

Understanding the Silent Struggles: The Lived Experiences of Single Fathers

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Single Fathers. Peculiar experiences like causes of broken marriages, struggles in raising their children, strategies in managing struggles, and future plans for their families were highlighted. Phenomenological approach was utilized to extract meanings from the participants' constructs. Transcripts were analyzed using the Moustakas' (1994) 8-step procedure. The SFs' broken marriages are caused by infidelity, economic challenges, abuse of substance, and differences of religious belief. The SFs were burdened with fulfilling and managing multiple responsibilities, and attending to financial obligations. The SFs' unwavering faith to the Almighty, their humbleness, and genuine love for their children enabled them to navigate the challenges of single parenthood. The SFs look forward to prioritizing the educational plan for their children, and developing themselves to become worthy and ready of building a complete and united family. The essence of the phenomenon is: The Single Fathers shouldered a heavy burden of responsibilities and financial obligations, and while raising their children alone, they drew strength from unwavering faith, humility, and a deep-seated love for their children, and planned to prioritize their children's education and personal development in pursuit of rebuilding a complete and united family once again.

Keywords: single fathers; marriage; strategies; future plans; phenomenological study

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most significant parts of human society, representing a deep commitment and bond between two people, filled with love, trust, and mutual support. Celebrated across cultures and religions, marriage brings hearts and lives together in a beautiful union. However, the dream of lifelong togetherness is often tested by the challenges of modern life. According to Riemann (2024), financial struggles, communication problems, and changing societal values can put a strain on relationships, leading to more and more broken marriages.

As we see the sanctity of marriage being tested, it is essential to understand what causes these issues and how we can help relationships stay strong and last. Consequently, based on the study of Bubelwa (2024), the rise in broken marriages has led to an increase in single-parent households, where many fathers find themselves navigating the complexities of single fatherhood.

In today's contemporary society, the traditional family structure has undergone significant transformations, with the role of fathers evolving beyond the conventional breadwinner archetype to encompass active involvement in childcare (Cohen, 2014). Among these transformations, one of the increasingly prevalent yet understudied phenomena is that of single fatherhood. This demographic shift



brings to light the unique challenges and struggles that single fathers face as they navigate the complexities of raising children alone.

As traditional gender roles continue to blur and societal expectations evolve, an increasing number of fathers find themselves solely responsible for the upbringing of their children due to various circumstances such as divorce, separation, bereavement, or chosen single parenthood. According to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Philippine Information Agency (PIA) (2024), over 15 million single parents reside in the Philippines, where 95% of them are single mothers and 5% are single fathers. This explains why common studies deal more with the obvious as they look into the dominant number of single parents who are female. Against the backdrop of traditional parenting roles that have typically cast mothers as primary caregivers, single fathers often confront societal expectations and navigate a journey fraught with obstacles that impact their parenting experiences.

Despite the growing visibility of single fathers, their experiences and struggles remain relatively underexplored in scholarly research compared to single mothers. Coles (2015) stated that while single mothers have historically received more attention in both academic literature and public discourse, single fathers often grapple with unique challenges and experiences that warrant closer examination. Understanding the lived experiences of single fathers is crucial not only for acknowledging their contributions but also for informing support systems and policies tailored to their needs.

Central to this inquiry is the exploration of how husbands describe their struggles as single parents in raising their child or children. By delving into the lived experiences of single fathers, this research sought to illuminate the multifaceted challenges they encountered, the coping mechanisms they employed, and the societal and systemic factors that shaped their experiences.

The central question that guided this study is: How do husbands describe their struggles as single parents in raising their child or children? Through qualitative phenomenological inquiry and narrative analysis, this research aimed to capture the rich and nuanced accounts of single fathers, providing insights into their emotional, practical, and social challenges. By amplifying the voices of single fathers, this study endeavored to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary fatherhood and the complexities inherent in solo parenting.

Furthermore, this research is situated within the broader context of gender dynamics, family structures, and social support systems with the locality as the gap. By examining how single fathers navigate societal expectations, gender norms, and institutional support, this study aimed to shed light on the intersections of masculinity, fatherhood, and caregiving responsibilities.

The phenomenon of single fathers' struggles represents a significant yet under-researched aspect of contemporary parenthood. By examining their narratives and experiences, this study sought to bridge the gap in existing literature, advocate for greater recognition and support for single fathers, and contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender equality, family dynamics, and parental roles in modern society.

Related Literatures

The phenomenon of broken marriages has garnered considerable attention in societal, marital, and family counseling, reflecting its profound impact on individuals and society. Studies have identified a multitude of factors that contribute to the dissolution of marriages. Financial difficulties are a significant factor contributing to marital breakdowns. Okoree et al. (2020) emphasized that economic instability can lead to frequent conflicts over money, eroding the quality of the relationship and increasing the likelihood of divorce. Financial stress can contribute to feelings of inadequacy and resentment, which may further strain the marital bond (Maya and Adital, 2021).

Effective communication is crucial for a healthy marriage, and its breakdown is a common precursor to divorce. Guetto et al. (2021) identified four negative communication patterns—criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling—as strong predictors of marital dissolution. These behaviors erode trust and intimacy, making it difficult for couples to resolve conflicts constructively. Additionally, infidelity is a significant cause of marital breakdown, as it deeply undermines trust and emotional security. Tessema et al. (2022) found that extramarital affairs often lead to feelings of betrayal and loss of trust, which are difficult to repair. The emotional trauma associated with infidelity can create lasting damage to the relationship, often resulting in separation or divorce.

Mismatched expectations and unmet needs can lead to persistent dissatisfaction and conflict within a marriage. Imri and Golombok (2020) suggested that when couples enter marriage with mismatched expectations concerning roles, responsibilities, and life goals, it frequently results in conflict, frustration, and a sense of disconnection. This misalignment can erode the marital bond over time. As individuals grow and change, their personal development may not always align with their partner's, leading to marital strain. Tessema and Kassa (2022) highlighted that changes in personal values, interests, and life goals can create distance between partners, making it difficult to maintain a strong connection. This divergence can lead to feelings of incompatibility and dissatisfaction.

Mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, can contribute to marital strain by affecting emotional availability and the ability to cope with relationship challenges. Luhr (2020) observed that these conditions can worsen pre-existing marital issues and introduce new challenges, thereby heightening the likelihood of divorce. Couples facing mental health problems often grapple with communication and emotional intimacy, which are essential for maintaining a healthy relationship. Additionally, societal changes have impacted marital stability. Padilla-Walker et al. (2020) explored how the growing acceptance of divorce and evolving social norms have made it more feasible for individuals to exit unsatisfactory marriages. This shift in societal attitudes has lessened the stigma surrounding divorce, contributing to an increase in divorce rates.

External pressures, such as demanding work schedules and the challenges of balancing family and career, can exacerbate marital tensions. Work-related stress and lack of time together can create feelings of neglect and resentment (Capacio, 2021). The absence of a supportive social network can further isolate couples, making it more difficult to navigate marital challenges. The effects of broken marriages extend beyond the couple, significantly impacting children and the broader community. Ukor (2021) notes that children from divorced families often experience emotional and behavioral issues, academic difficulties, and strained parental relationships. The broader community also feels the impact, as rising divorce rates can weaken social cohesion and disrupt community stability.

The transition from a dual-parent household to single fatherhood requires significant adjustments and can profoundly impact the well-being of both the father and the children. Understanding the experiences and struggles of single fathers is crucial to providing them with the necessary support and resources to thrive in their parenting roles.

The phenomenon of single fatherhood has increasingly attracted attention in contemporary family studies, highlighting a notable shift in family dynamics and the rising number of households led by single fathers. Although single fathers are often less prominent in social discussions compared to single mothers, they encounter a distinct array of challenges that can make their parenting journey particularly demanding (Li and Piezunka, 2020).

Financial stress is a common concern among single fathers, who frequently assume the full responsibility for supporting their families. Research by Gallais (2023) highlights that single fathers often face financial difficulties due to the absence of a second income and the additional costs associated with

childcare, housing, and daily expenses. Moreover, balancing work and parenting responsibilities can restrict their job opportunities and earning potential, further intensifying financial pressures.

Balancing work and family life is another significant challenge for single fathers. According to Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis (2015), single fathers often struggle to find adequate childcare and must juggle their job responsibilities with parenting duties. This can lead to high levels of stress and burnout, as they attempt to fulfill the roles of both breadwinner and primary caregiver. The lack of flexible work arrangements and supportive workplace policies can further compound this issue.

Social isolation is a common experience among single fathers. Unlike single mothers, who often have more robust social support networks, single fathers may find it harder to connect with others in similar situations. According to Panter-Brick et al. (2014), societal stereotypes and stigmas surrounding single fatherhood can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of social support. This isolation can impact their mental health and overall well-being, making it more challenging to cope with the demands of single parenthood.

The emotional and psychological strain of single fatherhood is another critical factor. Single fathers may struggle with feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and stress as they navigate the complexities of raising children alone. A study by Bianchi (2014) highlighted that single fathers often experience higher levels of stress and depression compared to their married counterparts, partly due to the dual pressures of parenting and financial responsibilities.

Parenting challenges are particularly pronounced for single fathers, who may lack the traditional support and resources typically available to two-parent households. Research by Brown et al. (2015) showed that single fathers often face difficulties in establishing routines, managing discipline, and providing emotional support to their children. Additionally, they may encounter challenges in fulfilling both paternal and maternal roles, which can affect their parenting effectiveness and the emotional development of their children.

Access to resources and support services presents a significant challenge for single fathers. Traditionally, many support programs and services have been designed with single mothers in mind, resulting in a lack of tailored resources for single fathers. This gap can make it difficult for them to find the specific assistance they need, whether in the form of financial aid, counseling, or parenting support (Evangelista et al. 2022). Additionally, societal perceptions and stigmas surrounding single fatherhood can further complicate their experiences. Single fathers often face judgment and skepticism about their parenting abilities, which can lead to increased stress and feelings of inadequacy. This societal bias can negatively impact their self-esteem and confidence in their role as primary caregivers (Lu et al. 2020).

Single fathers, though not as extensively studied as single mothers, face their own unique set of hurdles, including the delicate balance of work and parenting, societal judgment, and often limited support systems. Children growing up with single fathers experience a wide range of outcomes, influenced by factors such as how engaged their fathers are, financial stability, and the support of extended family. The overarching theme in the literature is the intricate nature of these family structures and the crucial role of support systems in fostering well-being for all members.

Statement of the Problem

This qualitative phenomenological research aimed to unveil the lived experiences of Single Fathers through the exploration of stories, narratives, and sentiments from the 8 selected research participants in Pagadian City. The grand tour question is: "How do Single Fathers describe their struggles as single parents in raising children?"

The grand tour question has the following sub-questions that further probed their experiences:

1. What are the causes of broken marriages among single fathers?
2. What are the struggles of fathers in raising children as single parents?
3. What are the strategies of single fathers in managing their struggles in raising children?
4. What are the plans of single fathers in their lives?

2. METHODS

STUDY DESIGN

Considering the general purpose of this research which is to understand and describe the lived experiences of Single Fathers, the researchers employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. This design is a qualitative approach utilized to capture and reveal the untold stories and lived experiences of individuals who shared same unique encounters (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, Moustakas' phenomenological data analysis procedure was chosen for this study due to its rigorous and systematic approach to exploring and understanding the essence of lived experiences. Given the general purpose of this research which is to delve deeply into the lived experiences of single fathers, Moustakas' method offers several advantages over other qualitative approaches.

The goal is to culminate with the essence of the experiences of several individuals who have similar experiences of the phenomenon. They added that this design had a strong underpinning derived from conducting interviews; hence, the narratives from the stories of Single Fathers were dealt with much attention.

To add, Moustakas' phenomenology is particularly well-suited to capturing the richness and depth of individual experiences. It emphasizes the importance of returning "to the things themselves," meaning that the analysis is grounded in the participants' descriptions of their experiences without preconceived notions or theoretical biases. This aligns with the study's objective to faithfully represent the authentic voices and stories of single fathers, allowing their unique encounters to be revealed in their full complexity.

Moreover, Moustakas' approach includes specific steps such as epoché (bracketing), phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesis of meanings and essences. These steps ensure a thorough and reflective process that uncovers the core meanings of participants' experiences. The use of epoché, for instance, enables the researcher to set aside personal biases and focus solely on the participants' perspectives. This is crucial in a study aiming to explore the nuanced and often emotionally charged experiences of single fathers, as it helps in avoiding researcher bias and ensuring that the findings are genuinely reflective of the participants' realities.

The researchers themselves never actually experienced becoming Single Fathers; however, they had noticed that it is too unyielding to become one. With that, the researchers have undoubtedly carved presuppositions and judgment in mind with regard to the exhausting process of walking through life and raising kids as a one-man parent.

To better attain clarification, realizations, and insights, a researcher must stand outside and view the world from above (Moustakas, 1994). Hence, the researchers chose to side with the constructivist research perspective and decided not to attempt to explain the phenomenon based on how he sees, observes, and judges it, but embraced a wide range of social constructs from people with direct experiences.

Sample Population or Subject of the Research

The study was conducted in Pagadian City where the researchers and participants presently reside. The main concern was to explore the rich context of Single Fathers in the locality. The researchers believed there was no need to go farther in terms of the geographical site since rich data can already be

accumulated within the locale and with respect also to the number of participants that this study catered. The geographical spaces left uncovered could serve as rooms for exploration by other researchers who would intentionally replicate this study with their situational context as the "gap".

In determining the sample size for this study, the researcher adhered to Capacio (2021) interpretation that 6 to 10 participants are enough to address research questions and uncover multiple realities. The researchers decided to include the most number - that is 10 Single Fathers who would make good informants. This research explored the lived experiences of 10 Single Fathers. The participants were chosen in accordance with the inclusion criteria set by this study, specifically that they are: (1) Single Fathers; (2) parents of 1 or more children; (3) living with, and providing the necessities of their children; and (4) residing in Pagadian City. The researchers had secured a list from the office of the registry of families that had declared only one sole-provider – fathers. Upon having been able to contact the fathers, most were untraceable and others had declined to participate. As the researchers narrowed down the contact list, only 10 single fathers commit to participate.

Data Collection Techniques and Instrument Development

The main instruments were the researchers, who were aided by a semi-structured interview guide that allowed them to have liberal conversations with the participants. The researcher-designed questionnaire was rooted in the most important question of this paper: "How do husbands describe their struggles as single parents in raising child/children?". The questionnaire was composed of four sub-questions with probes.

Since the study involved an educational motive, the researchers asked first an authorization to conduct from their instructor. Upon approval, the researchers immediately went to the research participants, and courteously discussed the nature, purpose, and mechanics of the study. The whole process of the data gathering was clearly stated in the Informed Consent, which was given prior to the discourse; since the participants' approval was a pre-requisite. Consents were collected before the interview to ensure that understanding and acceptance of terms and conditions were well-documented.

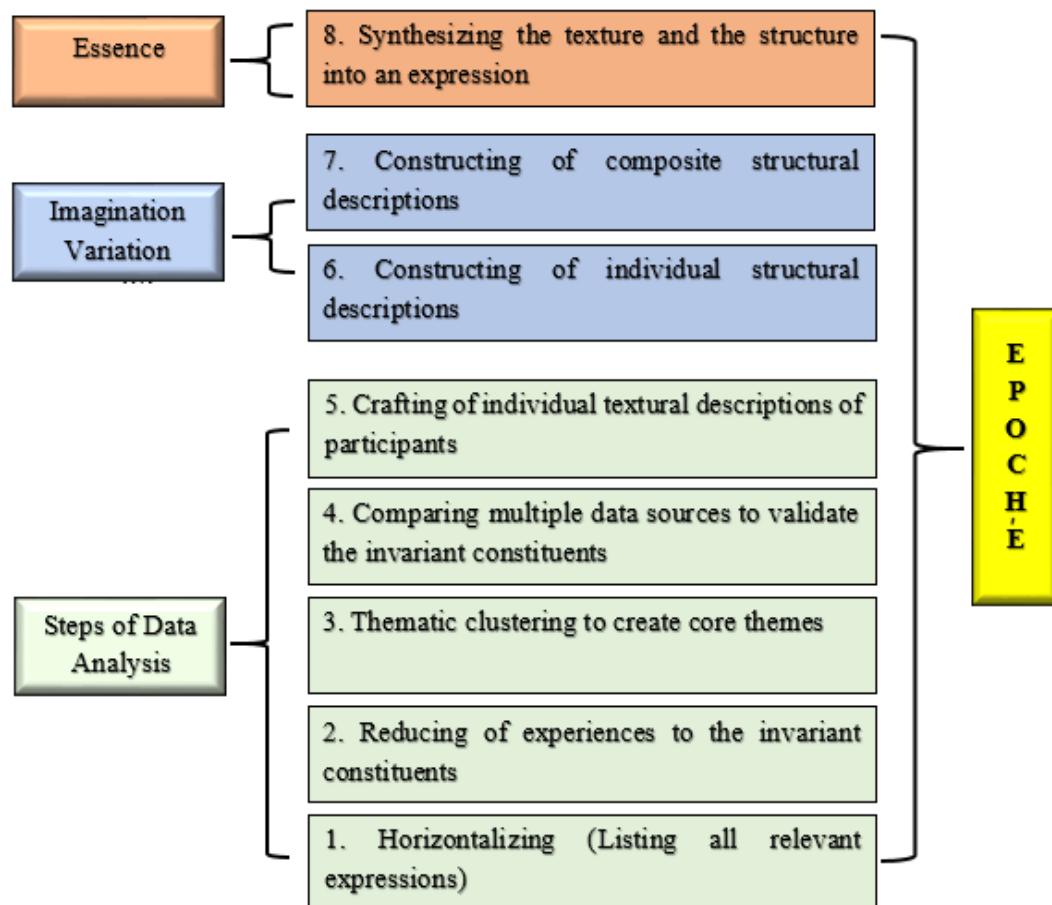
Using an audio recorder, verbal answers were recorded. The research participants were also instructed to answer each probe in oral form wholeheartedly. They were reminded that they could freely disengage from the interview whenever they felt like doing so. The researchers translated the questions into the most preferred language of the participants when found necessary. Before administering the semi-structured interview, the researchers established an inviting atmosphere with the participants to make them at ease and remove the barrier between the interviewer and interviewee. They focused on asking good and relevant questions and probed to gather open-ended responses that could provide substantial answers to the central question.

On top of that, the researcher believed that the trustworthiness of results is the bedrock of high-quality qualitative research (Birt et al., 2016); hence, they also conducted Members' Checking to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the study. This means that after transcribing the audio into text, the researchers returned to the research participants and provided them with a copy of their responses to verify if the transcriptions accurately represented what they intended to express initially.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological studies start and stop with lived experiences. Since the form of inquiry of this study is to understand human experiences with no variable of disturbances, presupposition, and judgment just to precisely zero in with the Epoché, the researchers used Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological data

analysis procedure. This method consists of eight steps which are divided into three clusters: (1) Phenomenological Reduction; (2) Imaginative Variation; and (3) Essence.



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Causes of Broken Marriages Among Single Fathers:

As the researchers sought the truth behind the causes of broken marriages among the ten Single Fathers (SFs), they determined the categories: (1) Third Party; (2) Financial Problems; (3) Vices; (4) Miscommunication; and (5) Religion.

Third Party:

It was just because I made a mistake; I had a relationship with another woman, and my wife found out and left me. (SF02)

During the time that I was in Manila for military schooling, she stopped working and studied at MU that was year 2012, she called and informed me to cool-off. When the time I came back something had changed. When I started to report in Basilan for months or years, I found out that she had another man. (SF04)

It came to the point that she got pregnant by other man. (SF05)

Financial Problems:

Of course, it was about money, since neither of us had a job at that time. We were just relying on my parents. (SF01)

The first problem we had encountered was financial problem because during that time, the salary of Military was not big enough to sustain our needs even though she was also working as casual worker at DAR. We transferred our residence from time to time that is why we can't save money especially I also have loans. (SF03)

Money Vices.

It is about my vices. I would come home drunk and then gamble. (SF06)

The very reason why we got separated with my wife is because of my vice. I was influenced by my co-workers to drink liquors until it became a vice. Whenever I go home drunk, I became mad with my wife and hit her physically because I am out of mind already. (SF08)

Miscommunication:

Our personalities really did not match. It was a result of our decision to live together because I got her pregnant. We were not ready to live together. We kept arguing at home. (SF07)

We have problems on not understanding each other and we miscommunicate, until it reaches to a fight. (SF09)

Religion:

She entered the Islam religion and she wanted me to join also but I am against it although I tried to observe it for two years. The Lord, God freed me from that religion because they do not believe Jesus Christ is the son of God. So I got discouraged and I went out. (SF10)

Staying in close proximity to the categories, the researchers noticed the diverse yet interconnected reasons as regards why their marriage weakened, and eventually resulted to separation. The researchers deduced the main theme: **The broken marriages that made Single Fathers, are rooted from the act of infidelity, economic challenges, abuse of substance that led to episodes of quarrelling, and differences of religious belief.**

Looking back at the responses, there are evidences of interconnectedness of family members prior to the separation, and that each behavior is influenced by emotional patterns and dynamics within the family system. In the first theme, it can be seen that infidelity, economic challenges, substance abuse, quarreling, and differences in religious beliefs, contributed to emotional tension and conflict within the family system. According to Family Systems Theory of Bowen (1993), these issues could be seen as manifestations of unresolved emotional issues and dysfunctional patterns passed down through generations. The infidelity and substance abuse may be coping mechanisms or responses to underlying emotional distress within the family system. Economic challenges can exacerbate stress and strain within relationships, leading to increased conflict and arguing.

Family Systems Theory of Bowen (1993) emphasized the importance of differentiation of self, or the ability to maintain one's individuality while remaining emotionally connected to others in the family. He said that through family therapy, single fathers and their families could explore how these issues are interconnected and work towards developing healthier patterns of interaction and communication, ultimately fostering greater emotional resilience and family cohesion.

The Struggles of Single Fathers in Raising Their Children As Single Parents:

As the researchers sought the truth behind the struggles of Single Fathers (SFs) in raising their children as single parents, they determined the categories: (1) Management of Responsibilities; and (2) Financial Instability.

Management of Responsibilities:

At first, it was tough. Feeding the baby, changing diapers, waking up at night when the baby also wakes up. I just had to work extra hard, from working at my job, then preparing things, and then doing side jobs like driving in the afternoons. I did this so I could send my child to a private school. It is indeed difficult to face responsibilities. (SF01)

At first, it was difficult because I was not very familiar with household chores typically done by women. Doing the laundry, cooking, waking up early, cleaning the house, and taking the child to school before going to work. I kept getting scolded by my boss for being late and leaving early to pick up my child, then returning to the office. It was really hard. Not having a partner in life to help raise a child is tough. It was a truly eye-opening experience for me. I realized what I had wasted. I

realized how hard it was for my partner before. I realized how difficult it is to be both a father and a mother. (SF02)

It was very difficult to raise my children especially they go to school, there needs of which I am not so good at because they are girls. I am so used that my wife will take care of everything. In the morning, I wake up early so that I can cook food for breakfast and lunch. Then, in the afternoon, after my work I am always on the rush to go home because I still need to prepare for our dinner, clean the house, and many more. It is difficult for me to manage my time and responsibilities well. (SF06)

Initially, it was overwhelming, juggling everything on my own. The sleepless nights, waking up whenever the baby cried, feeding, changing diapers—it all felt like an endless cycle. But I knew I had to push through. (SF08)

Balancing everything felt nearly impossible. Managing the household, working long hours, and still being there for my child. I had to figure out how to handle everything on my own, from getting my child ready for school to making sure we had enough to cover our expenses. There were nights when I barely slept, but I knew I had to keep going. (SF10)

Financial Instability:

Now that the child is in school, my challenge is on earning more money so that I can provide for his daily needs and anything related to his requirements in school. (SF03)

I did so many jobs just to raise and sustain my son's needs. (SF04)

One of my challenges is on our finances. I have a loan and I am the only one supporting my child. I could only cry while continuing to strive. (SF05)

It is hard to raise children much more if you have to raise 3 kids. I will try any work just so I could feed them. There are times that I need to leave them in the house in order to find work or job so that our daily needs are met. Much more in times when the kids got sick and I have no money at all. I have no choice but to borrow money from people. That is the hardest. (SF07)

The toughest moments are when they get sick, and I have no money to take them to the doctor or buy medicine. In those times, I have no choice but to borrow money from others, even when I do not know how I will pay it back. It is a constant struggle, but I keep pushing forward because I want to give my kids the best life I can. (SF09)

Keeping in the vicinity of details, the researchers noticed the interconnected reasons as regards why it is truly challenging to walk through life by way of single-parenting. The researchers reached the main theme: **The Single Fathers, while raising their children alone, are burdened with fulfilling and managing multiple responsibilities, while at the same time, attending to financial obligations.**

The Role Strain Theory of Goode (1960) supports the idea that single fathers, while raising their children alone, face the heavy burden of managing multiple responsibilities while also striving for financial stability. This theory suggests that people experience stress and difficulty when their roles have excessive and competing demands. He explained that single fathers experience significant role strain as they try to be both the main caregiver and the sole financial provider. This conflict can lead to increased stress, less effective performance of their duties, and negative effects on their well-being. The absence of a partner to share responsibilities and the need to ensure financial stability, often by working multiple jobs or overtime, exacerbates this strain (Goode, 1960).

The Strategies of Single Fathers in Managing Their Struggles of Raising Children:

As the researchers sought the truth behind the strategies of Single Fathers (SFs) in overcoming the challenges of raising their children alone, they determined the categories: (1) Praying to God; (2) Receiving Help from Closest People; and (3) Making Children as Inspiration.

Praying to God:

It is important to return to worship and praise God. If it weren't for Him, I might have committed suicide long ago. But because of His wisdom and the instruments He used, who are my family, siblings, friends, and girlfriend, I was able to overcome the most difficult part. (SF01)

The Lord and His people, like my parents and siblings, made me feel supported and helped me stand up again. I am able to stand because I keep conversing with the Lord. (SF02)

I prayed to the Lord. I always kneel and pray to the Lord; I cried and asked Him to help me to give me strength. (SF03)

In my case, during those difficult times, I seek guidance from God to overcome everything and asked advised from other people but the first one is God. Pray that God will provide everything. (SF04)

I just laid it on God and the skies. I always pray that all these problems will only pass. I got a lot of trust on God, that He will help me. (SF09)

In those times, although I am not so religious I seek God. I humbled myself to Him. I ask for forgiveness for all the things/sins and shortcomings for my wife and to Him. Then, I give time to my family like bonding together. (SF10)

Receiving Help from Closest People:

Financial support and talking to me when I was really down—that is all I ever asked for, nothing else. They are the reason why I was able to stand back up and get back on my feet. (SF02)

When I did not have any money, it was my parents and siblings who I borrowed from. They never hesitated to help, especially for the sake of my child. They never lacked in giving me advice either. They were the ones who pushed me not to give up on life. They are the ones I share my problems with. (SF04)

I have some family and friends who will give a little money and food, and others will tell me that there is work and endorse me to it. (SF05)

In my case, my mother gave me advice of what I am going to do. (SF06)

My close neighbors shared their food others even bought medicine when my kids got sick. My co-workers gave in kinds, like canned goods, noodles and milo. (SF07)

Family and relatives were my strength, refuge and hope. They gave me pieces of advice, and guidance. My parents also gave me some financial support and even a sack of rice since they have a ricefield. (SF09)

Making Children as Inspiration:

Challenges are always there. It really depends on the person whether they let themselves be weakened. In my case, I always think about my child's future, which is why I do everything to provide a good future for them. (SF07)

I drew strength from my child to work harder. What I did is I made my child as an inspiration to overturn my life in the financial aspect. I stopped buying the things I wanted and gave up my vices to save money. Instead of indulging in vices, I focused on household expenses like electricity, water, food, and the necessary school supplies for my child. (SF08)

Staying close to the specifics, the researchers noticed the parallel mechanisms concerning how they overturned the tables despite facing many challenges. The researchers arrived at the main theme:

The Single Fathers' unwavering faith to the Almighty, their humbleness to receive help from people, and their genuine love for their children enabled them to navigate the challenges that are brought by single parenthood.

The Resilience Theory offers a comprehensive framework to support the theme. According to Garmezy (1991), the proponent, the theory posits that resilience is fostered through both internal and external protective factors. Internal factors include personal faith and a strong sense of purpose derived from parental love, while external factors encompass social support networks. He highlighted that integrating these elements, single fathers can effectively cope with stress, adapt to adverse conditions, and maintain a positive outlook, ultimately ensuring their well-being and the well-being of their children.

This holistic approach covers the importance of spiritual, social, and emotional resources in fostering resilience in single fathers.

The Future Plans of Single Fathers:

As the researchers sought the truth behind the future plans of Single Fathers (SFs) in their respective lives, they determined the categories: (1) Continuing the Educational Support for Children; (2) Building a Complete Family Again; and (3) Becoming a Good Example.

Continuing the Educational Support for Children:

I plan to help my child finish school and provide for his daily needs. (SF03)

I want to continue working so I can support my child until she finish her education. (SF05)

I will support my son, he likes to do computer engineering. I will try to support him until he finishes. (SF06)

My plan for my child, since I already retired in my work, I would get a educational plan for her future. (SF07)

I do not aspire for so much more than what we need. My desire for the my family is to be able to live a peaceful life, good health, and that my kids would be able to finish school. I'll just continue on my work for my kids and someday they would be successful. (SF09)

My plans are to focus on the goodness and future of my children that they will finish their studies. To give them their needs and to guide them in the right path and to give my fullest support to them. (SF10)

Building a Complete Family Again:

I want again to build a solid family. It is really different when you have someone to share in the hardships and joys that life brings. Waking up feeling more inspired because your child and your spouse are there. That is what I want to build. Of course, I can only achieve that if I also build myself up first. (SF04)

Soon, I still want to build my own family. (SF08)

I may build my own family because it is nice if we have someone to be with for the rest of our lives. I know in the future my two daughters will have their own family and somehow I do not like to be left alone. (SF10)

Becoming a Good Example:

I also want to show him that even with just one parent, nothing is impossible as long as you work hard. I want to be a role model for my child. I also want to give him a sibling so he can learn to be responsible and love his own family. I want to become wealthy enough to be stable and start a new family. (SF01)

I will do my best to show my child that even though their father made mistakes, he regrets them and is striving to improve our situation. I will also work hard to ensure my child does not encounter a man who will hurt her like I hurt her mother. My plans for my child are really simple. (SF02)

Maintaining precision, the researchers arrived at the main theme: **The Single Fathers' look forward to prioritizing the educational plan for their children, and developing themselves to become worthy and ready of building a complete and united family once again.**

Self-determination theory (SDT) helps us understand why single fathers focus on their children's education and personal growth to create a strong family again. SDT of Ryan and Deci (2020) says people are driven by needs like being independent, feeling capable, and having close relationships. Single fathers want to make choices about their children's education because it makes them feel capable. This helps them be better parents. They also work on themselves to be ready for a new family, which makes them feel connected to others. SDT shows us why single fathers are motivated to prioritize education and self-improvement as they build a united family again.

In exploring the causes of broken marriages among single fathers, our research revealed a complex interplay of factors, including infidelity, financial strain, substance abuse, miscommunication, and religious differences. These findings reflected the diverse yet interconnected reasons contributing to marital breakdown among single fathers. Similarly, our investigation into the struggles of single fathers in raising their children alone illuminated the challenges they face in managing multiple responsibilities and financial instability.

Despite these difficulties, our research identified strategies employed by single fathers to overcome these challenges, including seeking support from their faith, relying on assistance from loved ones, and drawing inspiration from their children. These findings highlight the resilience and determination of single fathers in navigating the trials of single parenthood. Looking ahead, our study elucidates the future plans of single fathers, who prioritize their children's education and personal development as they aspire to rebuild complete and united families once again.

EPOCHÉ:

With the facts which were presented, the researchers had finally grasped the Essence of the Phenomenon or the Epoché - it is that: **The Single Fathers, as they navigated the aftermath of their broken marriages, shouldered a heavy burden of responsibilities and financial obligations, and while raising their children alone, they drew strength from unwavering faith, humility in seeking support, and a deep-seated love for their children, and planned to occupied themselves into prioritizing their children's education and personal development in pursuit of rebuilding a complete and united family once again.**

4. CONCLUSION

The narratives shared by the ten single fathers served as a profound testament to their journey post-marriage breakdown, characterized by the weight of responsibilities and financial obligations, intertwined with the resilience found in unwavering faith, humble acceptance of support, and deep affection for their children. Their aspirations for prioritizing their children's education and personal growth signalled a collective desire to reconstruct cohesive family units. From the roots of broken marriages, through the challenges of single parenthood, and the strategies employed to navigate these difficulties, emerged a touching narrative of hope and determination as these single fathers endeavored to cultivate a future marked by unity, love, and familial stability.

This focus on single fathers offers a necessary counterbalance to the predominantly mother-centric discourse in single parent research, thereby broadening our understanding of the dynamics within single-parent families. Furthermore, the findings emphasized the importance of emotional and spiritual resources in navigating the difficulties of single parenthood, offering new insights into the coping mechanisms employed by single fathers. The aspect of centrality of education and personal growth in the aspirations of single fathers for their children contributes to the broader understanding of the goals and values that drive single fathers, providing valuable information for policymakers and practitioners working to support single-parent families.

Finally, the study adds core to the field by presenting a narrative of hope and determination among single fathers. By documenting their strategies for overcoming the challenges of single parenthood, the study offers a touching and inspiring account of their efforts to cultivate a future marked by unity, love, and familial stability. This narrative not only enriches our understanding of single fatherhood but also serves as a testament to the strength and resilience of these men, offering a new perspective on the potential for growth and healing in the aftermath of marital breakdown.

Limitations and Recommendations

1. **Single Fathers.** Seeking support networks, such as counseling services or support groups, to address emotional needs and develop coping strategies might be of help. Also, staying connected with your children and actively engaging in their education and personal development may contribute to becoming focused or preoccupied.
2. **Families.** Fostering a home-based inclusive, supportive, loving environment might be a way to better strengthen the bond of family members, that could negate chances of separation.
3. **Single Parents' Children.** Through expressing love, support, understanding, children could motivate their single parents to stay strong, composed, and navigate challenging times with greater resilience. By demonstrating appreciation for their parent's efforts and sacrifices, children might uplift their parent's spirits and remind them of their importance in their lives. Additionally, offering emotional support by being empathetic and understanding towards their parent's struggles can provide a sense of reassurance and comfort.
4. **Community.** Establishing community-based initiatives that offer practical support and resources for single fathers, including job training, financial literacy programs, and childcare assistance may be beneficial. Promoting awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by single-parent families, and advocate for policies that promote equality and support for all families could be advantageous.

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