

Voices Of Solo-Parents Teachers In The Division Of Kabankalan City Amidst Stress

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This study aimed to determine the profile of the solo parent-teachers, their level of stress, their coping strategies, and the significant difference in the level of stress with their profile. An explanatory sequential mixed method was the methodology used in this study. An adapted questionnaire was used to gather the quantitative data among the 30 purposively sampled identified solo parent-teachers from the Division of Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental, who served as the participants of the study, and it was followed up by a focused group discussion. The findings show that stress at work was the main cause, while the impact on the emotional and behavioral sphere was considerably low, which might indicate a proclivity towards the internalization of stress. Moreover, a majority of the women were the participants, and their marital status was either separated or widowed. They were mostly in lower teaching positions and which indicates the limited upward mobility in their careers and the increase in their caregiving duties. Cooperation and compromise, among the coping strategies, were the most used, while the employment of assertive tactics like verbal confrontation and aggression was at a low level, which shows a strong inclination towards non-confrontational ways of dealing with the matter that are influenced by the cultural norms. Besides that, the study revealed the absence of differences in the degree of stress concerning sex, civil status, teaching position, or number of children, meaning that stress is likely to stem from systemic and professional pressures rather than from demographic variables. It is then recommended that support from institutions, like flexible work arrangements, mental health programs, assertiveness training, and policy alignment with the Solo Parent Welfare Act. The actions of these wellness of solo parent-teachers enable them to manage their double duties efficiently.</p>	<p>Keywords: <i>Solo Parents' Teacher, Teacher Stress, Coping Strategies, Work-related Stressors, Cooperation and Compromise, Work-Life Balance, Solo Parent Welfare Act, Mixed Method Research</i></p>

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INTRODUCTION

Life in the 21st century is infinitely more complex than ever. Deadlines, the clock, modern technology, mobile phones, pagers, faxes, computers, satellites, and 100 and one other demands and pressures govern people's lives (Fokkens et al. 2014). Individuals encounter varying degrees of stress, which may originate from work-related or personal circumstances (e.g., health issues, financial difficulties, etc.) (Carr, 2014). Teaching is widely regarded as a high-stress profession, often marked by emotional exhaustion, heavy workload, and limited work-life balance (Herman et al., 2018). These stressors are further intensified for solo parent teachers, who must simultaneously fulfil professional duties and parental responsibilities, often without adequate support (Alvarez & Villena, 2020). Solo parents are more vulnerable to psychological distress due to increased financial, emotional, and caregiving demands (Romero et al., 2022). Understanding how solo parents cope with these challenges is crucial, as effective coping mechanisms can reduce stress and improve professional performance (Yu et al., 2021).

However, some situations sometimes lead parents to break away from one another. Several factors will cause solo parenting; these factors may end up in stressful situations that they will face as they begin the journey of being a single parent. The number of solo parents in the Philippines is on the increase. The 2014 Solo Parent Statistics show that there are 4 million solo parents in the Philippines. Hence, the solo parent-teachers within the City of Kabankalan may have experienced various levels of stress associated with their teaching career and their family. Therefore, the researcher aims to research the underlying level of stress and coping strategies of the solo parent-teachers within the Division of Kabankalan City.

Objective of the Study

This study aimed to determine the level of stress and coping strategies of solo parent-teachers in the Division of Kabankalan City. More specifically, the researcher seeks to determine the profile of the solo parent-teachers in terms of sex, civil status, position, and number of children; the level of stress of the solo parent teachers of Kabankalan City when grouped according to profile in terms of Time Management, Work-Related Stressors, Professional Distress, Discipline and Motivation, Professional Investment, Emotional Manifestation, Behavioral Manifestation; the extent of use of the following coping strategies of the solo parent teachers of Kabankalan in terms of Cooperation and Compromise, Verbal Cooperation, Aggression & Confrontation, Avoidance and Withdrawal and the significant difference in the level of stress of the solo parent teachers of Kabankalan City

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which conceptualizes stress as a result of the dynamic interaction between an individual and their environment. According to this model, stress is not simply a direct reaction to external pressures but is mediated by an individual's cognitive appraisal of the situation and their available coping resources.

In this study, the profile of the solo parent teachers was determined, and a survey of the level of stress and the extent of use of the coping strategies of the solo parent teachers was conducted. Furthermore, the study also determined the significant difference in the stress level of the solo parent teachers when grouped according to profile. After the results were analyzed, a proposed stress intervention program for solo parent teachers was made to address participants' needs. Moreover, to maintain and improve the program, a feedback mechanism will be activated to identify whether the intervention plan will be of immense help. This will determine whether the program will be fully sustained or otherwise.

METHODS

This study employed MIXED METHODS RESEARCH, specifically an EXPLANATORY SEQUENTIAL MIXED METHOD. Purposeful sampling was used to identify 30 solo parent-teachers as the study participants. Thus, the sample size is relatively small; it was deliberately chosen to focus on a specific and hard-to-reach population – solo parents within the teaching profession whose lived experiences and coping mechanisms are often underrepresented in research (Etikan et al., 2016). While the data collection period for this study occurred during school year 2016-2017, its findings remain highly relevant and significant for the 2025 context.

Moreover, the data provide a valuable baseline for understanding ongoing stress experiences among solo parent-teachers, and this study serves to contextualize these findings within current educational and societal conditions. Hence, the study utilized a three-part questionnaire, including a demographic profile, the Teacher Stress Inventory by Fimian (1988), and a coping strategies tool developed by Pestaño (2008). While these instruments have established credibility, modifications were necessary to align with the specific cultural and professional context of solo parent teachers in Kabanakalan City. Thus, the adapted instruments underwent expert evaluation using the Good and Scates method with a mean score of 4.8, indicating strong content validity. Furthermore, to test reliability, the instruments were pilot tested among solo parent teachers in the Division of Himamaylan City, producing a Cronbach's alpha score of 4.76, which suggests excellent internal consistency. These results support the use of the adapted instruments as both valid and reliable for the target population. The quantitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted. The researchers then prepared open-ended questions, which were validated by a panel of experts, to facilitate the focus group discussion and collect qualitative data to support the results of the quantitative data. The statistical tools used for analyzing and interpreting data included frequency counts and percentages, mean, Kruskal-Wallis test, and mode. Ethical considerations were observed in the study's conduct. A letter of invitation and consent was sent to the participants of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following a thorough analysis of the accumulated research data, the following findings and discussion were drawn from the study.

Profile of the Solo Parents Teachers

The demographic profile showing a predominance of female solo-parent teachers (93.33%), with most being widowed (46.7%) or separated (33.3%), reflects wider trends found in Filipino solo parents, where women disproportionately carry single parenting responsibilities (Aguila & Mapa, 2017). The classification of most participants as Teachers I (63.3%), with fewer in higher positions, suggests limited career advancement opportunities for solo parents, a finding supported by Garcia and Paredes (2019), who highlighted that solo parenthood often constrains professional growth due to added familial duties. Regarding the number of children, the predominance of solo parents with one child (46.7%) corresponds with findings by Torres and Mendoza (2020), who reported that solo parents often limit family size to manage financial and caregiving demands more effectively. These demographic insights provide a crucial context for understanding the stress and coping mechanisms of solo parent teachers, emphasizing the need for targeted support considering their unique socio-family profiles.

Level of Stress of the Solo Parent Teachers of Kabanakalan City

The study found that among seven stress dimensions, work-related stressors ranked highest (mean = 4.53), while emotional (2.04) and behavioral manifestations (1.53) were lowest. This suggests that solo parent-teachers experience stress most acutely in external, professional domains rather than through internalized or observable symptoms. These findings align with Kyriacou (2015), who identified workload, administrative pressure, and classroom management as the most persistent stressors among teachers globally. Alvarez and Villena (2020) further emphasized that for solo parent-teachers in the Philippines, stress is compounded by the dual burden of professional responsibilities and solo caregiving, making work-related stress the most significant. The moderate stress in professional investment (4.14) and professional distress (4.09) reflects concern over career growth and job satisfaction—an issue raised in Delos Reyes (2019), who found that solo parent-teachers often sacrifice career advancement opportunities due to parenting demands. Meanwhile, the low levels of emotional and behavioral manifestations may indicate a tendency to internalize stress, consistent with findings by Mendez and Cruz (2017), who noted that Filipino educators, especially solo parents, often suppress emotional expression to maintain professional decorum and avoid stigma. Overall, while stress is evident in professional dimensions, the muted emotional response may mask deeper issues and suggest a need for institutional support systems that go beyond workload management to include emotional well-being interventions.

“Kakapoy guid sang balance sang kabuhe, permi lang ko stress kapin pa sa eskwelahan, kadamu-damu ubra, stress kana sa pangabuhe kay ikaw lang isa atipan sang mga bata.” (I am tired of balancing life, I am always stressed especially with school, so much work, stress from life because I am the only one taking care of the kids.)

“Kis-a feeling ko gaka bilin nagid ko professionally sa iban ko nga upod kay kulang guid oras ko.” (Sometimes, I feel like I am being left behind professionally by my colleagues because I really lack time.)

Coping Strategies of the Solo Parent Teachers of Kabankalan City

The finding that cooperation and compromise are the most used coping strategies (mean = 3.28), while verbal cooperation, aggression, and confrontation are the least used (mean = 1.47), highlights the preference of solo parent-teachers for non-confrontational, harmony-preserving strategies. This aligns with Pestaño (2008), who noted that Filipino working mothers typically avoid direct confrontation and prefer peaceful solutions due to cultural values rooted in collectivism and social harmony. Yazon and Buenviaje (2018) also found that teachers often choose adaptive coping mechanisms like cooperation and withdrawal over aggressive or assertive responses to maintain professional relationships and manage workload. Meanwhile, the low use of aggression and confrontation may reflect a coping gap in assertive communication, which, as De Torres and Dimarucut (2021) argue, could lead to internalized stress and emotional exhaustion over time. This underscores the need for programs that encourage healthy expression and assertiveness training for teacher-parents.

“As solo parent teacher pamati kag pamalandungan ang tanan nga gakatabu para ikaw mismo kabalo mag cope up sang imu sitwasyun.” (As a solo parent teacher, cooperate, listen, and reflect on everything that is happening so that you can know how to cope with your situation.)

“Prayers and acceptance amu pagid na ang pinaka the best sa tanan ta nga sitwasyun” (Prayers and acceptance are still the best for all our situations.)

Significant Difference in the Level of Stress of the Solo Parent Teachers of Kabankalan City

The finding that there are no significant differences in stress levels among solo parent-teachers across sex, civil status, position, and number of children indicates that stress may stem less from demographic factors and more from the shared demands of solo parenting within the teaching profession. This aligns with Alvarez and Villena (2020), who emphasized that solo parent-teachers, regardless of background, experience high stress due to role conflict and lack of systemic support. Similarly, Delos Reyes (2019) found that stress levels among solo parents are consistently high across different family structures, suggesting that the burden of single-handedly managing both work and home responsibilities is universally taxing. Kyriacou (2015) also noted that teacher stress tends to cut across demographic boundaries, as job-related pressures such as classroom management, administrative load, and performance expectations are common stressors experienced by most educators. Moreover, MacIntyre et al. (2020) found that during times of high institutional pressure, such as during education reforms or external crises, stress becomes more uniform across teacher groups—indicating that systemic challenges can outweigh individual differences. Thus, your findings are well-supported by literature and suggest the need for broad, inclusive interventions that support all solo parent-teachers, rather than targeted programs based solely on demographic distinctions.

“We really need to discipline our self kag kita man mismo ang maka motivate sa atun nga self kay wala naman gid sang ma ubra sina.” (We need to discipline and motivate ourselves. No one will do anything for us.)

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that single-parent teachers, mostly women, and particularly those in lower teaching positions, are negatively affected by the stress of their professional lives that is mainly caused by work-related demands. They have a very limited number of symptoms of emotional and behavioral stress. The pattern of their conduct not only reflects the heaviness of the dual roles they have but also the chance of them internalizing the stress because of the cultural and professional norms they are a part of. The differences in civil status, teaching positions, and the number of children do not have a significant impact on the level of stress, which is always very high. Therefore, the stress causes in the education system are implied to be the structural challenges and

the solo parenting universal demands rather than the demographic differences. Methods of stress management mostly depend on cooperation and compromise, thus reflecting the culture that is deeply ingrained with conflict-avoidant traits. The little use of assertive coping, nevertheless, indicates that the solo parent-teachers have a non-met need for emotional release and boundary-setting. The study findings point out that the interplay of professional responsibilities, cultural expectations, and solo parenting that makes one suffer from stress is a systemic problem that is not individual.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Firstly, as work-related stress was identified as the leading cause of stress, schools must start promoting flexible work arrangements and setting up reasonable workloads for solo parent-teachers. With school duties being properly adjusted, minimized administration, or even given support in the work. Secondly, the school and division officials can initiate a program that will provide scholarships, training, and leave for solo parent-teachers to pursue graduate studies, seminar attendance, and leadership programs simultaneously with their parental duties without any compromise. Thirdly, schools should be encouraged to set up mental health programs, e.g., counselling services, workshops for stress management, and spaces where teachers can be at liberty to speak out. Such initiatives should put more focus on letting the teachers have a healthy emotional process, and at the same time, making it normal to seek help. Fourthly, while more assertive forms of communication were the least used, programs that develop assertiveness, conflict resolution, and boundary-setting skills should be introduced. These skills can help solo parent-teachers manage workplace relationships more effectively and reduce the tendency to suppress their own needs. Fifth, instead of focusing on certain subgroups, the programs available for supportive purposes should be concerned with the common difficulties faced in solo parenthood within the teaching profession, such as time constraints, emotional fatigue, and role overload.

Moreover, an idea of a solo parent-teacher taking care of him/herself is well welcomed and promoted best when he/she make time for rest, relaxation, and hobbies. Activities like retreats, reflection sessions, or community-building events are all ways to prevent burnout and to even get one's motivation recharged. Moreover, it is suggested that administrators in schools and the Gender and Development (GAD) offices should recognize the difficulties faced by solo parent-teachers. Teachers can become more supported and less pressured in their workplace, as well as personally, through the various kinds of seminars, support groups, and wellness programs run by the school administration and the GAD office. Thus, school policies need to be updated and checked to ascertain their compatibility with the Solo Parent Welfare Act. The act is inclusive of areas such as the availing of leave benefits, workplace accommodations, and easy access to support services. When it comes to institutional policies that are in harmony with national welfare standards, solo parent-teachers are the ones who benefit the most in the professional and personal aspects of their lives.

These recommendations are designed to result in a favorable, caring, and reinforcing atmosphere to be easily managed by solo parent-teachers, thereby enabling them to use such stress coping mechanisms and at the same time accomplish their dual roles with pride and success.

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