92	Mildly agree
6. Caring for my child(ren) takes up all my time and energy.	0	2	2	1	1	6	4.58	Moderately agree
Total	8	14	6	15	19	34	4.30	Mildly agree

Note: Strongly disagree (1.00-1.82); Moderately disagree (1.83-2.65); Mildly disagree (2.66-3.48); Mildly agree (3.49-4.31); Moderately agree (4.32-5.14); Strongly agree (5.15-6.00)

Tables 3 and 4 show that when arranged according to their profile, there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of self-efficacy when grouped according to their age. The respondents' level of self-efficacy does not have big interval which supports why there is no discernible difference. Concerning the respondents' level of self-efficacy according to their sex, results showed no significant difference as their levels of self-efficacy are closely similar.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Result and Descriptives for Self-Efficacy When Grouped According to Age

One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)

Variable	F	df1	df2	p-value	Interpretation
Level of Self-Efficacy	0.793	4	9.75	0.557	Not Significant

Group Descriptives

Age Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
26–31	3	4.38	0.650	0.375
32–37	7	3.54	1.099	0.415

38-43	19	4.36	1.134	0.260
44-49	10	3.84	1.295	0.410
50-55	3	4.21	0.382	0.220

Table 4 Independent Samples T-Test and Descriptives for Self-Efficacy When Grouped According to the Sex

Independent Samples T-Test		Statistic		df	p	Effect Size	
Level of Self-Efficacy	Student's t	-0.421	^a	41.0	0.676	Cohen's d	-0.174
^a Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances							

Group Descriptives							
Level of Self-Efficacy	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE	
	Female	36	4.07	4.25	1.20	0.200	
	Male	7	4.27	4.00	0.423	0.160	

Table 5 reveals that college graduates have the highest level of self-efficacy and post baccalaureates having the lowest level of self-efficacy among the other participants. However, in spite of the educational attainment, the respondents' level of self-efficacy is almost the same which the results discover that there is no significant difference.

Table 5 One –way ANOVA Result and Descriptives for Self-Efficacy When Grouped According to the Educational Attainment

One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)									

Table 6 shows that widowed parents with the highest number of schoolchildren have the lowest level of self-efficacy; however, discernible difference couldn't be established since there is no exact pattern of their level of self-efficacy. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of self-efficacy when grouped according to their number of schoolchildren.

Table 6 One –way ANOVA Result and Descriptives for Self-Efficacy When Grouped According to the Number of School Children

One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)									
	F	df1	df2	p					
Level of Self- Efficacy	0.351	2	13.9	0.710					
Group Descriptives									
	No. of Schoolchild/children	N	Mean	SD	SE				
Level of Self- Efficacy	1-2	18	4.07	1.296	0.306				
	3-4	19	4.23	0.940	0.216				
	5-6	6	3.81	1.123	0.458				

Table 7 demonstrates that there is no significant difference between the respondents' level of self-efficacy when grouped according to the year when their spouse died. Their level of self-efficacy explains why there is no discernible difference.

Table 7 One –way ANOVA Result and Descriptives for Self-Efficacy When Grouped According to the Year When the Spouse Died

One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)									
	F	df1	df2	p					
Level of Self- Efficacy	0.178	2	11.8	0.839					
Group Descriptives									
	Year when spouse died	N	Mean	SD	SE				
Level of Self- Efficacy	2010-2012	7	4.32	1.15	0.436				
	2015-2017	8	4.30	1.12	0.395				
	2019-2021	27	4.09	1.02	0.196				

As shown in Tables 8 and 9 when arranged according to their profile, there is no significant relationship between the respondents' level of self-efficacy when grouped according to their age. On the other hand, as to the relationship between the respondents' level of self-efficacy when grouped according to the number of children, significant relationship is not visible and this is supported by the p-value that is almost close to one. Moreover, Table 10 indicates that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' level of self-efficacy and the year when their spouse died.

Table 8 Correlation Result Between Age and Level of Self-Efficacy

Correlation Matrix					
		Age	Level of Self- Efficacy		
Age	Pearson's r	—			

	p-value	—		
Level of Self- Efficacy	Pearson's r	0.068	—	
	p-value	0.667	—	

Table 9 Correlation Result Between Number of School Children and Level of Self-Efficacy

Correlation Matrix					
		Level of Self- Efficacy		No. of School-Age Children	
Level of Self- Efficacy	Pearson's r	—			
	p-value	—			
No. Of schoolchild/children	Pearson's r	-0.026		—	
	p-value	0.869		—	

Table 10 Correlation Result Between the Year When the Spouse Died and the Level of Self-Efficacy

Correlation Matrix					
		Level of Self- Efficacy		Year when spouse died	
Level of Self- Efficacy	Pearson's r	—			
	p-value	—			
Year when spouse died	Pearson's r	0.160		—	
	p-value	0.305		—	

The findings indicate that widowed parents generally perceived themselves as capable of raising their school age children, with both urban respondents ($M = 4.03$) and rural respondents ($M = 4.30$) falling within the “mildly agree” level of widowed parenting self-efficacy. This positive perception was particularly evident in the belief that their deceased spouses would be proud of how they were raising their children, which obtained a mean of 4.87 among urban parents and 5.17 among rural parents. These findings suggest that the death of a spouse does not necessarily prevent surviving parents from developing confidence in their capacity to continue fulfilling their parenting roles, consistent with the purpose of widowed parenting self-efficacy as a measure of perceived competence following partner loss (Edwards et al., 2018). At the same time, respondents acknowledged the demands of their parenting role, as caring for their children was perceived to consume considerable time and energy, particularly among urban parents where this item obtained a mean of 4.48. This combination of parenting confidence and burden is consistent with evidence that widowed parents may maintain parenting competence while simultaneously experiencing grief, emotional strain, and difficulties associated with becoming the primary surviving parent (Yopp et al., 2019; Park et al., 2021).

The results further showed that widowed parenting self-efficacy did not significantly differ according to age ($p = .557$), sex ($p = .676$), educational attainment ($p = .696$), number of school age children ($p = .710$), or year of spousal death ($p = .839$). These findings imply that the respondents’ confidence in parenting may not be strongly determined by basic demographic characteristics, but may instead depend on more complex personal, psychological, and family experiences associated with parenting after bereavement. This interpretation is supported by Glatz et al. (2024), whose systematic review showed that parental self-efficacy is a dynamic construct related to parenting practices, child behavior, psychological factors, and broader contextual conditions rather than a simple product of demographic characteristics. The findings partly align with Aktu (2024), who reported that parental gender did not significantly predict parenting self-efficacy after other relevant factors were considered. This difference suggests that the influence of family size on parenting self-efficacy may vary across populations, family circumstances, and parenting contexts.

The correlation analyses reinforce this pattern, showing no significant relationship between parenting self-efficacy and respondents' age ($r = .068$, $p = .667$), number of school age children ($r = -.026$, $p = .869$), or year when the spouse died ($r = .160$, $p = .305$). In particular, the absence of a significant relationship with the year of spousal death suggests that the passage of time alone may not determine how confident widowed parents feel about their ability to raise their children. Research among widowed fathers similarly indicates that adaptation after spousal loss is complex, as grief and depressive symptoms can remain substantial over time and are associated with poorer psychological adaptation and lower parenting self-efficacy (Yopp et al., 2019). More broadly, parental self-efficacy among parents of school age children is influenced by changing parenting experiences, parent and child characteristics, parenting stress, depression, and parent child interactions, indicating that it should be understood as a dynamic rather than fixed personal characteristic (Glatz et al., 2024). Therefore, support programs for widowed parents may be more useful when they respond to individual parenting difficulties, emotional needs, available resources, and family circumstances rather than assuming that age, sex, education, number of children, or length of widowhood alone determines a parent's ability to cope with parenting responsibilities.

Certain limitations of this study could be addressed in future research. For example, the groups involved in the computation of significant differences had wide disparities. Furthermore, the number of respondents from rural and urban areas had a big difference. The number of women is higher than that of men as respondents. Future studies should increase the sample size and ensure more balanced representation across sex, location, and demographic categories. Researchers should consider using mixed-method or qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of widowed parents. Additional variables such as social support, financial status, coping strategies, grief intensity, parental stress, and child behavior should be examined as potential predictors of parenting self-efficacy. Longitudinal studies would help determine how parenting self-efficacy changes over time following spousal loss and during different stages of child development. Despite these limitations, the present study has enhanced our understanding of the lived experiences of widowed parents raising their schoolchildren. We hope that the current research will stimulate further investigation of the important areas we failed to address.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to measure the self-efficacy of widowed parents in raising their school-age children and determine whether their self-efficacy differed or was related to selected demographic characteristics. The findings showed that widowed parents in both urban and rural areas generally had a positive perception of their parenting capability, with mean self-efficacy scores of 4.03 and 4.30, respectively, both interpreted as "mildly agree." The respondents also expressed confidence in how they were raising their children, although they recognized that parenting after the death of a spouse requires considerable time, energy, and responsibility. These findings indicate that, despite the challenges associated with widowhood, the respondents generally believed that they were capable of continuing to fulfill their parenting responsibilities.

The study further found no significant differences in self-efficacy according to age, sex, educational attainment, number of school-age children, and year of spousal death, while age, number of school-age children, and year of spousal death were likewise not significantly related to self-efficacy. These results suggest that widowed parenting self-efficacy may not be determined primarily by basic demographic characteristics but may instead be influenced by personal experiences, coping resources, emotional adjustment, family relationships, and available support. Theoretically, the findings support the view that self-efficacy reflects an individual's belief in the ability to manage particular demands and challenges. Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of providing widowed parents with appropriate emotional, social, and parenting support based on their actual needs and circumstances rather than relying solely on demographic characteristics.

Based on the findings, schools, guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, local government units, and social welfare agencies are encouraged to develop or strengthen programs that support widowed parents in managing the emotional and practical demands of raising school-age children, including parenting guidance, bereavement counseling, peer support, stress-management activities, and assistance with parent-child concerns. Since self-efficacy did not significantly differ according to the demographic variables examined, interventions

should focus on the individual needs, parenting difficulties, emotional conditions, and available support systems of widowed parents. Future researchers are encouraged to use larger and more balanced samples, particularly in terms of male and female respondents and participants from urban and rural areas, because these groups were unevenly represented in the present study. Future studies may also investigate other factors that could influence widowed parenting self-efficacy, such as grief, parenting stress, coping strategies, social support, financial condition, parent-child relationships, and children's emotional or behavioral needs, and may employ longitudinal, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches to provide a deeper understanding of how parenting confidence develops after spousal loss.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the study participants for generously sharing their experiences and time during the in-depth interviews. Likewise, thanks to the study respondents for generously sharing their time in completing the survey questionnaires.

Declaration Of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

REFERENCES

1. Aktu, Y. (2024). The role of parenting stress on parenting self-efficacy and parental burnout among Turkish parents: A moderated mediation model. *BMC Psychology*, 12, 475. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-024-01980-7>
2. Albanese, A. M., Russo, G. R., & Geller, P. A. (2019). The role of parental self-efficacy in parent and child well-being: A systematic review of associated outcomes. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 45(3), 333–363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cch.12661>
3. Anderson, E., Bennett, K. M., Van Vuuren, J., & Soulsby, L. K. (2023). Partner bereavement when parenting dependent children: What factors influence adjustment? *Death Studies*, 47(3), 239–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2022.2048281>
4. Ayers, T. S., Wolchik, S. A., Sandler, I. N., Twohey, J. L., Weyer, J. L., Padgett, J. S., Weiss, L., Cole, E., Kriege, G., & Griffin, W. A. (2014). The Family Bereavement Program: Description of a theory-based prevention program for parentally bereaved children and adolescents. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 68(4), 293–314. <https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.68.4.a>
5. Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
6. Coleman, P. K., & Karraker, K. H. (2000). Parenting self-efficacy among mothers of school-age children: Conceptualization, measurement, and correlates. *Family Relations*, 49(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2000.00013.x>
7. Edwards, T. P., Yopp, J. M., Park, E. M., Deal, A. M., Biesecker, B. B., & Rosenstein, D. L. (2018). Widowed parenting self-efficacy scale: A new measure. *Death Studies*, 42(4), 247–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2017.1339743>
8. Ellis, K., Barros-Lane, L., & Kasper, T. (2025). The difficulties of parenting when widowed: A qualitative study of the lived experience. *Death Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2025.2521738>
9. Fritzson, E., Zhang, N., Wolchik, S. A., Sandler, I. N., Tein, J. Y., & Bellizzi, K. M. (2024). Developmental pathways of the Family Bereavement Program to promote growth 15 years after parental death. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 38(3), 355–364. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0001189>
10. Glatz, T., Lippold, M., Chung, G., & Jensen, T. M. (2024). A systematic review of parental self-efficacy among parents of school-age children and adolescents. *Adolescent Research Review*, 9, 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-023-00216-w>
11. Haine, R. A., Wolchik, S. A., Sandler, I. N., Millsap, R. E., & Ayers, T. S. (2006). Positive parenting as a protective resource for parentally bereaved children. *Death Studies*, 30(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180500348639>

12. Haine, R. A., Ayers, T. S., Sandler, I. N., & Wolchik, S. A. (2008). Evidence-based practices for parentally bereaved children and their families. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 39(2), 113–121. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.39.2.113>
13. Hoppe, R., Winter, M. A., Williams, C. D., & Sandler, I. (2025). When a parent dies: A scoping review of protective and risk processes for childhood bereavement. *Death Studies*, 49(5), 546–556. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2024.2340729>
14. Jones, T. L., & Prinz, R. J. (2005). Potential roles of parental self-efficacy in parent and child adjustment: A review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 25(3), 341–363. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2004.12.004>
15. O’Leary, S., Quinn-Nilas, C., Pileggi, V., & Eaton Russell, C. (2024). Development and psychometric evaluation of the Concerns of Grieving Caregivers Scale with two clinical samples. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 88(3), 977–997. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228211053062>
16. Park, E. M., Deal, A. M., Yopp, J. M., Chien, S. A., McCabe, S., Hirsch, A., Bowers, S. M., Edwards, T., & Rosenstein, D. L. (2021). Parenting through grief: A cross-sectional study of recently bereaved adults with minor children. *Palliative Medicine*, 35(10), 1923–1932. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02692163211040982>
17. Sandler, I. N., Tein, J. Y., Cham, H., Wolchik, S. A., & Ayers, T. S. (2016). Long-term effects of the Family Bereavement Program on spousally bereaved parents: Grief, mental health problems, alcohol problems, and coping efficacy. *Development and Psychopathology*, 28(3), 801–818. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579416000328>
18. Sandler, I. N., Wolchik, S. A., Ayers, T. S., Tein, J. Y., & Luecken, L. J. (2013). Family Bereavement Program approach to promoting resilience following the death of a parent. *Family Science*, 4(1), 87–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19424620.2013.821763>
19. Sandler, I., Wolchik, S., Sandler, J., Tein, J. Y., Gaffney, D., Zhang, N., & Porter, M. (2025). Feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness of adding an evidence-based parent/caregiver program for bereaved families to usual community-based services. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 91(1), 82–100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221132910>
20. Williams, C. (2025). The relationship between perceived parental competence and bereavement outcomes in widows with young children. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 92(2), 553–573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228231186354>
21. Worden, J. W., & Silverman, P. R. (1993). Grief and depression in newly widowed parents with school-age children. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 27(3), 251–261. <https://doi.org/10.2190/XMHJ-F977-P8GV-4W07>
22. Wray, A., Pickwell-Smith, B., Greenley, S., Pask, S., Bamidele, O., Wright, B., Murtagh, F., & Boland, J. W. (2022). Parental death: A systematic review of support experiences and needs of children and parent survivors. *BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care*, 16(1), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.1136/spcare-2022-003793>
23. Yopp, J. M., Deal, A. M., Nakamura, Z. M., Park, E. M., Edwards, T., Wilson, D. R., Biesecker, B. B., & Rosenstein, D. L. (2019). Psychological and parental functioning of widowed fathers: The first two years. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 33(5), 565–574. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000528>