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WHEN ONE CHAIR STANDS EMPTY: CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN IN NAVIGATING LIFE WITH SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN UBAY

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ABSTRACT

Single-parent families present unique developmental dynamics, yet the literature predominantly emphasizes parental viewpoints rather than the lived realities of youth. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of children navigating life within single-parent households in Ubay, Bohol, examining their emotional, social, and financial challenges, coping mechanisms, and personal realizations. Fifteen (15) children from single-parent households across Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw were selected through purposive

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sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and examined using thematic analysis. The inquiry revealed three overarching themes: (1) Navigating Early Independence and Recognizing Parental Sacrifices, where children developed early maturity, self-reliance, and profound gratitude toward their solo parents; (2) Encountering Tri-Fold Vulnerabilities: Emotional Solitude, Social Stigma, and Material Strain, characterized by feelings of parental absence, social prejudice, and financial rationing; and (3) Cultivating Adaptive Resilience, Reimagining Family Values, and Civic Hopes, reflecting refined personal grit, redefined perceptions of family completeness, and determination to succeed academically. The findings conclude that while single-parent household dynamics impose compounded socioeconomic and psychosocial burdens, lived adversity concurrently fosters positive adaptability, maturity, and moral resolve. Consequently, the study recommends targeted municipal social protection floors by the Local Government Unit and Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, school- and barangay-based anti-stigma initiatives, accessible youth counseling services, and strengthened family communication channels to reinforce the well-being and developmental potential of children in single-parent homes.

Keywords: *Single-Parent Families, Lived Experiences, Phenomenological Study, Resilience, Ubay, Youth Well-Being*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Single-parent families continue to represent a growing family structure that presents unique emotional, social, and financial experiences deserving of greater scholarly attention (Dela Luna et al., 2023). Life in single-parent families refers to the lived experiences of children raised in households headed by only one parent, which encompasses the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities and adaptive behaviors these youth encounter daily. Navigating this structure involves addressing challenges that arise from limited financial resources, rapidly shifting family roles, and emotional instability, all of which can significantly influence children's well-being, development, and daily experiences. By understanding these challenges, educators, policymakers, and communities can gain a deeper appreciation of how children adapt to and cope with the realities of living in a single-parent family.

The phrase "one chair stands empty" captures the starting point of this inquiry. It refers not only to the physical absence of one parent at the family table but also to the many ways in which that absence is felt in a child's daily life: in the quiet moments at home, at school events where families are expected to attend together, and in the conversations of peers and neighbors. A household headed by one parent is not, in itself, a deficient household. It is, however, a household in which responsibilities, resources, and emotional labor are concentrated in a single adult, and children are often drawn into the work of keeping the family going. Understanding how children themselves interpret this arrangement is therefore central to any effort to support them.

Identifying and understanding these specific challenges is valuable because it can inform targeted interventions and improve the long-term well-being of affected youth. Current literature heavily emphasizes the parental side of this dynamic; for instance, Dela Luna et al. (2023) explored the experiences of solo parents in child-rearing and family responsibilities, while Casco et al. (2025) examined the lived experiences of single fathers and their coping mechanisms. On a broader scale, international organizations provide structural data, such as UNICEF (2023) discussing children's well-being across different family structures with less attention to the personal perspectives of the children, and the OECD (2024) describing macro social and economic conditions rather than day-to-day youth experiences. Consequently, an important gap remains regarding how children themselves perceive and navigate the challenges of growing up when "one chair stands empty." The contributing factors to this issue include localized socioeconomic pressures in rural or developing municipalities and a lack of youth-centered support systems. To respond to this concern, local communities and social welfare sectors must move beyond generic statistics and investigate the distinct geographical and cultural realities of these households.

The primary goal of this study was to explore and understand the emotional, social, and financial challenges encountered by children in navigating life within single-parent families in Ubay through their lived experiences. Specifically, it sought to determine how these emotional, social, and financial experiences shape their daily lives, affect their overall well-being, and identify the localized coping mechanisms they employ. Through this research, valuable insights may be uncovered to benefit children from single-parent families, solo parents, the Local Government Unit (LGU), the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO), the Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU), and future researchers. Ultimately, the findings of this study are intended to serve as a baseline foundation for developing appropriate support programs, evidence-informed interventions, and localized policies aimed at promoting the well-being and resilience of children in single-parent families.

The study was situated in Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw in the Municipality of Ubay, Bohol. These communities provide the localized context in which the children's experiences unfolded, a context shaped by the socioeconomic pressures of a rural or developing municipality and by the limited availability of youth-centered support systems noted above. Documenting the experiences of children in this specific setting responds to the need, identified in the literature, for research that looks beyond generic statistics and attends to the geographical and cultural realities of single-parent households.

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Two ideas frame the inquiry. The first is that the experience of growing up in a single-parent household cannot be fully understood from the viewpoint of parents or from aggregate data alone; it requires the accounts of the children who live it. The second is that the emotional, social, and financial dimensions of this experience are not separate. A child who rations personal spending, who feels excluded at a school event, and who misses an absent parent is living one experience with several faces. For this reason, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, which places the children's own descriptions at the center of the analysis and treats their words as the primary evidence.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on diverse developmental and psychosocial frameworks to explain how children in Ubay navigate the realities of single-parent households. Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) establishes that a secure, consistent emotional bond with a single caregiver, rather than the sheer number of parents, is what dictates emotional stability, trust, and resilience (Simply Psychology, 2022). This process of emotional adaptation is extended by Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development Theory (1950), which asserts that children in single-parent environments can successfully resolve identity and competence conflicts by building self-reliance and personal values when given supportive guidance (McLeod, 2018).

Furthermore, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) explains that these children acquire resilience, problem-solving skills, and proactive coping mechanisms by directly observing and imitating the industrious example of their solo parents (Cherry, 2020). These developmental trajectories, however, remain contingent upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943), which maintains that children require basic physiological, safety, and emotional needs to be secured before they can successfully build confidence and pursue self-actualization (McLeod, 2021). Ultimately, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory (1936) supports this study's qualitative methodology, confirming that children actively construct and reflect upon their unique family realities rather than passively adopting external perceptions, making their direct voices indispensable to understanding their lived experiences (LibreTexts, 2023).

Table 1 summarizes how each theoretical perspective relates to the focus of the study and to the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Table 1. Theoretical Perspectives and Their Relevance to the Study

Theoretical Perspective	Core Ideas	Relevance to the Study	Related Theme
Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969)	A secure, consistent emotional bond with a caregiver dictates emotional stability, trust, and resilience	Explains how a loving bond with one primary caregiver provides the emotional foundation for children's resilience and healthy development	Theme 1
Psychosocial Stages of Development Theory (Erikson, 1950)	Identity and competence conflicts can be resolved through self-reliance and personal values when supportive guidance is given	Explains how children in single-parent households overcome identity conflicts by developing competence and personal values	Theme 3

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Theoretical Perspective	Core Ideas	Relevance to the Study	Related Theme
Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)	Resilience, problem-solving skills, and coping mechanisms are acquired by observing and imitating role models	Explains how children acquire industrious habits and proactive coping by observing the hardworking example of their solo parents	Theme 1
Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943)	Basic physiological, safety, and emotional needs must be secured before confidence and self-actualization can develop	Explains how unmet safety and material needs impede children's confidence and self-actualization	Theme 2
Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1936)	Children actively construct and reflect upon their realities rather than passively adopting external perceptions	Supports the qualitative methodology and the use of children's own voices to understand their lived experiences	Theme 3

Integrating the Theoretical Perspectives

Together, the five perspectives provide a layered lens for understanding how children navigate life in a single-parent household. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) directs attention to the quality of the emotional bond between the child and the remaining caregiver, which is what the literature identifies as the foundation of stability and resilience. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explains how that bond becomes a channel for learning, as children observe and imitate the industrious example of their solo parents. Psychosocial Stages of Development Theory (Erikson, 1950) addresses what children do with these experiences over time, namely how they resolve questions of identity and competence by building self-reliance and personal values.

Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943) adds the material and safety conditions under which these developments take place. It reminds the reader that confidence and self-actualization depend on basic needs being met, which is particularly relevant where a single income limits what a household can provide. Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1936) completes the lens by emphasizing that children are active interpreters of their own circumstances rather than passive recipients of them. This last point also supports the methodological choice of the study, since it is the children's own constructions of their family reality that the interviews sought to capture.

These perspectives were used in this study as interpretive guides rather than as hypotheses to be tested. Because the study is qualitative and phenomenological, the themes were derived from the participants' accounts, and the theories were then used to interpret what those accounts mean. The relationship between each perspective and the themes that emerged is shown in Table 1 and discussed under each theme in the Results and Discussion section.

Legal and Regulatory Context and the Sustainable Development Goals

The legal and institutional framework in the Philippines establishes a mandate to defend, protect, and support children in single-parent families. The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Article XV, Sections 1–3 (1987), recognizes the family as the nation's foundation and binds the State to protect children from developmental harm, ensuring equal support regardless of family composition. This is operationalized by Presidential Decree No. 603, the Child and Youth Welfare Code (1974), which declares children as vital national assets and mandates local communities to explore their lived realities to address emotional, social, and structural gaps. In alignment with this, Executive Order No. 209, the Family Code of the Philippines (1987), positions the

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child's best interests as the primary consideration in all domestic arrangements, safeguarding their welfare in non-traditional households.

At the localized level, Republic Act No. 6972, the Barangay-Level Total Development and Protection of Children Act (1990), shifts this responsibility to local government units, tasking the municipal authorities of Ubay, specifically within Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw, to implement targeted programs that identify and assist children with limited parental presence or care. Finally, Republic Act No. 7610, the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (1992), prohibits discrimination and emotional neglect based on family status, providing the legal imperative to dismantle societal stigma and establish proactive safety nets for single-parent households.

Internationally, this domestic mandate directly reinforces the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015). Safeguarding children in single-parent homes contributes to SDG 1: No Poverty (Target 1.3) by institutionalizing nationally appropriate social protection floors to shield vulnerable solo-parent households from economic deprivation. Prioritizing their cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being advances SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being (Target 3.4) and SDG 4: Quality Education (Target 4.2), ensuring equitable early childhood development and mental health support. Crucially, dismantling stigma and institutional disparities aligns with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities (Targets 10.2 and 10.3) by empowering vulnerable family structures and eliminating discriminatory social practices. Finally, localizing child protection protocols within municipal and barangay mechanisms operationalizes SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Targets 16.2 and 16.6), upholding the global pledge of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind" by safeguarding children from all forms of neglect, abuse, and structural exclusion.

Taken together, these laws and global goals define the State's obligations toward children, establish expectations for local government units to identify and assist children with limited parental presence or care, and set a standard against which stigma and neglect based on family status are to be measured. They do not, however, describe how children in single-parent households themselves experience these conditions, whether the protections reach them, or how they respond when they do not. This study complements the legal and policy framework by documenting those experiences from the children's own perspective, in the specific communities where the mandate is expected to be carried out.

Related Literature and Studies

The review of related literature and studies provides strong empirical evidence regarding the socioeconomic, psychological, and adaptive realities of single-parent households globally and within the Philippine landscape. Internationally, children in single-parent homes often navigate behavioral and emotional difficulties stemming from limited supervision, social stigma, and economic strain (Fu, 2023; Zhang, 2025; Yilmaz & Demir, 2024), yet strong emotional closeness with the available caregiver consistently acts as a primary protective factor (Rossi et al., 2025).

This financial vulnerability is echoed locally, where solo parents experience severe distress and material constraints due to single incomes and systemic implementation gaps in welfare policies such as Republic Act No. 11861 (Lucero-Dueñas, 2025; Cruz et al., 2024; Dela Cruz et al., 2025). In response, children demonstrate acute awareness of these economic struggles, often limiting personal spending, modifying academic expectations, and voluntarily taking on domestic duties to alleviate their parents' workloads (Aryani & Lindawati, 2025; Aloro et al., 2024; Al Zoubi et al., 2026; Müller & Weber, 2026).

Furthermore, limited parental contact due to demanding work schedules, such as those faced by single-parent educators, often compels children to develop early decision-making capabilities, rely on sibling support networks, or leverage digital tools to bridge physical distances (Novak & Varga, 2025; Calamaan et al., 2025; Okeke et al., 2024). While single fathers experience unique struggles with emotional guidance (Casco et al., 2025), and single mothers face persistent professional and social biases (Ybanez et al., 2025), local families display exceptional

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resilience by utilizing adaptive budgeting and seeking assistance from extended kin and informal community networks (Bedes et al., 2026; Hingpis et al., 2022).

This reliance on localized, informal networks rather than formal government channels is particularly pronounced in rural areas (Dela Cruz et al., 2024; Reyes et al., 2026). This disparity underscores the necessity of research like the present study to elevate children's direct voices, address regional gaps in support systems, and promote more inclusive developmental environments (Sigle-Rushton et al., 2023; Setiawan et al., 2025).

Patterns in the Related Studies

Several patterns emerge from the studies reviewed. The first concerns the burdens that accompany single-parent households and the protection that a caregiver's closeness can provide. International studies describe behavioral and emotional difficulties among children that stem from limited supervision, social stigma, and economic strain (Fu, 2023; Zhang, 2025; Yilmaz & Demir, 2024). At the same time, strong emotional closeness with the available caregiver is described as a primary protective factor (Rossi et al., 2025). The literature therefore does not portray single-parent households only as places of hardship; it identifies the caregiver relationship as a resource that can offset many of the risks.

The second pattern concerns financial vulnerability and children's response to it. Locally, solo parents are reported to experience severe distress and material constraints because of single incomes and systemic gaps in the implementation of welfare policies such as Republic Act No. 11861 (Lucero-Dueñas, 2025; Cruz et al., 2024; Dela Cruz et al., 2025). Children, in turn, show acute awareness of these struggles. They limit personal spending, modify academic expectations, and voluntarily take on domestic duties to ease their parents' workloads (Aryani & Lindawati, 2025; Aloro et al., 2024; Al Zoubi et al., 2026; Müller & Weber, 2026). These studies suggest that children are participants in the household's economic adjustment and not merely its dependents.

The third pattern concerns limited parental contact. Demanding work schedules, such as those faced by single-parent educators, often compel children to develop early decision-making capabilities, rely on sibling support networks, or leverage digital tools to bridge physical distances (Novak & Varga, 2025; Calamaan et al., 2025; Okeke et al., 2024). The literature also distinguishes the particular struggles of different single-parent households: single fathers experience difficulty with emotional guidance (Casco et al., 2025), while single mothers face persistent professional and social biases (Ybanez et al., 2025).

The fourth pattern concerns coping and community support. Local families display considerable resilience by utilizing adaptive budgeting and by seeking assistance from extended kin and informal community networks (Bedes et al., 2026; Hingpis et al., 2022). This reliance on localized, informal networks rather than formal government channels is particularly pronounced in rural areas (Dela Cruz et al., 2024; Reyes et al., 2026). The studies reviewed therefore point to a gap between the formal protections that exist on paper and the informal arrangements on which families actually depend.

Taken together, the literature describes the hardships of single-parent households, the economic adjustments families make, and the informal networks that sustain them, much of it from the standpoint of parents or of broad social and economic conditions. What remains less developed is an account, in the children's own words, of how they experience and make sense of life when one chair stands empty. Scholars have called for research that elevates children's direct voices, addresses regional gaps in support systems, and promotes more inclusive developmental environments (Sigle-Rushton et al., 2023; Setiawan et al., 2025). This is the gap that the present study addresses.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of children from single-parent families by examining the emotional, social, and financial aspects they encounter in navigating life within a single-parent household during calendar year 2026. The study was conducted among children residing in Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw in Ubay. It also sought to uncover how these children cope with such challenges and the

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insights they gain from their experiences, which may serve as a basis for developing appropriate support programs and interventions.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do children describe their experiences in navigating life within a single-parent family?
2. What emotional, social, and financial challenges do children encounter while living in a single-parent family?
3. What realizations do children from single-parent families gain from the challenges they experience in navigating life within a single-parent family?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what recommendations can be proposed to support the well-being and resilience of children from single-parent families?

The four questions follow the logic of the inquiry. The first asks children to describe their experiences in their own terms. The second narrows the focus to the emotional, social, and financial challenges that the literature has identified as the main areas of difficulty. The third asks what children take away from those challenges, which is the meaning-making that phenomenological inquiry is designed to reveal. The fourth turns the findings toward action by asking what support can be proposed on their basis.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of children in navigating life within single-parent families in Ubay.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. explore and describe the lived experiences of children navigating life within a single-parent family;
2. identify the emotional, social, and financial challenges encountered by children living in single-parent families;
3. explore the realizations and insights gained by children from their experiences in navigating life within a single-parent family; and
4. develop recommendations that may support the well-being and resilience of children from single-parent families.

The first three objectives are descriptive and interpretive: they seek to understand what children experience, what challenges they face, and what they realize. The fourth objective is practical and rests on the first three. The recommendations offered at the end of this paper are therefore drawn from the themes that emerged from the children's accounts and not from assumptions about what single-parent households need.

Significance of the Study

This research holds significant value for various stakeholders by providing a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of children from single-parent families. The findings of this study may contribute to the development of appropriate support systems, interventions, and programs that promote the well-being and resilience of children navigating life in a single-parent household.

Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO). The findings of this study may provide valuable insights into the emotional, social, and financial challenges encountered by children from single-parent families. These insights may serve as a basis for designing and strengthening social welfare programs, interventions, and support services that address the needs of children living in single-parent households.

Local Government Unit (LGU). This study may assist the Local Government Unit in developing and implementing community-based programs and initiatives that promote the well-being, protection, and resilience

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of children from single-parent families. The findings may also support the planning of services and activities that respond to the emotional, social, and financial needs of these children.

Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU). The findings of this study may help the Barangay Local Government Unit identify the specific needs of children from single-parent families within the community. These insights may support the implementation of barangay-level programs, referral services, and community-based initiatives that promote the welfare, protection, and resilience of children living in single-parent households.

Single Parents. The findings of this study may help single parents gain a deeper understanding of how their children experience the emotional, social, and financial challenges associated with living in a single-parent household. Such insights may guide them in strengthening communication, providing emotional support, and adopting parenting practices that foster their children's overall well-being and resilience.

Children from Single-Parent Families. This study may provide children from single-parent families with an opportunity to express and share their lived experiences regarding the emotional, social, and financial challenges they encounter. It may also help them recognize that their experiences are valued and understood while encouraging resilience and positive coping strategies.

Future Researchers. This study may serve as a valuable reference for future researchers who intend to conduct studies related to children from single-parent families and their lived experiences. The findings may contribute to the existing body of knowledge and encourage further qualitative and quantitative research on the emotional, social, and financial challenges, coping strategies, and resilience of children living in single-parent households.

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METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of children from single-parent families. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to capture rich, descriptive data on how these children navigate the emotional, social, and financial realities of their household dynamics, which would be difficult to quantify through other methods.

Phenomenology is concerned with how people experience a phenomenon and with the meaning they give to it. In this study, the phenomenon was life within a single-parent family as it is lived by children: the daily adjustments, the feelings of absence, the pressures of limited resources, and the realizations that followed. The design treated the children's own words as the primary evidence and was aligned with the first three research questions of the study, which ask about experiences, challenges, and realizations. A quantitative survey could have measured how common certain difficulties are, but it would not have shown how a child feels at a school event where parents are expected to attend, or what a child understands about family after years of watching one parent carry the household.

Research Environment

The research was conducted in Barangay Imelda, Barangay Biabas, and Barangay Benliw, all located in the Municipality of Ubay, Province of Bohol. This environment was the specific context for the study, and all data collection activities were carried out within these communities. This ensured that the study is directly relevant to the daily lived experiences of the children within their natural home and community environments.

The three barangays are located in a rural or developing municipality, where, as discussed in the Introduction, socioeconomic pressures are pronounced, and youth-centered support systems are limited. Collecting data within these communities placed the study close to the children's actual circumstances and allowed the findings to speak to the local government units, the municipal social welfare office, and the barangay officials who are positioned to act on them.

Participants of the Study

The participants were a group of fifteen (15) children from single-parent families residing in Barangays Imelda, Benliw, and Biabas, Ubay, Bohol. The participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method to ensure that all selected individuals possessed firsthand, relevant lived experiences of being raised in a household headed by only one parent. This technique helped to target information-rich cases that could provide an authentic and objective representation of the challenges, coping mechanisms, and realizations of the target population.

The number of participants was kept small in keeping with the in-depth interview approach of phenomenological research, in which the richness of each account is prioritized over the breadth of the sample. Purposive selection ensured that every participant could speak directly from experience, since each was a child being raised in a household headed by only one parent. The participants came from the three barangays named above, so that the accounts reflect more than a single neighborhood while remaining within the same municipal context.

Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool for this research was a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide. The questions in the guide were carefully crafted to delve into the children's experiences regarding three key areas: emotional, social, and financial challenges, as well as their coping mechanisms and personal realizations. To ensure quality, the instrument was reviewed and validated by the research adviser and qualified experts, and its flexible nature allowed the researchers to ask probing, follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's unique experience.

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The questions in the guide were directed at the same areas covered by the research questions: how children describe their experiences of living in a single-parent family; the emotional, social, and financial challenges they encounter; and the realizations they gain from those challenges. Because the instrument was semi-structured, the same areas guided every interview, while the follow-up questions were adapted to what each participant said. This flexibility was important in working with children, since it allowed the researchers to let each participant describe sensitive matters in his or her own way and at his or her own pace.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The research followed a systematic process to ensure ethical standards and data validity, divided into three distinct phases:

Phase 1. Securing Approvals and Permissions. The researchers first secured the necessary permissions and approvals from the appropriate authorities to establish the administrative and ethical validity of the study. A formal request letter describing the title, purpose, scope, and objectives of the research was prepared and submitted to the research adviser and school administration for review and approval. After the required institutional approval was obtained, the researchers submitted the endorsed request letter to the concerned Barangay Captains of Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw in Ubay, Bohol, to seek permission to conduct the study within their respective communities. Upon receiving authorization, the researchers coordinated with the barangay officials and other appropriate personnel to identify qualified participants and arrange the schedule and venue of the interviews while observing established community protocols.

Phase 2. Participant Selection and Interviews. The second phase involved the purposive selection of participants and the conduct of face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The researchers identified children from single-parent families who met the predetermined inclusion criteria of the study and invited them to participate voluntarily. Before each interview, the researchers explained the purpose, procedures, expected participation, confidentiality measures, and ethical considerations of the study, and the necessary informed consent and assent were secured in accordance with the participants' age and circumstances. Data were then gathered through a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide designed around the study objectives, focusing on the children's lived experiences, emotional, social, and financial challenges, and the realizations they gained while navigating life within a single-parent family. The semi-structured approach provided participants with sufficient opportunity to freely express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and personal perspectives.

Phase 3. Documentation and Transcription. The final phase focused on the proper documentation, transcription, and organization of the information gathered from the participants. With prior permission, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that the participants' responses were captured accurately and completely. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed carefully to ensure that the written transcripts accurately reflected the participants' accounts.

The sequence of the procedure was designed to protect the participants and the quality of the data. Securing the approval of the research adviser and the school administration first established the institutional validity of the study. Seeking the permission of the Barangay Captains before approaching families respected community protocols and gave the researchers a legitimate channel for identifying qualified participants. Explaining the purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures before each interview, and securing informed consent and assent according to the participants' age and circumstances, ensured that participation was voluntary and informed. Audio recording with permission, followed by verbatim transcription and review, preserved the children's own words for analysis.

Data Analysis

The researchers organized and coded the transcripts and applied thematic analysis to identify significant statements, meaningful patterns, and emerging themes related to the children's lived experiences, emotional, social, and financial challenges, and realizations. The resulting themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions and served as the basis for developing recommendations that may contribute to the well-being and

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resilience of children from single-parent families. Participant excerpts are presented in the next section under the codes P1 to P8.

The analysis therefore moved from the transcripts to significant statements, from statements to codes, from codes to recurring patterns, and from patterns to themes. The themes were then examined in relation to the research questions and interpreted with reference to the theoretical perspectives and related studies reviewed in the Introduction. This process produced the three themes presented in the Results and Discussion section.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical standards throughout. The necessary permissions and approvals were secured from the research adviser, the school administration, and the Barangay Captains before the participants were approached. Before each interview, the researchers explained the purpose, procedures, expected participation, and confidentiality measures of the study, and informed consent and assent were secured in accordance with the participants' age and circumstances. Participation was voluntary, and the interviews were audio-recorded only with prior permission. In reporting the results, participants are identified only by codes (P1 to P8). The authors declare no conflict of interest, as stated in the compliance section of this paper.

Operational Definition of Terms

For a clearer understanding of this study, the following terms are operationally defined:

Children from Single-Parent Families. The selected participants residing in Barangays Imelda, Benliw, and Biabas, Ubay, Bohol, who are being raised by only one parent.

Coping Mechanisms. The specific strategies, behaviors, and cognitive practices employed by the participants to manage, endure, and overcome their emotional, social, and financial difficulties.

Emotional Challenges. The feelings and psychological difficulties experienced by the participants, such as loneliness, sadness, anxiety, stress, or insecurity resulting from living with only one parent.

Financial Challenges. The economic difficulties experienced by the participants due to limited household income, affecting educational expenses, daily necessities, healthcare, and basic needs.

Lived Experiences. The personal encounters, daily perceptions, emotions, and household realities of children living in single-parent families as described in their firsthand accounts.

Realizations. The personal insights, lessons learned, and shifts in perspective gained by the participants through their experiences of living in a single-parent household.

Recommendations. The proposed actions, community-based interventions, and support programs formulated based on the study's findings to promote student and child well-being.

Resilience. The capacity of the participants to adapt positively, recover from hardships, and function effectively despite the adversity of navigating life with a single parent.

Single-Parent Families. Households in which children are raised by only one parent due to circumstances such as separation, death, abandonment, or other family situations.

Social Challenges. The interpersonal, peer, and community-related difficulties encountered by the participants, which may include social stigma, limited social interaction, discrimination, or difficulties participating in school and community activities.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings, analysis, and interpretation of the qualitative data gathered from the participant youth regarding their lived experiences of growing up in single-parent families in Ubay. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurring patterns, core meanings, and overarching insights embedded in the participants' responses. The analysis directly addresses the primary objectives of the study: exploring how children perceive and navigate life when "one chair stands empty," the specific emotional, social, and financial challenges they encounter, and the cognitive realizations they gain regarding personal resilience, family values, and community support systems. Through a systematic examination of the qualitative responses, three major themes emerged that capture the lived reality of youth in single-parent households. Table 2, presented after the three themes, summarizes how the themes relate to the research objectives.

The three themes are: (1) navigating early independence and recognizing parental sacrifices; (2) encountering tri-fold vulnerabilities, namely emotional solitude, social stigma, and material strain; and (3) cultivating adaptive resilience, reimagining family values, and civic hopes. Taken in sequence, they describe how children first adapt to life in a household headed by one parent, what difficulties that life brings, and what children come to understand and hope for as a result. Each theme is presented with representative excerpts from the participants, an interpretation of the responses, and a discussion of the theoretical and empirical literature that supports it.

Theme 1. Navigating Early Independence and Recognizing Parental Sacrifices

The first theme highlights how children experience and adapt to the daily realities of living in a home headed by a solo parent. Participants described developing an early sense of self-reliance, taking on domestic responsibilities, and managing their own school routines to lighten their available parent's burden. While the absence of one parent initially evokes feelings of longing or emotional emptiness, children forge a deep bond of gratitude with their remaining caregiver, recognizing the immense sacrifices required to provide for the household single-handedly.

Dimensions of the Theme

Three strands run through the first theme. The first is early self-reliance. Participants described managing their own school routines and learning to take care of themselves so that the available parent would have less to worry about. The second is household contribution. Domestic responsibilities became part of daily life, and children took them on as a way of sharing the work of the family. The third is gratitude. Seeing the parent provide for the household single-handedly led children to recognize the effort involved and to feel a deep appreciation for it. These strands are connected: it is because children see the parent's effort that they take on responsibility, and it is by taking on responsibility that they come to understand how much the parent does.

Several participants described their daily routines and perspective shifts regarding parental effort. One participant shared:

> **P1:** *"Seeing my mother work alone day and night made me realize I had to grow up fast, manage my own schooling, and help around the house without complaining."*

Another participant reflected on the emotional bond formed through shared hardship:

> **P2:** *"Even though we miss having a complete family, seeing my father strive every single day makes me value his love and sacrifice even more."*

The responses indicate that children in single-parent homes undergo an accelerated maturation process. Rather than remaining passive dependents, youth actively adjust their behavioral expectations, taking pride in their growing independence while offering emotional solidarity to their solo parent. Their accounts reveal that the "empty chair" serves as a daily visual reminder of both lost presence and heroic single-handed effort.

The two excerpts illustrate different sides of the same adjustment. In the first, P1 describes how watching a mother work "day and night" led to a recognition that growing up quickly was necessary, and the account lists specific

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tasks: managing one's own schooling and helping around the house, and doing so "without complaining." The last phrase is significant because it shows that the child regards the contribution as an obligation to be carried without adding to the parent's burden. In the second, P2 acknowledges that the family is missing a member ("we miss having a complete family") and then immediately turns to the parent's daily effort as the reason for deeper appreciation. The sense of loss and the sense of gratitude are held together and do not cancel each other.

The participants' descriptions strongly support this theme through their consistent references to early responsibility, household contribution, deep appreciation, and emotional maturity. Their reflections illustrate how youth transform domestic necessity into personal strength and family loyalty.

Discussion

These findings align with Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory, which establishes that a secure, loving bond with one primary caregiver provides the necessary emotional foundation for resilience and healthy development. Furthermore, the results echo Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, as children acquire industrious habits and proactive coping mechanisms by observing and modeling the hardworking example set by their solo parents.

The theme also illustrates the contention of Bowlby (1969) that it is the quality of the bond with a caregiver, and not the number of parents in the household, that shapes a child's emotional stability. The participants' descriptions of gratitude and loyalty toward the remaining parent suggest a bond that is strengthened and not weakened by shared hardship. In the language of Erikson (1950), the early experience of competence that comes from managing schooling and household tasks may also contribute to the sense of industry and identity that children develop at this stage, provided that the responsibilities remain manageable and are accompanied by supportive guidance.

Overall, this theme reveals that growing up in a single-parent family fosters early independence and strong familial devotion. Acknowledging this developmental acceleration allows educators and community leaders to better support these youth in balancing household responsibilities with their academic goals.

In relation to the first research question, the theme shows that children describe life in a single-parent family as a process of early adjustment shaped by what they observe in the remaining parent. Their descriptions do not center on the absence alone. They center on what the household requires of them and what they see their parent giving. The "empty chair" is therefore a reminder of what is missing and, at the same time, a measure of what the remaining parent does. The theme also carries a caution that the findings themselves acknowledge: early independence strengthens responsibility and maturity, but the tasks children assume should be balanced with their developmental and educational needs.

Theme 2. Encountering Tri-Fold Vulnerabilities: Emotional Solitude, Social Stigma, and Material Strain

The second theme focuses on the specific emotional, social, and financial hurdles children face while navigating life in a single-parent household. Participants reported experiencing periodic emotional solitude and yearning during family-oriented school events. Socially, youth encountered uncomfortable comparisons, subtle peer exclusion, or insensitive inquiries regarding their family structure. Financially, single-income constraints forced households into strict rationing, limiting children's access to non-essential school supplies, extracurricular activities, and personal leisure.

Dimensions of the Theme

The second theme has three dimensions, which the participants experienced together and not separately. The emotional dimension is the solitude and yearning that children feel when the absence of a parent becomes visible, particularly during family-oriented school events. The social dimension is the discomfort of being compared with others, the subtle exclusion by peers, and the insensitive questions about family structure. The financial dimension is the strict rationing that a single income imposes, which limits access to non-essential school supplies, extracurricular activities, and personal leisure. The name given to the theme, tri-fold vulnerabilities, reflects the

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fact that these three dimensions reinforce one another. A child who cannot afford an extra school project may feel excluded, and the exclusion may deepen the sense that something is missing at home.

One participant explained the social and financial strain experienced among peers:

> **P3:** *"There are times in school when you feel left out because you can't afford extra projects, and you secretly wish you had both parents to support you."*

Another participant elaborated on the emotional weight of societal judgment and social stigma:

> **P4:** *"It hurts when people in the neighborhood assume that kids from single-parent homes will turn out bad or unsuccessful just because one parent is absent."*

A third participant described the material adjustments required within the household budget:

> **P5:** *"We have to be very careful with money; I learned to hold back asking for new clothes or gadgets because I know my parent's income goes straight to food and basic utilities."*

These statements reveal that youth in single-parent households face multiple, interrelated problems. Economic limitations require constant self-restraint, while social misconceptions create emotional vulnerability. Compounding these pressures is the mental load of shielding their solo parent from additional stress, which leads many children to internalize their anxieties.

The qualitative data strongly support this theme by illustrating the interplay between financial tightness, social discomfort, and emotional strain. The accounts demonstrate that systemic gaps in community welfare directly affect youth well-being.

Each excerpt points to a different dimension of the theme. P3 links the social and the financial: the child feels "left out" at school because extra projects cannot be afforded, and the wish for both parents is expressed as a wish for support. P4 describes stigma as a form of pain inflicted by neighborhood assumptions that children from single-parent homes will "turn out bad or unsuccessful." The hurt arises from the judgment of others and not from the family arrangement itself. P5 shows the financial dimension as a form of self-restraint: the child has learned to hold back from asking for clothes or gadgets because the parent's income goes to food and basic utilities. In each case, the child adjusts personal wants and feelings to protect the parent and the household, which supports the observation that many children internalize their anxieties.

Discussion

These findings are supported by Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs Theory, which asserts that unfulfilled basic safety and material needs impede optimal confidence and self-actualization. Furthermore, the results validate empirical findings by Lucero-Dueñas (2025) and Aryani and Lindawati (2025), who observed that children in single-parent families frequently constrain personal spending and endure social stigma due to systemic gaps in local socioeconomic safety nets.

The social dimension of the theme also connects to the legal and policy framework discussed earlier. Republic Act No. 7610 prohibits discrimination and emotional neglect based on family status, and the Sustainable Development Goals call for reducing inequalities and eliminating discriminatory social practices (SDG 10; United Nations, 2015). The experience described by P4 shows that the stigma these provisions are meant to dismantle is still felt by children in the community. Likewise, the financial rationing described by P3 and P5 reflects the economic deprivation that social protection floors under SDG 1 are intended to prevent.

Overall, this theme illustrates that children in single-parent families face notable structural vulnerabilities. Mitigating these challenges requires municipal social welfare offices, local government units, and schools to implement targeted financial subsidies, anti-stigma campaigns, and accessible counseling programs.

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In relation to the second research question, the theme shows that the challenges children encounter are interconnected and cannot be addressed one at a time. Financial limits produce social discomfort, social discomfort deepens emotional solitude, and emotional solitude is hidden from the parent in order to spare the parent further stress. Support that addresses only one of these, such as a material subsidy without attention to stigma or counseling, would leave the others in place. This is the basis for the study's call for combined financial, anti-stigma, and counseling responses from municipal social welfare offices, local government units, and schools.

Theme 3. Cultivating Adaptive Resilience, Reimagining Family Values, and Civic Hopes

The third theme encapsulates the profound realizations, ethical growth, and future aspirations developed by children through their lived experiences. Participants reflected on how overcoming household struggles reshaped their understanding of family, realizing that genuine family strength is defined by love, commitment, and mutual support rather than traditional household composition. Furthermore, youth expressed a strong desire for community-level support systems, advocating for school guidance programs, peer support groups, and LGU initiatives that empower single-parent families in Ubay.

Dimensions of the Theme

The third theme also has three dimensions. The first is a redefinition of family: participants came to see family strength as a matter of love, commitment, and mutual support and not of household composition. The second is aspiration: the difficulties of the household became a reason to study hard and to look forward to giving the parent a better life. The third is civic hope: participants spoke of school guidance programs, peer support groups, and local government initiatives that could empower single-parent families in Ubay. Together, these dimensions show that the children's realizations extend beyond the household. They think about what family means, about their own futures, and about what their community can do.

One participant expressed a fundamental realization regarding family identity and resilience:

> **P6:** *"I realized that an empty chair doesn't mean our family is broken; it taught me resilience, independence, and the true value of love and hard work."*

Another participant highlighted how their struggles served as personal motivation for future achievement:

> **P7:** *"Experiencing financial hardship made me more determined to finish my studies so I can give my single parent a comfortable life in the future."*

A third participant reflected on the concrete institutional support needed from local leaders:

> **P8:** *"Our local leaders and schools should create youth programs and student assistance specifically for single-parent families so no child feels alone or left behind."*

The responses indicate an evolution in how children view their personal narratives. Rather than perceiving their family structure as a permanent disadvantage, youth reframe their struggles as a source of character, empathy, and determination. They recognize their own agency while highlighting the systemic responsibility of local institutions to provide equitable opportunities.

The three excerpts show three different expressions of the same shift. P6 moves from the image of the empty chair as a sign of a "broken" family to the statement that it "taught me resilience, independence, and the true value of love and hard work," which is a redefinition of what makes a family complete. P7 turns hardship into direction: financial difficulty has made the child "more determined to finish my studies" in order to give the single parent "a comfortable life in the future." P8 moves from the personal to the civic, calling on local leaders and schools to create youth programs and student assistance "so no child feels alone or left behind." Together they trace a progression from personal realization, to ambition, to a claim on the community.

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The participants' quotes support this theme by consistently emphasizing character growth, redefined family values, and constructive recommendations for municipal policy enhancement. Their reflections demonstrate that lived adversity can cultivate deep personal grit and civic awareness.

Discussion

These findings align with Erikson's (1950) Psychosocial Development Theory, demonstrating how youth overcome identity conflicts by developing competence and personal values when supported by care and self-reflection. Additionally, Piaget's (1936) Cognitive Development Theory supports these insights, illustrating that children actively construct meaning from their unique realities to build a mature worldview. These realizations also mirror empirical recommendations by Dela Cruz et al. (2024) and Setiawan et al. (2025), who advocated for community-anchored safety nets to nurture youth resilience.

The redefinition of family reported under this theme also reflects the contention of Piaget (1936) that children actively construct their understanding of their circumstances. The participants did not simply accept the view that a family with one parent is incomplete; they examined their experience and reached a different conclusion. The finding that youth reframe their struggles as a source of character, empathy, and determination also supports the view in the literature that strong emotional closeness with the available caregiver is a primary protective factor (Rossi et al., 2025) and that families, including children, draw on informal networks and shared effort to cope (Bedes et al., 2026; Hingpis et al., 2022).

Overall, this theme demonstrates that children in single-parent families possess remarkable adaptive strength. By pairing their personal resilience with responsive local government policies, community welfare initiatives, and supportive educational environments, local stakeholders can ensure that these youth thrive.

In relation to the third research question, the theme shows that the realizations children gain are both personal and civic. Personally, they come to see family strength in terms of love, commitment, and mutual support and not in terms of household composition. Civically, they place a responsibility on local institutions, which is consistent with the role that Republic Act No. 6972 assigns to local government units in identifying and assisting children with limited parental presence or care, and with the aim of SDG 16 to strengthen institutions that protect children from neglect and exclusion (United Nations, 2015). The children's own recommendations thus anticipate the recommendations of this study.

Integrated Discussion of the Themes in Relation to the Research Objectives

Taken together, the three themes address the research questions that guided the study. Theme 1 describes how children experience and adapt to everyday life in a single-parent household (Research Question 1); Theme 2 identifies the emotional, social, and financial challenges they encounter (Research Question 2); and Theme 3 captures the realizations they gain from these experiences (Research Question 3). The fourth research question, on recommendations, builds on all three themes and is addressed in the final section. Table 2 summarizes these relationships.

Table 2. Relationship of the Themes to the Research Objectives

Research Objective	Theme	Central Meaning	Theoretical and Empirical Support
Objective 1: Explore and describe the lived experiences of children navigating life within a single-parent family	Theme 1	Early independence, accelerated maturity, and gratitude toward the solo parent's sacrifices	Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969); Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)

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Research Objective	Theme	Central Meaning	Theoretical and Empirical Support
Objective 2: Identify the emotional, social, and financial challenges encountered by children	Theme 2	Emotional solitude, social stigma, and material strain that are interconnected	Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943); Lucero-Dueñas (2025); Aryani and Lindawati (2025)
Objective 3: Explore the realizations and insights gained by children from their experiences	Theme 3	Adaptive resilience, redefined family values, and civic hopes for community-level support	Psychosocial Development Theory (Erikson, 1950); Cognitive Development Theory (Piaget, 1936); Dela Cruz et al. (2024); Setiawan et al. (2025)
Objective 4: Develop recommendations that may support the well-being and resilience of children	Themes 1–3	Targeted school, barangay, and municipal support that strengthens children's resilience and addresses their needs	Addressed in the Conclusions and Recommendations

Read together, the themes show that the same household circumstances that impose emotional, social, and material burdens also foster early independence, gratitude, and resilience. This is consistent with the conclusion of the study that life in a single-parent family is not defined solely by hardship.

Two tensions run through the themes. The first is between independence and burden. The responsibility that children take on is a source of maturity and pride (Theme 1), but it is also the mechanism through which they carry the household's financial and emotional strain (Theme 2). The findings do not treat early independence as a purely positive development; they stress that the tasks children assume should remain appropriate for their age. The second tension is between adversity and growth. The same experiences that produce solitude, stigma, and strain are the ones that children credit for their resilience and their redefined understanding of family (Theme 3). This does not mean that hardship is beneficial. It means that children actively make meaning of it, and that the support they receive can determine whether the hardship wears them down or becomes a source of strength.

The theories reviewed illuminate different parts of this progression. Attachment Theory and Social Learning Theory explain the bond with the solo parent and the habits learned from that parent. Hierarchy of Needs Theory explains why material strain limits confidence. Psychosocial and Cognitive Development theories explain how children reconstruct their identity and their understanding of family. The empirical studies cited under each theme show that these patterns are not unique to the participants but are visible in other settings, while the participants' own words show how they are lived in Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw.

Read together, the themes show that the same household circumstances that impose emotional, social, and material burdens also foster early independence, gratitude, and resilience. This is consistent with the conclusion of the study that life in a single-parent family is not defined solely by hardship.

Implications of the Findings

For children from single-parent families, the findings suggest that the resilience they develop is valuable but should not be left to develop alone. Children who are able to express their experiences, to recognize that their family is valued, and to find trusted adults and peers to turn to may be better able to carry their responsibilities without internalizing their anxieties. The accounts of the participants also show that they already hold ideas about the support they want, such as youth programs and student assistance, and these ideas deserve to be heard.

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For single parents, the findings highlight the value of open communication and consistent emotional support. The children's accounts show that they recognize their parents' sacrifices and often hide their own worries in order to protect them. Parents who create space for children to speak, who involve trusted relatives and community resources when needed, and who keep the children's responsibilities appropriate for their age may help ensure that gratitude does not become silent pressure.

For schools and teachers, the findings point to the family-oriented school events, school projects, and school requirements that the participants described as moments of exclusion or strain. Schools can reduce these moments by being sensitive to differences in family structure and in household resources, by offering accessible guidance and counseling, and by creating activities in which children from single-parent families can participate without fear of discrimination or stigma.

For the Barangay Local Government Unit, the Local Government Unit, and the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, the findings indicate that support is most useful when it addresses the emotional, social, and material needs together. Programs that combine counseling, educational assistance, family support activities, and anti-stigma initiatives respond more fully to the interconnected difficulties the children described than any single service could. Because the children's own calls for youth programs and student assistance match the mandate of local government units, the findings may serve as a baseline for localized programs and policies in Ubay.

For future researchers, the findings provide a qualitative basis for further studies of children in single-parent families. Other communities, other age groups, and other aspects of single-parent family life remain to be explored, and studies that combine the children's accounts with those of parents, teachers, or community leaders could show how the perspectives compare.

Directions for Future Research

This study examined the experiences of fifteen children in three barangays of one municipality, using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The findings may serve as a baseline for further research. Studies in other communities would show whether the themes are shared by children in other settings or are specific to Barangays Imelda, Biabas, and Benliw. Studies of other age groups would show how the experience of a single-parent household changes as children grow older. Research that combines the accounts of children with those of solo parents, teachers, and local officials could compare how each group understands the same circumstances. Finally, both qualitative and quantitative approaches could examine the emotional, social, and financial challenges, the coping strategies, and the resilience of children in single-parent households, and could evaluate the programs that the recommendations propose.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Based on the responses of the participants, the following findings were drawn:

The three findings are closely related. The early independence described in the first finding is the means by which children contribute to the household, and it is also the source of some of the strain described in the second finding. The material and social difficulties described in the second finding are, in turn, the experiences through which children develop the resilience and the redefined sense of family described in the third. Understanding the findings as a connected whole, and not as three separate results, is important for interpreting what they mean for the support children need.

Navigating Early Independence and Recognizing Parental Sacrifices. The findings show that children in single-parent families may develop early independence as they adjust to responsibilities within the household and cope with the absence of one parent. Some children describe taking on household tasks, helping with daily responsibilities, and becoming more self-reliant while their parent works to provide for the family. These experiences indicate that children recognize and appreciate the sacrifices made by their single parent, particularly

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the effort required to balance work, parenting, and household responsibilities. The implication of this theme is that early independence can strengthen children's sense of responsibility and maturity, but the responsibilities they carry should also be balanced with their developmental and educational needs. Support from family members, schools, and community programs may therefore help children manage their responsibilities while ensuring that parental sacrifices are supported and that children are not burdened beyond what is appropriate for their age.

Encountering Tri-Fold Vulnerabilities: Emotional Solitude, Social Stigma, and Material Strain. The findings reveal that children may encounter interconnected emotional, social, and material difficulties while living in single-parent families. Emotional solitude may arise from moments when children feel the absence of a parent, while social stigma may be experienced when peers or other people make them feel different because of their family situation. Material strain may also be present when financial limitations affect their ability to meet school requirements and daily needs, requiring children to adjust their expectations and resources. The implication of this theme is that the challenges experienced by children are not limited to one aspect of their lives because emotional, social, and financial difficulties can influence one another. This highlights the need for child-centered support systems that provide emotional assistance, promote acceptance and understanding, and help address the material and educational needs of children from single-parent families.

Cultivating Adaptive Resilience, Reimagining Family Values, and Civic Hopes. The findings indicate that children can develop resilience by learning to adapt to the absence of one parent and by recognizing the strength, independence, and values developed through their experiences. Rather than viewing an incomplete family structure only as a source of difficulty, children may gradually develop a different understanding of family, emphasizing love, support, responsibility, and perseverance. Their experiences can also encourage self-reliance and a stronger appreciation for the efforts of the parent who remains present in their lives. The implication of this theme is that children's experiences should not be understood solely in terms of hardship, because their circumstances may also contribute to positive personal growth and the development of adaptive strengths. The expressed need for targeted community and school support programs further suggests that strengthening existing support systems can help children sustain their resilience, develop their potential, and maintain hope for themselves and their families.

Conclusions

The study concludes that children living in single-parent families in Ubay experience a combination of emotional, social, and material challenges that shape their everyday lives and overall well-being. The findings show that children often develop early independence as they take on responsibilities at home while recognizing the sacrifices made by their single parents to provide for the family. At the same time, they encounter emotional solitude, social stigma, and material strain, particularly when dealing with the absence of a parent, social pressures, and limited resources for school and daily needs. Despite these difficulties, the children demonstrate resilience by developing self-reliance, adapting to their circumstances, and gaining a deeper appreciation of family values, love, responsibility, and perseverance. Their experiences suggest that living in a single-parent family is not defined solely by hardship, as challenges can also contribute to personal growth, maturity, and strength. The findings further indicate the importance of supportive relationships and targeted school and community programs in helping children manage their emotional, social, and material challenges. Therefore, giving greater attention to the lived experiences and voices of children in single-parent families can provide a meaningful basis for strengthening support systems and promoting their well-being, resilience, and hopes for the future.

Specifically, the following conclusions are drawn from the findings:

1. Children in single-parent families develop early independence, self-reliance, and maturity as they take on household and school responsibilities, and they recognize and deeply appreciate the sacrifices their single parents make for the family.
2. Children in single-parent families encounter interconnected emotional solitude, social stigma, and material strain, which affect one another and shape their daily lives and well-being.

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3. Overcoming these difficulties leads children to redefine family in terms of love, commitment, and mutual support, to develop adaptive resilience, to aspire to academic success, and to call for school-based and community-level support.
4. Strengthening school, barangay, and municipal support systems that respond to the emotional, social, and material needs of children can help sustain their resilience, develop their potential, and protect their well-being.

Conclusions 1 to 3 correspond to Objectives 1 to 3 of the study, while Conclusion 4 provides the basis for the recommendations that respond to Objective 4.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the recommendations are the following:

1. **The Local Government Unit and Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office** are encouraged to develop or strengthen programs that address the emotional, social, and material needs identified among children in single-parent families. Support initiatives may include accessible counseling, educational assistance, family support activities, and programs that strengthen children's coping and resilience. These efforts can provide a more targeted response to the localized experiences of children and single-parent households in Ubay.
2. **The Barangay Local Government Unit and schools** are encouraged to establish supportive and child-centered activities where children from single-parent families can participate without fear of discrimination or social stigma. Teachers, barangay personnel, and other concerned individuals may work together to identify children who may need additional emotional, social, or educational support. Such collaboration can help create a more understanding environment that recognizes the experiences, strengths, and needs of these children.
3. **Solo parents** are encouraged to maintain open communication with their children and provide consistent emotional support despite the demands of work and household responsibilities. They may also involve trusted relatives and available community resources when additional assistance is needed in caring for their children. Strengthening family relationships can help children recognize parental sacrifices while also ensuring that their responsibilities remain appropriate for their age.
4. **Children from single-parent families** are encouraged to continue developing positive coping mechanisms, self-reliance, and resilience while managing the emotional, social, and material challenges they encounter. They may also seek support from trusted family members, teachers, peers, and other responsible adults whenever they experience emotional solitude, social stigma, or difficulties in meeting their needs. Providing safe spaces where children can express their experiences and concerns may help strengthen their well-being and confidence.
5. **Future researchers** are encouraged to conduct further studies on the lived experiences of children in single-parent families using the findings of this study as a baseline. They may explore other communities, age groups, or aspects of single-parent family experiences to provide a broader understanding of the issue. Further research may also contribute additional evidence for developing appropriate, evidence-informed support programs and interventions for children and solo-parent families.

Taken together, the recommendations respond to the three themes of the study. Those addressed to the Local Government Unit, the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, the Barangay Local Government Unit, and schools respond to Theme 2 by providing coordinated emotional, social, and material support and by reducing stigma. Those addressed to solo parents and to children respond to Themes 1 and 3 by strengthening communication and the coping and resilience that children have already begun to develop. The recommendation to future researchers extends the study to other communities and groups.

Rationale for the Recommendations

The recommendations follow from the themes of the study. The first recommendation, addressed to the Local Government Unit and the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, responds mainly to Theme 2. Where

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children describe financial rationing, emotional solitude, and social stigma, programs that combine counseling, educational assistance, and family support activities can address the difficulties together. Because the municipal offices are the bodies mandated to protect and support children, their programs can provide the targeted response that general welfare measures do not.

The second recommendation, addressed to the Barangay Local Government Unit and schools, responds to the social dimension of Theme 2 and to the civic hopes expressed in Theme 3. Participants described feeling left out in school and judged in their neighborhoods, and they asked for youth programs and student assistance. Child-centered activities in which children from single-parent families can participate without fear of discrimination, together with collaboration among teachers and barangay personnel to identify children who need additional support, address both concerns and place the response close to where children live and study.

The third recommendation, addressed to solo parents, responds mainly to Theme 1. Children recognize their parents' sacrifices and take on responsibilities to lighten the parents' burden, and some protect their parents by hiding their own anxieties. Open communication and consistent emotional support allow children to share what they feel, and keeping their responsibilities appropriate for their age ensures that early independence does not become an excessive burden.

The fourth recommendation, addressed to children from single-parent families, responds to Themes 1 and 3. The resilience and self-reliance that participants described are strengths worth continuing, and the recommendation encourages children to pair them with the willingness to seek support from trusted family members, teachers, peers, and other responsible adults. The fifth recommendation, addressed to future researchers, follows from the limits of a study of fifteen children in three barangays and invites further work, as outlined in the Directions for Future Research above.

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COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The authors of this manuscript certify that the substance of this research is free of conflicts of interest. We attest that this investigation was carried out impartially, without any financial or personal ties that may have influenced how the findings were presented or how the results were interpreted. We also commit to promptly disclosing any conflicts of interest that may arise in the future.

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