



SERENDIPITY OF SOLO PARENTS: IT'S PSYCHOSOCIAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Wilfredo J. Nicolas

Associate Professor V, School of Arts & Sciences, Aklan State University, Banga, Aklan, Philippines

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS:

serendipity, solo parents, case analysis, personal and social competencies

This descriptive and qualitative research study were purposely conducted to find out the economic status, aspirations and problems met by solo parents living in urban poor community in the Province of Aklan Philippines for the Fiscal Year 2018-2019. Data revealed that solo parent-respondents were dominated by females whose ages ranged on the age bracket of 18 to 23 and have been a single parent for two to five years. It was noted that children living with a single parent were living with their parents and most solo parents have no more than two children. Solo parents aspired that their children could earn a diploma specifically in a state university. The problems met by the respondents were lack of financial support from the absent parent, inability to find work due to inferior personal attributes, poor working ability and lack of personal and social competencies needed for the job. Majority of the solo parents particularly those mothers often worked overtime to compensate for the low salaries, thus their domestic responsibilities were performed by their parents. Purposive sampling was done in this study.

I.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Single-parenting became a fast and rapidly growing trend in today's generation which directly threatens the cultural family system. While, it is the policy of the State to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development. Towards this end, it develops a comprehensive program of services for solo parents and their children to be carried out by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Education (DepEd) and other related agencies (Republic Act 8972).

Single-parent families can be defined as families where a parent lived with dependent children, either alone or in a larger household, without a spouse or partner. Single-parent is a parent who cares for one or more children without physical assistance of another parent in home. "Single parenthood" varies according to the local laws of different nations or regions. While, single-parent families are families with children under ages 18 headed by a parent who is divorced, widowed, adoption, artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood or not married.

Mostly single-parent families came about because of the death of spouse who usually faced a common problem and a special challenge of taking care alone of their children. In most cases, children, who lived with single father or mother, have to take care of themselves and get less care from a parent because of busy work. According to social scientists,

children who have grown up with a single-parent families had great disadvantages when compared to a two-biological-parent families. Many of these problems are directly related to the poor economic condition of single-parent families, not just to parenting style.

Time has really changed where many of the old customs and traditions which were taught and practiced for several years were becoming obsolete now. The modern culture has changed and outgrown the values and beliefs that were thought to be the core beliefs and values of our society. Even the moralists and conservatives have disgusted over the currently evolved belief and cultural systems. The truth was and has been unacceptable in the olden days and has become fast and rapidly rising trends. For decades and even centuries, one of the major concerned issues to the conservatives was the issue of single-parenting.

In the Philippines, the parental roles are culturally determined. Maternal role was on the childcare and home making while the paternal role is of economic responsibilities and discipline of children. Generally, it is the responsibility of the family, to train and bring up the child in the norms and values of the society. They are responsible for the psychological and emotional welfare of the child. The parents are mainly responsible for the educational and career development of their children. However, divorce and separation of various kinds or death of one spouse have left the roles in the hands of a single parent.

The family structure has provided a sense of security and stability that are necessary for children. When there is a breakdown in the family structure, it could left a tremendous impact on the child and his/her ability to function ordinarily or achieve academically. In most situations, the child has no longer two parents to depend on. With limited finances, time and availability of the parents are less likely to provide the adequate support of a child needs to perform to the best of his/her ability. The parent who raises them has not provided adequate love and attention, but rather the single parent model within himself/herself/itself has comprised of many different factors that had affected a child's level of truancy and academic success.

Parents are the first point contact of children. When both parents are present, it implies that the child has derives most care. However, when one of the parent is absent in a child's life, a gap created that the child has lost love emanated from that parent.

II.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research study was purposely conducted to find out the psychosocial analysis of solo parents for the Calendar Year 2018-2019. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age and gender?
2. What are the classification of solo parents, and
3. What are the common problems met by solo parents.

III.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is meant to provide meaningful significance for policy makers and other stakeholders who are involved in areas of improvement of socio-economic livelihood of individuals and groups in general and solo parents and their children in particular. Above all, it will pave a way in attracting many resources and intervention which are supported by organizational responses that are guided and shaped by local and national organizations. Finally, it will have a room in igniting further researches and mobilizing resources which bring practical utility by ultimately answering questions which are related to these two values of humanity that is: consideration to the socio-economic needs as a universal human need which in turn helps promote socio-economic justice.

IV.METHODOLOGY

This study followed a quantitative and qualitative research methods design. Qualitative research is concerned with non-statistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. It draws on an inductive process in which themes and categories emerge through analysis of data collected by such techniques as interviews, observations, videotapes, and case studies. Qualitative research has been defined in a variety of ways. In one definition, Strauss and Corbin (1998) identified qualitative research as: "Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.

It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, and cultural phenomena". These authors elaborated that qualitative research is best used when the methods are: (a) complementary to the preferences and personal experiences of the researcher, (b) congruent with the nature of the research problem, and (c)

employed to explore areas about which little is known. Miles and Huberman (1994) expressed an expanded position and indicated that qualitative research is conducted on a topic, (b) provide more in-depth detail about something that is already known, (c) gain a new perspective or a new way of viewing something, and (d) expand the scope of an existing study.

Data Gathering Technique and Instruments

This study employed a face to face interview method to explore the lived experience of participants as a solo parents, living in urban poor community in Aklan. Interview, is very useful for gaining insight and context into a research topic and it allows respondents to describe what is important to them. The interview format was semi-structured. Semi structured interview enabled respondents to talk freely and it allowed deeper insights from among the interviewees.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics and the safety of informants have a very special emphasis in this research. Accordingly, maximum care was used to ensure anonymity and safety of participants. Identities could not be traced at any point. They were also told, at the initial contact, about the goals of the study and that they could skip questions or stop at any time. Oral consent was obtained from each respondent and participant. Code names used in presenting data to maintain anonymity of the participants of the study.

V.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Economic Problem of Single Parents

One common feature of the solo parents was their poverty status. Although coming from diverse background they all shared similar experiences in terms of hardships to meet the basic needs of their family. All respondents involved in this study were engaged in temporary and low paying informal jobs such as; selling fish and vegetables, street foods vendor, selling ready to wear clothes and local beverage, laundry woman, and helper to their neighbor while men usually engaged in masonry and carpentry.

Psychosocial Challenges

Children of solo parents in the study experienced psychological problems associated with the reconfiguration of the family, economic instability, loneliness, stress, and adjustment to work.

Respondent said:

When I thought about my children's' future I am very worried. I do not have sufficient money to pay for my children's' education and hospitalization. No one would support them when I die. Beside experienced, psychological stress, children of solo parents' exhibited low level of education. But for her, she believes that nobody is tied to poverty. In fact, she was inspired every time her daughter and son got honors in school.

Family's Role in Children Education

The study showed that low educational background of solo parents is the major challenge for their un-employment. Respondents revealed that they don't have experience spending their time with their children to tutor them in reading, helping with their child homework, and by listening to the stories about their experiences at school. In contrast, when children spend time with their mothers, assisting them in generating income, both develop a very positive attitude to another. Solo parents noted to have psychological problems such as anxiety and stress as a result of lack of adequate

resources, difficulties in developing good relationship with their children and feeling guilty for not able to meet the needs of their children.

Influence to Children

In single-parent families, children tend to experience short-and long-term economic and psychological disadvantages, higher absentee rates at school, lower levels of education, and higher dropout rates (with boys more negatively affected than girls) (Demo & Acock, 2011). Besides that, they are more prone to criminal activity, including alcohol and drug addiction. Teenagers, on the other hand, are more negatively affected by parental disorder than by living in single-parent families and actually gain in responsibility as a result of altered family routines. In addition, children in single-parent families more likely to suffer emotional problem, due to mother and father split up or any other reason. In future, children who from single-parent families become adults, they are more likely to marry early, have children early, and separated. Women are at greater risk of becoming single mothers as a result of noncapital childbearing or separation.

Conflict with Parents

Children who live in single-parent families will have conflict with the parent, due to the following situations: solo parents are busy working outside, spend less time with their children, and lack of communication. Moreover, some children argue with their parent because they cannot understand them.

The Interview

The Interview was done in vernacular and translated into English

The Respondent under study had 4 children, the oldest name Charles is 10 years old and still schooling. His younger daughter is in Kindergarten and an honor pupil. Besides the difficulties encountered in life, he was able to finish his AB (English) Degree. When asked what the source of his income, he said his talents in t-shirt printing, sketching and drawing that made him inspired to have a normal life. Sometimes he was absent in the class and during the On the Job Training since he was the one who took care of his ailing grandmother. According to him, it was GOD's will that I finished my degree course.

Another respondent was asked what she felt about being a solo parent, she reasoned out that she cried several times and spent sleepless nights. She decided to continue her studies due to the motivation, financial and moral support from her parents, who are working in a government offices. She said, she is fortunate to have very supportive parents. Her child was under the tutelage of her nanny which makes her comfortable while she was in school. Her being stubborn, is the reasons why she became a solo parent.

Nonetheless, one respondent, commented that: being a solo parent is not an easy task. She said, "I need to wake up early to prepare the food of my child. She suffers a tremendous set back due to unstable financial condition. Selling fruits and vegetables are her sources of income. She said, she repented and cried. Her irresponsible classmates assured her of their supports but they were gone away when they knew that she was pregnant.

Table 1. Age and Gender of the Respondents

Age	Gender		Frequency	Percentage
	Male	Female		
29-33	2	4	6	23.08
24-28	2	6	8	30.77
18-23	1	9	10	38.46
below 18	0	2	2	7.69
Total	5	21	26	100.00

Table 2 Classification of Solo Parents

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Death of spouse	2	7.69
Being abandoned or left by partner	13	50.00
Decision to leave spouse	9	34.62
Mutual decision to separate	2	7.69
Total	26	100.00

Table 3. Problems Met by Solo Parents

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
1. Lack of financial support from the absent parents	9	34.62
2. Inability to find work due to inferior personal attributes	7	26.92
3. Poor working ability	6	23.07
4. Lack of personal and professional competencies needed for the job	4	15.38
Total	26	100.00

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The impact of being a single parent goes down to their children who could not be provided enough care and attention by solo parents.

On being a solo parent in a situation has adverse influence in the academic success of children. Although other factors may contribute to aggravate the children's problem; children in solo parent homes often face greater problems.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A professional workforce with knowledge about and competencies for implementing evidence-based interventions to support solo parents is essential to the successful scale-up of effective approaches.
2. There must be programs designed to prepare individuals to work with young children who do not always include evidence-informed strategies for creating successful partnerships with families. A program designed to prepare teachers and providers to include professional development related to working with parents.
3. The Department of Education should convene a group of experts in teaching and research with representatives of relevant practice organizations and research associations to review and improve professional development for providers who work with families of young children across sectors (education, child welfare, health).

4. Based on the result of the study, it is therefore recommended that parents should stay together with their children to ensure that their welfare is properly catered for. Government should see to it that children of single parent availed of free and compulsory education, family support for the less privileged parents. Public enlightenment on issues of parental skills, family planning, family values and child discipline could be done regularly, as this would make an impact to the family.

REFERENCES

1. Republic Act No. 8972. *The Solo Parents Act of 2000.*
2. Amato, P.R. (1993). *Children's adjustment to divorce: Theories, hypotheses, and Empirical support. Journal of Marriage and Family, 55, 23-38.*
3. Amato, P. R., & Keith, B. (1991). *Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. Psychological Bulletin, 110, 26-46.*
4. Aquilino, W. S. (1994). *Impact of childhood family disruption on young adults relationships with parents. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56, 295-313.*
5. Astone, N.M., & McLanahan, S. (1991). *Family structure, parental practices, and high school completion. American Sociological Review, 56, 309 -320.*
6. Azuka-Obieke, U. (2013). *Single-parenting, psychological well-being and academic performance of adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria. Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies (JETERAPS), 4(1), 112-117.*
7. Avison, W.R. (2002). *Family structure and mental health. Bethesda, MD: NIH Office of Behavior and Social Research.* Baumrind, D. (1991). *The Influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. Journal of Early Adolescence, 11(1), 56-95.*