

# Lived Experience of Solo Parents Nurturing Young Children Seven Years and Below in Virac, Catandaunes

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Article information	Abstract
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: January 31<sup>nd</sup>, 2025 Revised: February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Accepted: March 21<sup>th</sup>, 2025</p> <hr/> <p><b>Corresponding author:</b> Name: Rose Ann M. Arcilla Address: Calatagan Tibang, Virac, Catanduanes E-mail: <a href="mailto:chasecaleb14014@gmail.com">chasecaleb14014@gmail.com</a></p> <hr/> <p>International Journal of Nursing and Health Services (IJNHS), Volume 8, Issue 2, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 DOI: 10.35654/ijnhs.v8i2.864 E-ISSN: 2654-6310</p>	<p><b>Background:</b> Solo parenting demands constant balancing of caregiving duties with other responsibilities, highlighting the importance of understanding the unique struggles and coping mechanisms of solo parents, especially in contexts where resources may be limited. <b>Objective:</b> This study explored the lived experiences of solo parents nurturing young children in Virac, Catanduanes, emphasizing the physical, mental, and emotional challenges they encountered. Solo parenting demanded resilience and adaptability, as parents faced financial instability, social stigma, and emotional stress while striving to provide for their children's well-being. <b>Method:</b> The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design, gathering data through in-depth interviews with solo parents to gain insights into their struggles and coping mechanisms. <b>Result:</b> Findings revealed that financial constraints, exhaustion, and limited access to support services significantly impacted their physical and mental health. Many solo parents experienced stress, anxiety, and fatigue due to balancing employment and caregiving without consistent assistance. Despite these challenges, their unwavering commitment to their children served as a source of motivation and strength. <b>Conclusion:</b> The study highlighted the need for accessible government assistance programs, including financial aid, healthcare services, and community-based support networks, to alleviate the burdens of solo parents. <b>Recommendation:</b> It recommended policy enhancements, increased local implementation of solo parent benefits, and the establishment of community-driven interventions to promote the well-being of solo parents and their children in Virac, Catanduanes.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> solo parent, resilience, financial strain, caregiving, coping mechanisms</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Solo parenting, whether by choice or circumstance, is a complex and demanding role that requires resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment. The experience of raising children alone presents unique challenges, including financial instability, emotional stress, and societal stigma. Research has consistently highlighted the multifaceted nature of solo parenthood, with studies [1] [2] underscoring the psychological and social impacts associated with this family structure. While international studies have explored the implications of solo parenting on mental health and child development, there remains a significant gap in localized research, particularly in regions such as Virac, Catanduanes, where socio-economic hardships and limited support structures exacerbate these challenges.

The rationale for this study stems from the increasing prevalence of solo parenthood in the Philippines and the pressing need to understand its impacts within the local context. Republic Act No. 11861, also known as the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act, aims to provide comprehensive benefits and support to solo parents. However, the practical implementation and accessibility of these benefits remain inconsistent, leaving many solo parents struggling with financial burdens and limited access to essential services [3]. This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the lived experiences of solo parents in nurturing young children in Virac, Catanduanes, focusing on their physical and mental well-being and identifying potential interventions to enhance their quality of life.

Despite extensive global research on solo parenting, there is limited empirical evidence addressing the specific challenges faced by solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes. Studies conducted in Western societies [4] [5] provide insights into the psychological well-being and social support structures available to single parents. However, these findings may not fully encapsulate the experiences of Filipino solo parents, who often contend with cultural expectations, economic constraints, and inadequate institutional support [6]. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the literature by contextualizing the challenges of solo parenting within a rural Philippine setting.

Another study [7] focuses on single mothers' lived experiences in child-rearing practices, highlighting financial problems and loneliness as common challenges. The findings emphasize the crucial role of faith, family support, community, and employment in helping single mothers cope and thrive. [8] Contribute to the discourse by examining the lived experiences of lesbian parents raising children, shedding light on the additional societal challenges they face.

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Hans Selye's Stress Theory, which characterizes stress as the body's response to external pressures and demands. According to Selye (1936), prolonged exposure to stressors can lead to various physical and psychological health issues, a phenomenon particularly relevant to solo parents who experience chronic stress due to financial instability, lack of social support, and the dual responsibilities of caregiving and employment [9]. By applying this framework, the study seeks to analyze the coping mechanisms employed by solo parents and assess the effectiveness of existing support systems in mitigating stress-related health impacts.

Empirical evidence suggests that solo parenting significantly influences mental and physical health outcomes. [1] A study found that single mothers and fathers often experience heightened levels of stress, depression, and anxiety, which can affect their ability to provide optimal care for their children. Similarly, studies [10] emphasized the correlation between family structure and child development, highlighting the necessity of targeted interventions to support solo parents. However, existing research has largely overlooked the experiences of solo parents in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, where access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities is often constrained.

Furthermore, the connection between socio-economic status and parenting stress has been well-documented. Studies [11] [12] indicated that financial instability is a primary source of stress for single parents, influencing their mental health and overall well-being. In the context of the Philippines, where economic disparities persist, solo parents are particularly vulnerable to financial hardships that limit their access to healthcare, education, and social

services. By examining the lived experiences of solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes, this study aims to provide insights into the socio-economic determinants of health and well-being among this demographic.

This study is particularly significant as it sheds light on the resilience and coping strategies of solo parents in a rural setting. While previous research has focused on urban populations with relatively better access to resources, the unique challenges faced by solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes require a different analytical lens. Understanding the intersection of financial stress, social support, and health outcomes will provide valuable information for policymakers, community leaders, and social workers in designing effective interventions tailored to the needs of solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes.

The findings will inform policy recommendations and intervention strategies to enhance the physical and mental well-being of solo parents, ultimately contributing to the broader discourse on family dynamics and social support systems in the Philippines.

## **OBJECTIVE**

This study sought to bridge this gap by exploring the lived experiences of solo parents in nurturing young children in Virac, Catanduanes, focusing on their physical and mental well-being and identifying potential interventions to enhance their quality of life.

The main objective of this study was to explore the lived experiences of solo parents in nurturing young children in Virac, Catanduanes. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Explore the lived experiences of solo parents in nurturing young children in Virac, Catanduanes.
2. Evaluate the perception of solo parents of their physical and mental health while nurturing young children.
3. Propose an intervention plan to enhance the physical and mental health status of solo parents in nurturing young children.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of

solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research as it allows for the exploration of personal narratives, perceptions, and challenges encountered by solo parents. Through in-depth interviews, the study aims to capture the nuances of their experiences and the coping strategies they employ [13].

The phenomenological method enables the researcher to focus on the meanings that solo parents ascribe to their experiences, offering a rich, descriptive account of their struggles and resilience. This approach is particularly useful in understanding the personal and social dimensions of solo parenting in a rural setting, where access to resources and support systems may be limited [14].

## **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and interpret the lived experiences of solo parents in nurturing young children. Phenomenology is chosen as it provides a structured approach to capturing individual experiences, emotions, and perspectives in a detailed and meaningful manner [15].

By focusing on the lived experiences of solo parents, the study seeks to provide insights into the psychological, social, and economic challenges they face. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how solo parents navigate their responsibilities, cope with stress, and access available support systems within their communities.

## **Sample, sample size & sampling technique**

The sample for this study consists of solo parents residing in Virac, Catanduanes, who are actively nurturing young children. The sample consists of eight (8) solo parents residing in Virac, Catanduanes, who are actively nurturing young children aged seven years and below. This sample size aligns with the qualitative phenomenological design, which emphasizes an in-depth exploration of lived experiences [16]. According to Creswell, phenomenological studies typically require between five and twenty-five participants to capture the essence of a phenomenon, allowing for a rich and meaningful analysis of participants' narratives. The chosen sample size of eight was deemed

sufficient to achieve data saturation, ensuring that recurring themes and patterns emerged while maintaining a manageable scope for thorough data collection and analysis [17]. By selecting participants with varied backgrounds and experiences, this study ensures a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and coping mechanisms of solo parents within this context.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit participants for this study. Purposive sampling, a widely used method in qualitative research, allows the researcher to deliberately select individuals who possess specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives [18]. This technique was chosen to ensure that the participants had firsthand experiences of solo parenting in Virac, Catanduanes, enabling them to provide rich, detailed insights into their challenges, coping mechanisms, and support systems.

The recruitment process involved collaboration with local government units (LGUs), community organizations, and social welfare agencies that support solo parents. Additionally, referrals from existing participants (snowball sampling) were utilized to identify additional eligible respondents who met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion Criteria including 1) individuals who self-identify as solo parents with at least one child aged seven (7) years old or younger; 2) residents of Virac, Catanduanes, who have been solo parenting for at least one year; 3) willingness to participate in the study and provide informed consent; and 4) ability to articulate their experiences in either English or Filipino. The exclusion Criteria: 1) individuals who have shared custodial arrangements and receive substantial co-parenting support from a former spouse or family member; 2) parents who have recently experienced traumatic events (e.g., loss of a child, domestic violence) that may affect their ability to participate; 3) those who are unable to provide informed consent due to cognitive or mental health concerns; and 4) non-residents of Virac, Catanduanes.

The application of these inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured that the study focused on individuals whose experiences align with the research objectives. By carefully selecting participants through purposive sampling and adhering to rigorous selection

criteria, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes.

### **The instrument for data collection**

This study utilized a semi-structured interview guide as the primary instrument for data collection. The interview guide was developed based on existing literature on solo parenting and adapted from validated instruments used in previous studies, such as those by [1] [7]. The adaptation process ensured that the questions were relevant to the lived experiences of solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes, while maintaining alignment with the study's objectives.

The interview guide was structured into three key sections:

1. Challenges and Coping Mechanisms – This section explored the daily struggles and coping strategies of solo parents.
2. Support Systems and Well-being – This section examined the role of family, community, and government support in the participants' overall well-being.

The guide was pilot-tested among three solo parents who were not part of the final sample. Their feedback helped refine the wording, structure, and relevance of the questions to ensure clarity and comprehensibility.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure the credibility and rigor of the research instrument, a systematic process was employed to establish content validity, reliability, and consensus among experts. Three subject matter experts in qualitative research and social work independently evaluated the instrument, assessing the relevance, clarity, and alignment of each question with the study's objectives. Their feedback was analyzed to identify commonalities and discrepancies. When disagreements arose regarding item phrasing or thematic coverage, a structured discussion was facilitated to reach a consensus. This iterative refinement process ensured that the instrument effectively captured the intended constructs, reinforcing its methodological soundness.

In addition to expert validation, face validity was assessed through a pilot test

involving a sample group of participants. This phase provided an opportunity to gauge the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions from the perspective of the target respondents. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback, which was incorporated to enhance the instrument's readability and cultural relevance. To further establish reliability, inter-rater reliability was examined by engaging two independent researchers to code the pilot test responses. Their coded interpretations were compared, and any inconsistencies were addressed through discussion and recalibration, ensuring a consistent analytical framework.

To quantify internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was computed after thematically categorizing and coding the interview responses. The resulting value of 0.82 indicated high reliability, affirming the instrument's stability in capturing the lived experiences of solo parents. This multi-layered validation process—combining expert consensus, participant feedback, and statistical reliability measures—ensured the robustness of the instrument, strengthening the study's credibility and enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings.[19].

### **Data collection process**

The data collection process for this study was conducted in three distinct stages to ensure a comprehensive and credible approach to gathering information. The first stage involved structured interviews with solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes, selected through purposive sampling based on the inclusion criteria of actively nurturing a young child. These interviews were conducted in private and comfortable settings to encourage openness, with each session lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. A follow-up stage was implemented to allow participants to clarify or elaborate on their responses, ensuring a rich and detailed dataset. If data saturation was reached—meaning no new significant insights emerged—additional interviews were deemed unnecessary. The final stage involved member checking and validation, where participants reviewed a summary of findings to confirm the accuracy of their perspectives. This iterative approach enhanced the study's reliability and

credibility. The entire data collection process spanned two months, from July to August 2024.

Data collection utilized semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of solo parents residing in Virac, Catanduanes. Through purposive sampling, participants were selected to represent diverse perspectives and challenges. The collected qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to identify common themes, patterns, and insights that emerged from participants' narratives [20]. This analytical approach provided a deeper understanding of the factors shaping the experiences of solo parents, ensuring that their voices were accurately captured and represented in the study.

### **Data analysis**

The study utilized thematic analysis to examine the qualitative data from solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. The approach was chosen for its ability to capture the complexity of participants' lived experiences while maintaining a structured process for data interpretation [16]. The analysis began with data familiarization, followed by initial coding, theme generation, and theme review. The emerging themes, which highlighted the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of solo parents, were refined to ensure accuracy. To enhance credibility, member checking and cross-checking by an independent researcher were employed. These findings form the basis for developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations to improve the well-being of solo parents in the area.

### **Ethical consideration**

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical research standards to ensure the protection, rights, and well-being of all participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Regulatory Board (ERB) of Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC), Graduate School, following a thorough review by the Graduate Studies Research Technical Panel. This approval confirmed that the study met institutional and ethical guidelines, particularly concerning participant protection, data confidentiality, and voluntary

participation. The study was also endorsed by the Oral Examination Committee of Catanduanes State Polytechnic College (CSPC), ensuring compliance with ethical research protocols.

To uphold ethical integrity, all participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Informed consent was obtained through a detailed Information Sheet and an Informed Consent Form (ICF), ensuring that participants fully understood their involvement before voluntarily agreeing to participate. The ICF explicitly stated that participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals retained the right to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. Additionally, participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential through anonymization, secure data storage, and restricted access to sensitive information.

The research team, including the primary researcher, research assistants, and a research coordinator, adhered to strict ethical guidelines throughout the data collection and analysis process. All individuals involved were trained in ethical research practices, emphasizing the importance of confidentiality, informed consent, and participant autonomy. To enhance research credibility and respect participants' perspectives, member checking was implemented, allowing respondents to review and validate their contributions. This approach ensured that their experiences were accurately represented while reinforcing ethical standards in qualitative research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes, focusing on their challenges, coping mechanisms, and support systems. Thematic analysis revealed key themes that align with the study's objectives. Three major themes emerged:

**Table 1. Summary of Themes**

Themes	Categories
1. Financial Challenges	Inadequate Income Financial Instability

2. Physical and Mental Health Struggles	Physical Exhaustion Emotional Stress
3. Support System	Family Support Desired Government Assistance

### 1. Financial Challenges

**a. Inadequate Income.** Solo parents, particularly those in contractual or low-paying jobs, face persistent financial struggles that make it difficult to meet their children's basic needs, including food, education, and healthcare. These challenges are especially pronounced for job order employees and live-out helpers, whose income is often insufficient and inconsistent. The financial strain forces many to rely on extended family for support, which, while helpful, can contribute to feelings of guilt and emotional distress. Some solo parents expressed their difficulties in managing daily expenses, highlighting the instability of their financial situation.

**P1:** *"My salary is very small and often not enough to cover both my child's and my own expenses. I feel ashamed because I sometimes cannot contribute to the household expenses."*

**P5:** *"One of the biggest challenges is financial instability. Being a job order employee means my income is not consistent, which makes budgeting very difficult."*

**P6:** *"Life is very difficult. The fact that I only make a little salary makes it worse."*

Solo parents face daily struggles due to inadequate income, making it difficult to meet basic needs. Financial instability leads to feelings of shame, guilt, and anxiety, especially when they cannot provide for their children. Job order employees, in particular, experience irregular salaries, making financial planning challenging and adding stress to familial relationships.

To cope, many solo parents rely on side jobs, loans, or government aid [18]. This economic vulnerability underscores the need for financial assistance programs and community support initiatives. Without sustainable solutions, solo parents remain at risk of ongoing hardship, impacting both their well-being and their children's quality of life.

**b. Financial Stability.** Solo parents with inconsistent income sources, such as job order employees and low-wage workers, struggle to provide for their children's basic needs due to financial unpredictability. Irregular salaries, delayed payments, and unstable employment make budgeting difficult, leading to stress and uncertainty about the future.

P5: *"Being a job order employee means my income is not consistent, which makes budgeting very difficult. There are times when I worry about whether I'll be able to provide for my sons' basic needs."*

P8: *"Working as a waitress in a turo-turo doesn't provide a high income, and it can be difficult to make ends meet."*

Financial instability forces solo parents to make difficult choices regarding daily expenses, often leaving them anxious about their children's well-being. This aligns with previous research indicating that many solo parents fall below the poverty threshold and lack social support [21]. Despite hardships, they prioritize their children's education, viewing it as a long-term investment to break the cycle of poverty. Addressing financial instability through sustainable employment opportunities and financial aid programs is crucial in alleviating their burdens and improving their quality of life.

## 2. Physical and Mental Health Struggles

**a. Physical Exhaustion.** The physical demands of both work and parenting leave many solo parents chronically fatigued, with some experiencing back pain, stress-related illnesses, and an overall decline in health. The relentless cycle of earning a living and caring for young children allows little time for rest or self-care, making exhaustion a persistent challenge, particularly for student mothers and those in physically demanding jobs.

P2: *"I know this statement is often heard from mothers, but it really is exhausting, especially since I am also a student."*

P3: *"I often feel exhausted and occasionally fall ill due to the stress and lack of rest."*

P6: *"Physically, the demands of solo parenting take a toll on my body. I sometimes experience back pain and fatigue from lifting and carrying my younger children and from standing for long hours at work."*

P7: *"I often have back pain. I only have one child but it feels like I gave birth to 10."*

Solo parents, especially those juggling work and academic responsibilities, report severe physical strain, frequent illnesses, and exhaustion. Research [22] supports these findings, indicating that solo parents face increased risks of chronic illness and cardiovascular issues due to prolonged stress and overwork. Without adequate support, these parents remain vulnerable to declining health, underscoring the need for interventions such as workplace accommodations, accessible childcare, and health programs to improve their well-being.

**b. Emotional Stress.** Emotional stress is a major challenge for solo parents, stemming from their dual roles as sole providers and caregivers. The constant worry about their children's future, the absence of a co-parent to share responsibilities, and limited opportunities for self-care contribute to anxiety, isolation, and, in some cases, depression.

P1: *"I just enjoy our lives as a family. When I feel stressed, I find that crying helps me cope."*

P2: *"Stress and back pain are occurring simultaneously."*

These accounts illustrate how emotional distress manifests in solo parents. While they find joy in family life, they also experience overwhelming stress, sometimes leading to emotional breakdowns and physical symptoms like back pain. This highlights the interconnected nature of mental and physical health challenges among solo parents.

Research [23] supports these findings, indicating that the absence of financial and social support increases emotional strain, leading to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among single mothers. Social isolation further exacerbates their struggles, increasing the risk of burnout and even suicidal thoughts. Addressing these challenges requires targeted mental health support, financial assistance, and community-based interventions to alleviate the emotional burden of solo parenting.

## 3. Support Systems

**a. Family Support** is a crucial pillar in the lives of solo parents in Virac, Catanduanes. Extended family members often step in to provide essential assistance with childcare, financial aid, and emotional reassurance, significantly easing some of the burdens faced

by solo parents. However, the level and consistency of this support can vary, leaving some parents with limited assistance.

*P1: "I am always thankful for the support from my family. It is a big deal that they provide us with some of our needs."*

*P2: "Financially, I struggle with daily expenses like milk, diapers, and school needs, but my parents help cover these costs and assist with budgeting. Their support is essential as I manage studying and parenting without being able to work."*

*P4: "As a single parent, my family plays a big role because of the support I get, may it be financial or emotional. While the journey is tough, the bond with my son and the skills I've developed in managing multiple roles are incredibly rewarding."*

These narratives highlight the indispensable role of family support in helping solo parents navigate financial constraints and emotional struggles. Participants emphasize that their families' contributions—whether financial or emotional—are crucial for balancing daily responsibilities and ensuring the well-being of both parent and child.

A study [24] affirms that solo parents face various challenges that require strong support systems. Studies on single mothers in Malaysia indicate that they experience heightened financial stress, health risks, and societal stigma, further underscoring the importance of family support in mitigating these difficulties. While family assistance serves as a critical lifeline, these findings also call for broader community and governmental interventions to ensure solo parents receive comprehensive and sustainable support.

#### **b. Desired Government Assistance.**

Solo parents frequently emphasize the need for more comprehensive government assistance to address their challenges. Desired forms of support include increased financial aid, access to affordable childcare services, and enhanced healthcare coverage. They also advocate for programs that provide emotional and psychological support, such as counseling services and support groups, to help them manage the stress and difficulties associated with solo parenting. Enhanced government support could improve their overall well-being and better equip them to meet their children's needs.

*P1: "I hope that the government will pay attention to helping solo parents. To give priority to providing us jobs even without a college degree."*

*P7: "I hope that the government will implement programs for single parents, prioritizing us for permanent jobs, even entry-level positions, so that we can better provide for the needs of our children."*

The data reveal a clear demand for targeted government interventions. One participant highlights the need for job opportunities for solo parents without a college degree, suggesting that employment policies should be more inclusive to improve economic stability. Another participant stresses the importance of permanent job opportunities, even at entry-level positions, to help solo parents secure a reliable income for their families. These insights emphasize the necessity for government programs that address both economic and employment support to better assist solo parents in managing their responsibilities and improving their quality of life.

In Zamboanga City, the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act has significantly enhanced the well-being of single-parent households by offering a comprehensive range of support services [25]. This legislation provides financial assistance, including monthly subsidies, discounts on essential goods, and priority access to affordable housing programs. Additionally, it supports educational opportunities for children of solo parents through scholarships and grants, ensuring access to quality education. Beyond financial aid, the act includes provisions for social services such as counseling, healthcare, and livelihood training, which are crucial for both emotional and professional development. These combined efforts create a supportive environment that not only addresses the immediate needs of single-parent households but also empowers them for long-term stability and success.

## **2. Perception of Solo Parents of their Physical and Mental Health While Nurturing Young Children in Virac, Catanduanes**

**a. Physical Exhaustion.** Solo parents face significant physical health challenges due to the combined demands of employment, household responsibilities, and childcare. Many experience chronic fatigue, back pain, and

physical exhaustion, particularly those in labor-intensive jobs like massage therapy, domestic work, and caregiving. The lack of time for self-care and rest further exacerbates these issues, leading to increased vulnerability to illness. Additionally, some solo parents report difficulties in accessing government benefits intended to support their well-being, making it harder for them to manage both their health and financial responsibilities. These findings emphasize the need for improved healthcare access, preventive care, and workplace policies that offer flexibility for solo parents to balance their roles more effectively.

Research [21] supports these findings, highlighting the dual burden solo parents face in balancing financial responsibilities and child-rearing. The necessity to provide for their children while managing caregiving duties leads to heightened stress, anxiety, and social isolation, further affecting their overall health. To address these challenges, interventions such as healthcare support, financial aid, and workplace accommodations should be prioritized to enhance their quality of life and ensure they can fulfill their responsibilities without compromising their well-being.

**b. Mental Health.** The mental health of solo parents in this study is profoundly affected by their dual roles as both primary caregivers and main providers for their families. The constant emotional stress and anxiety that stem from balancing household duties, work, and childcare often result in feelings of isolation. This is particularly pronounced among single fathers, who experience the additional pressures of being sole decision-makers and role models. Despite these challenges, the achievements of their children provide moments of joy and fulfillment, helping to balance the emotional weight of their responsibilities. However, these emotional strains often lead to long-term mental health concerns if not addressed.

The findings underscore the urgent need for mental health support tailored to the unique needs of solo parents. Providing access to counseling, peer support groups, and stress management resources could significantly alleviate the emotional toll on these parents, preventing chronic stress and fatigue. These results align with a previous study [26], which found that a significant portion of solo fathers

reported experiencing high levels of stress due to the challenges of raising children alone without a partner. Such studies highlight the importance of targeted interventions to address the emotional and psychological burdens of solo parenting.

### **3. Proposed Intervention Plan to Enhance the Physical and Mental Health Status of Solo Parents in Nurturing Young Children**

A comprehensive intervention plan has been designed to address the challenges faced by solo parents nurturing young children in Virac, Catanduanes. The plan focuses on enhancing physical and mental health, improving financial stability, and strengthening support systems. The proposed initiatives are outlined in Table 2, which identifies key areas of concern, specific objectives, strategies, persons involved, and expected outcomes. By addressing financial, physical, and emotional challenges, the plan aims to alleviate the difficulties solo parents face, improve their coping strategies, and ultimately foster a more supportive environment for both parents and children.

The intervention plan targets three main areas: financial challenges, physical and mental health struggles, and the support system. For financial challenges, the plan advocates for financial literacy workshops, emergency financial aid, and information on subsidies and grants. To address physical health struggles, strategies like ergonomic training, physical therapy, and wellness programs are proposed, while mental health issues will be tackled with stress management workshops, mindfulness practices, and family counseling. Finally, strengthening the support system involves organizing family support workshops, facilitating communication training, and advocating for government job training and placement programs. These efforts aim to enhance financial literacy, reduce physical strain, improve mental resilience, and create stronger familial support networks, leading to better health outcomes for solo parents and more effective caregiving for their children.

### **Acknowledgement**

The researchers extend their sincere gratitude to Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC) and Catanduanes State

University (CatSU) for their invaluable support and guidance throughout this study. Their institutional resources and mentorship played a crucial role in the successful completion of this research. Deep appreciation is also given to the researchers' families and friends, whose unwavering encouragement and understanding provided strength and motivation during the research process. Lastly, the researchers acknowledge the dedication and collaborative efforts of the entire research team, whose hard work, commitment, and shared vision made this study possible.

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