

Single Woman Parents' Typology of Strain Perspectives: Reinvention, Work-Family Symbiosis, Work Orientation, and Family Conflict

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Abstract: Balancing work and family responsibilities presents a persistent challenge for single woman parents, who assume both caregiving and income-generating roles without spousal support. This study examines the typology of strain perspectives among single woman parents in Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo, adopting four categories—reinvention, work–family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict—to understand how mothers negotiate work and family demands. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative surveys of 60 participants with qualitative interviews of 12 respondents. Results indicate that single woman parents predominantly exhibit reinvention and work–family symbiosis perspectives, reflecting psychological resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and flexible role negotiation. Socio-economic variables such as age, education, and number of children did not yield significant differences in strain perspectives, suggesting that structural and psychological work–family challenges are pervasive across groups. Qualitative findings highlight emotional and motivational drivers, including attachment to children, faith, and personal determination, alongside reliance on family support. Participants employed adaptive management strategies, such as time management, multiple income-generating activities, and fostering children's independence, demonstrating problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms. These findings underscore the psychological resilience and agency of single woman parents and provide insights for interventions, workplace policies, and social protection programs. Future research is recommended to explore psychological outcomes of strain perspectives across urban settings and diverse cultural contexts to inform policy and program development..

Keywords: single mother, work–family strain, strain typology, reinvention, work–family symbiosis, family conflict.

Introduction

Balancing work and family life remains a persistent global challenge, particularly for single parents who assume both caregiving and breadwinning roles without spousal support. This dual responsibility generates psychological strain, including stress, emotional exhaustion, and the need for adaptive coping strategies, which can affect mental health, well-being, and decision-making. Mothers are directly affected by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in 2015, which serves as the overarching framework for international development efforts. Several of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, quality education, gender equality, and decent work, are closely linked to the welfare of mothers and children. The recognition and empowerment of mothers can generate positive effects across these goals, as educated and adequately supported mothers contribute significantly to household stability and community development (Make Mothers Matter, 2024).

In the Philippine context, women's welfare and labor participation are protected by the Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710), which mandates the government to adopt mechanisms that ensure women's equal participation in economic, political, and social development. The law.

emphasizes access to education, employment, skills development, and social services to strengthen women's roles in families and communities. Despite these legal frameworks, single woman parents remain vulnerable to economic insecurity, role overload, and social stigma, which complicate their ability to achieve work–life balance

Research consistently shows that single parents experience greater work–family strain than partnered parents due to increased work hours and the absence of shared domestic responsibilities (Van den Eynde et al., 2019; Thielemans & Mortelmans, 2019). For women, the strain is intensified by persistent gender expectations that position mothers as primary caregivers even when they are also primary earners. Labor force participation may introduce role strain when workplace demands conflict with caregiving responsibilities, reflecting the gendered nature of work and family institutions (Killewald, 2016). Moreover, extended working hours combined with limited access to flexible employment options increase the likelihood of work–family conflict among single mothers (Bakker & Karsten, as cited in *Make Mothers Matter*, 2024).

Gasse and Mortelmans (2020) conceptualized single mothers' work–family experiences through a general strain perspective, identifying financial strain and role strain as the most significant pressures affecting this population. Their qualitative analysis led to a two-dimensional typology based on flexibility or rigidity in motherhood ideology and workplace context, producing four perspectives: reinvented motherhood, work–family symbiosis, work-centered motherhood, and work–family conflicted motherhood. These perspectives describe how single mothers negotiate caregiving expectations and employment demands, revealing different coping strategies shaped by workplace flexibility and personal beliefs about motherhood.

Building on this framework, the present study adopts simplified typology labels—reinvention, work–family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict—to emphasize strain perspectives rather than identity categories. Reinvention reflects adaptive strategies characterized by flexible workplace behavior and lean motherhood ideologies. Work–family symbiosis reflects strong family-centered values accommodated through workplace adjustments. Work orientation reflects prioritization of work demands supported by external childcare arrangements, while family conflict reflects persistent tension between rigid motherhood expectations and inflexible work environments. These perspectives remain grounded in strain theory but provide clearer conceptual alignment with stress management and role negotiation processes.

However, Gasse and Mortelmans (2020) acknowledged that their analysis did not sufficiently address socio-economic characteristics such as education, employment, and family size, which are important dimensions in intersectional research. These factors may shape access to resources, coping strategies, and employment opportunities, thereby influencing how single mothers experience and manage work–family strain. Addressing this gap is particularly important in developing-country contexts where economic vulnerability and informal employment are more prevalent.

In the Philippines, social perceptions of single parents often minimize the structural challenges they face, reinforcing stigma and limiting access to institutional support (Garcia et al., as cited in Natividad & San Mateo, 2024). Although Republic Act No. 11861 expanded benefits under the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 (RA 8972), including social protection and employment-related benefits, many single mothers continue to struggle with financial instability and limited access to sustainable livelihood opportunities. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) further supports solo parents through cash assistance programs intended to address educational, healthcare, and daily living expenses (DSWD, 2024). Nevertheless, implementation gaps and resource constraints often limit the reach and long-term effectiveness of these interventions.

Recent estimates suggest that the Philippines has between 14 and 15 million single parents, with approximately 90 percent being women (De Castro, 2023). Teenage and young mothers are particularly vulnerable, as many are forced to leave school and enter low-paying jobs to support their children (Fajardo-Jarilla, 2023). These structural realities intensify financial and emotional strain and limit opportunities for career advancement, reinforcing cycles of poverty and work–family imbalance.

Empirical studies further confirm that single mothers experience multidimensional stress involving emotional exhaustion, financial hardship, and social isolation (Martinez et al., 2022; Ramos & Tus, 2020). Coping strategies often rely heavily on family support, religious faith, and informal employment, reflecting limited access to institutional resources. While qualitative research has documented these experiences, fewer studies have systematically examined how different strain perspectives are distributed across socio-economic groups in local Philippine contexts.

Thus, this study seeks to examine the typology of strain perspectives among single woman parents in the Municipality of Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo, using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. By integrating quantitative assessment of typology patterns with qualitative exploration of lived experiences, this research aims to provide localized empirical evidence on how single mothers negotiate work and family responsibilities under varying socio-economic conditions. The findings are expected to inform community-based interventions, workplace policies, and social protection programs that are responsive to the specific needs of single woman parents.

Literature

Work-Family Strain Among Single Mothers. Single mothers experience higher levels of work-family strain compared with partnered parents because they must fulfill both caregiving and income-generating roles simultaneously. This dual demand often leads to psychological stress, emotional fatigue, and anxiety, which can influence decision-making, role satisfaction, and overall mental health. Van den Eynde et al. (2019) found that single parents report significantly poorer work-life balance due to longer working hours and reduced access to informal caregiving support. Similarly, Thielemans and Mortelmans (2019) emphasized that post-separation employment demands often increase financial pressure, requiring single mothers to intensify labor participation, which in turn exacerbates role overload.

Financial strain and parental role strain are often interconnected. Killewald (2016) explained that labor market participation among women is embedded within gendered social expectations that continue to assign primary caregiving responsibilities to mothers. As a result, increased employment does not necessarily reduce domestic labor, producing cumulative stress. Bakker and Karsten (as cited in Make Mothers Matter, 2024) further noted that extended work hours combined with lack of partner support contribute to persistent work-family conflict, especially among low-income single mothers.

In the Philippine setting, Ramos and Tus (2020) documented that financial hardship and emotional distress are among the most common struggles of single mothers, particularly in relation to children's education, healthcare, and daily subsistence. Martinez et al. (2022) similarly identified physical exhaustion, psychological distress, and emotional isolation as dominant stressors, indicating that work-family strain extends beyond economic factors and affects overall well-being.

Motherhood Ideology and Employment Behavior. Motherhood ideology refers to beliefs about what constitutes "good mothering" and how caregiving should be prioritized relative to employment. West and Zimmerman's (1987) theory of "doing gender" suggests that individuals perform socially constructed gender roles through daily interactions, reinforcing expectations that women should prioritize family responsibilities. These internalized norms influence how mothers perceive acceptable work behaviors and career decisions.

Clark's Work-Family Border Theory explains that individuals actively negotiate boundaries between work and family domains, and that flexibility in either domain affects stress levels and role satisfaction (Clark; Karassvidou & Glaveli as cited in Cochran, 2021). When borders are flexible, individuals can shift responsibilities across domains; when borders are rigid, conflict increases. For single mothers, limited control over work schedules and caregiving arrangements reduces their ability to manage these borders effectively.

Empirical research shows that motherhood ideology strongly shapes employment choices. Kim and Kim (2020) reported that mothers who strongly identify with caregiving roles are more likely to select flexible or informal employment, even when it limits income stability. Conversely, mothers who

adopt work-centered values may prioritize employment stability even when it reduces family time, indicating different pathways of strain management.

Typologies of Work–Family Negotiation Perspectives. Gasse and Mortelmans (2020) proposed a two-dimensional typology of single mothers' work–family negotiation based on the flexibility of workplace conditions and the strictness of motherhood ideology. Their study identified four perspectives: reinvented motherhood, work–family symbiosis, work-centered motherhood, and work–family conflicted motherhood. These perspectives explain how mothers respond differently to financial and role strain depending on available resources and personal beliefs.

Reinvented motherhood reflects adaptive strategies in which mothers modify traditional caregiving expectations and seek flexible employment arrangements. Work–family symbiosis reflects strong commitment to caregiving roles while adjusting work participation to accommodate family needs. Work-centered motherhood reflects prioritization of employment with reliance on alternative childcare arrangements. Work–family conflict reflects persistent strain when neither domain offers sufficient flexibility.

The present study adopts streamlined labels—reinvention, work–family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict—to emphasize strain management patterns rather than identity categories. This modification aligns the typology with stress and coping frameworks, highlighting behavioral strategies rather than fixed maternal roles.

Socio-Economic Factors and Intersectionality in Single Motherhood. Socio-economic characteristics significantly influence how single mothers experience work–family strain. Education, employment type, and family size affect access to resources, job flexibility, and social support networks. Kim and Kim (2020) reported that lower educational attainment is associated with poorer mental health and reduced employment opportunities among single mothers. Similarly, Van de Velde et al. (as cited in Kim & Kim, 2020) found that lower education correlates with worse health outcomes, suggesting cumulative disadvantage across life domains.

Family size also affects caregiving burden and financial strain. Mothers with multiple children face higher household expenses and greater caregiving demands, which may intensify work–family conflict when employment conditions are inflexible (Martinez et al., 2022). Employment status further influences strain perspectives, as informal or contractual workers often lack access to maternity benefits, paid leave, and childcare support.

In the Philippine context, Garcia et al. (as cited in Natividad & San Mateo, 2024) observed that cultural stigma toward single parents can reduce access to community support and institutional assistance. Despite the expansion of benefits under RA 11861 and DSWD assistance programs (DSWD, 2024), many solo parents remain excluded from stable employment opportunities and sustainable livelihood programs.

The reviewed literature establishes that single mothers experience multidimensional strain arising from financial pressure, rigid workplace structures, and persistent caregiving expectations. Theoretical models such as Doing Gender Theory (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and Work–Family Border Theory (Clark, as cited in Cochran, 2021) explain how social norms and boundary management shape mothers' work–family decisions. Empirical studies further demonstrate that socio-economic conditions significantly influence stress exposure and coping capacity.

However, while typologies of work–family negotiation have been developed (Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020), limited studies have quantitatively examined how these perspectives vary across socio-economic groups within local Philippine communities. Moreover, few studies integrate statistical analysis with qualitative exploration to explain how strain perspectives are shaped by lived experiences, support systems, and coping strategies.

Thus, there remains a need for localized mixed-methods research that examines typology-based strain perspectives while accounting for socio-economic diversity among single woman parents. Addressing this gap allows for more targeted policy recommendations and culturally responsive intervention strategies.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, wherein quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data (Creswell, 2013) to further explain and enrich the quantitative results (Chavez, 2022). This design is appropriate when numerical trends require in-depth understanding through participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

The quantitative phase identified the distribution of single woman parents across four strain perspectives—reinvention, work–family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict—and examined differences based on selected socio-economic variables. The qualitative phase explored the challenges, key drivers, support systems, and coping strategies of participants to provide contextual explanations for the identified typology patterns.

Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of single woman parents residing in the Municipality of Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo, who were raising at least one dependent child and were currently engaged in income-generating activities or employment at the time of the study.

For the quantitative phase, a total of 60 respondents were selected using purposive sampling, as this technique allows the inclusion of participants who meet specific characteristics relevant to the study objectives (Bernard, 2017; Etikan et al., 2016). Inclusion criteria were: (1) female, (2) legally or socially recognized as a solo parent, (3) responsible for at least one child, and (4) currently employed or self-employed.

For the qualitative phase, a subset of respondents was selected using maximum variation sampling to represent the four strain perspectives identified in the quantitative results. This ensured that diverse experiences across reinvention, work–family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict were adequately captured.

Instrument

The study utilized two research instruments: a self-constructed survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The quantitative questionnaire was developed based on the typology framework of Gasse and Mortelmans (2020) and consisted of two main parts: the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, including age, educational attainment, employment status, and number of children, and a strain perspective scale measuring the four dimensions of work–family negotiation, namely reinvention, work–family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict.

Responses were measured using a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with statements reflecting each strain perspective. The instrument underwent content validation by subject-matter experts in social sciences and education to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha confirmed acceptable internal consistency of the subscales.

For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide was employed to elicit in-depth descriptions of participants' challenges, motivational drivers, support systems, and coping strategies in managing work and family responsibilities. Open-ended questions allowed flexibility in probing individual experiences and provided contextual explanations for the quantitative findings.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from local authorities and institutional research ethics bodies. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and informed consent was secured, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses.

In Quantitative Phase, a survey questionnaire was personally distributed to identified single

woman parents within the community. The researcher provided instructions and clarified items when necessary. Completed questionnaires were retrieved and checked for completeness before encoding.

In Qualitative Phase, after analyzing quantitative results, participants representing each strain perspective were invited for in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient times and locations, ensuring privacy and comfort. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

In Quantitative Analysis, data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to determine the dominant strain perspectives of respondents. To examine differences across socio-economic groups, inferential statistical tests were applied based on data distribution and grouping variables. Results were interpreted according to the four typology categories: reinvention, work-family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict.

In Qualitative Analysis, qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps of familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021). Codes were grouped into broader themes related to challenges, drivers, support systems, and coping strategies.

Findings from the qualitative phase were integrated with quantitative results to explain why certain strain perspectives were dominant and how socio-economic conditions shaped work-family negotiation patterns among single woman parents.

Results and Discussion

General Responses of the Single Woman Parents on Typology of Strain Perspectives

Table 1 presents the general responses of the single woman parents ($N = 60$) on the four typology of strain perspectives, namely reinvention, work-family symbiosis, work orientation, and family conflict. When taken as an entire group, the results revealed that respondents manifested all four perspectives to a "Much" extent, with reinvention obtaining the highest mean ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.59$), followed by work-family symbiosis ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.57$), family conflict ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.66$), and work orientation ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.76$). This indicates that single woman parents frequently negotiate both motherhood ideologies and workplace behaviors in managing their dual roles.

The dominance of reinvention and work-family symbiosis suggests that many respondents attempt to preserve family-centered values while adapting to employment demands through flexible strategies. This finding supports Gasse and Mortelmans (2020), who reported that single mothers often modify traditional motherhood expectations and seek adaptable work arrangements to reduce role strain. Similarly, Thielemans and Mortelmans (2019) emphasized that single mothers must actively reconstruct their work-family balance after separation due to the absence of spousal support.

The highest-rated item emphasized strong commitment to children's upbringing ($M = 4.63$), while the lowest-rated item reflected reluctance to prioritize work over children ($M = 2.73$). This pattern indicates that maternal identity remains strongly family-oriented despite economic pressure, consistent with Martinez et al. (2022), who found that emotional attachment to children remains the primary motivation among single mothers. The relatively low standard deviation values suggest homogeneous experiences of work-family strain among participants (Refugio et al., 2020).

Single Woman Parents' Typology of Strain
 Perspectives: Reinvention, Work-Family
 Symbiosis, Work Orientation, and Family Conflict

Table 1. General Responses of Single Woman Parents (N = 60) on Typology of Strain Perspectives

Typology of Strain Perspectives	M	SD	Verbal Description
Reinvention			
I was struggling with my thoughts when I became a single parent.	4.3833	1.20861	To the Great Extent
I am a good mother even when I became a single parent.	4.5000	.67648	To the Great Extent
I am a good employee or worker when I became a single parent.	4.4000	.84773	To the Great Extent
I was an unachiever in all areas of my life when I became a single parent.	3.1167	1.65797	Much
I felt like I am an achiever when I realized that I have been the mother that I wanted to be for my children.	4.5333	.76947	To the Great Extent
I did not have the career I dreamt of when I became a single parent.	3.4500	1.26792	Much
I was doing my job in my own way when I became a single parent.	4.1667	1.12245	To the Great Extent
I changed my motherhood ideologies after divorce or separation.	3.4833	1.28210	Much
I have a slim motherhood belief that could be interpreted in a flexible way.	3.1167	1.18023	Much
I have a thin motherhood ideology that could stop me from pursuing unattainable goals in my work and family life.	3.1667	1.29099	Much
I exhibit flexibility in my workplace behavior.	4.1500	1.19071	To the Great Extent
I look for a job with a more flexible organization of labor.	4.1667	1.26446	To the Great Extent
I have a fast-changing work attitude.	4.0500	1.24090	To the Great Extent
I have a flexible and family-friendly workplace that ensures I do not experience insurmountable difficulties after divorce or separation.	4.1667	1.02786	To the Great Extent
I look for new work where I can adjust the work environment to my changing needs.	4.2833	1.12131	To the Great Extent
$\bar{X}$	3.94	.59	Much
Work-Family Symbiosis			
I believe that mothering is about looking for balance.	4.4833	.92958	To the Great Extent

My priority as a mother is to give my child or children a good, consistent upbringing that leads them to become a good human being.	4.6333	.75838	To the Great Extent
I prioritize my work over my child or children.	2.7333	1.48286	Somewhat
I have a good boss who understands my priorities.	3.7333	1.43641	Much
I look for jobs that offer a flexibility that enables me to give up few of my motherhood aspirations.	3.8000	1.47062	Much
If I look for a new job, I could not negotiate the working hours, or the possibility of working from home, even if the job was as interesting as it could be.	3.6833	.89237	Much
I would not take any job that would negotiate the working hours even if the job was as interesting as it could be.	3.5500	1.17061	Much
I would risk changing jobs after divorce or separation.	3.6167	1.37892	Much
My job is family-friendly in its organization.	4.0333	1.17843	Much
I have a strict motherhood belief.	4.0500	.96419	To the Great Extent
I have a flexible workplace behavior.	4.1167	1.00998	To the Great Extent
I have a combination of strict motherhood beliefs and flexible workplace behavior.	4.1333	.91070	To the Great Extent
I have a family-centered lifestyle in which everything is a function of parenting.	4.3167	.87317	To the Great Extent
I look for ways to bend my workplace behavior around my firm motherhood ideology, which I remain committed to after divorce or separation.	3.9167	1.12433	Much
Having a career is no longer something to which I could aspire.	3.8667	1.32085	Much
$\bar{X}$	3.91	.57	Much
Work Orientation			
I am a work-centered principled person.	3.8667	1.26848	Much
I can still meet the rigid demands of my workplace, while looking for childcare solutions outside my primary family system.	4.1667	.88618	To the Great Extent
Being a single parent led me to comfort in my other life project—my job or career.	4.1333	.87269	To the Great Extent
When I became a single parent, I locked myself up somewhat at work.	3.5333	1.43168	Much
I work hard and I feel so good when my work is appreciated.	4.0167	1.08130	To the Great Extent

Single Woman Parents' Typology of Strain
Perspectives: Reinvention, Work-Family
Symbiosis, Work Orientation, and Family Conflict

I let my parents or relatives take care of my children.	4.0500	1.09583	To the Great Extent
Sometimes I feel bad when I do not report on duty because I feel I really need to work to provide food on the table for my child or children.	3.8833	1.42724	Much
I prefer a full-time job.	3.8333	1.23737	Much
I would stay longer and take no breaks in my workplace because I needed the money.	3.6833	1.22808	Much
I do not want to do a boring part-time job.	3.5833	1.29263	Much
I used work or my job as the ultimate form of self-development in life after divorce or separation.	3.7667	1.28045	Much
I am trapped in a rigid work system just to divert my attention after divorce or separation.	3.6333	1.50667	Much
I adjust my motherhood ideology towards a slimmer motherhood perspective to deal with the high demands of the workplace.	3.5667	1.53343	Much
When I got divorced or separated, I locked myself up somewhat at work.	3.5167	1.62075	Much
When I got divorced or separated, I gained less time for my children.	3.3667	1.59413	Much
$\bar{X}$	3.77	.76	Much
Family Conflict			
I retain a strict motherhood belief while still meeting the demands of my job.	3.6500	1.40006	Much
I always run out of energy when I am home after my work.	3.1833	1.54582	Much
I cannot be a good mother anymore because I am always busy.	3.6167	1.62701	Much
As a single parent, I have to work hard to keep my current job to support my child or children.	3.8167	1.06551	Much
As a single parent, I cannot do the things I want to do to be the mother I want to be.	3.5833	1.29263	Much
I am a family-centered mother who is simply not able to adjust my work environment in accordance with my strict motherhood ideology	3.8167	1.26881	Much
I do not compromise my motherhood ideology for my work.	4.0000	.99149	Much
I have a fear of change in the work environment.	3.8833	1.07501	Much
I have a fear of the consequences of adjusting my motherhood ideology.	3.8167	1.11221	Much
Because of my fear of change in the work environment, I choose the security of a job I know,	3.9833	.94764	Much

although this is incompatible with my new family life situation.			
I have a lot of insecurities about my job and family as a single parent.	3.4000	1.48666	Much
My motherhood ideologies and work are in conflict.	3.6500	1.47090	Much
As a single parent, I have a lot of aspirations for my child/children	4.3167	.87317	To the Great Extent
I can still cope with the demands of a job despite being a single parent.	4.3000	.74333	To the Great Extent
I always encounter a problematic situation because my motherhood ideologies and work are in conflict.	3.9667	1.02456	Much
$\bar{X}$	3.80	.66	Much

Typology of Strain Perspectives When Grouped According to Age

Table 2 shows the typology of strain perspectives when respondents were grouped according to age. Both age groups demonstrated a “Much” extent across all four perspectives. Respondents aged 20–40 showed slightly higher levels of family conflict, while those aged above 40 exhibited slightly higher levels of reinvention and work–family symbiosis.

This trend suggests that older single mothers may have developed more adaptive coping strategies over time, enabling greater flexibility in managing work and family demands. Kim and Kim (2020) found that younger single mothers tend to experience greater emotional distress and financial instability, whereas older mothers display improved resilience and role adjustment. However, the similarities in verbal descriptions indicate that work–family strain persists regardless of age.

Table 2. Typology of Strain Perspectives of Single Woman Parents (N = 60) When Grouped According to Age

Typology of Strain Perspectives	20-40 years old			Above 40 years old		
	M	SD	VD	M	SD	VD
Reinvention	3.8000	.58500	Much	3.9816	.59591	Much
Work–Family Symbiosis	3.8000	.43546	Much	3.9418	.60698	Much
Work Orientation	3.5538	.68604	Much	3.8340	.77158	Much
Family Conflict	3.7282	.36052	Much	3.8184	.72174	Much

Typology of Strain Perspectives When Grouped According to Educational Attainment

As shown in Table 3, respondents with college education demonstrated reinvention to the “To the Great Extent” level, while the other three perspectives remained at the “Much” extent for both education groups. This implies that higher education may facilitate access to flexible employment opportunities and enhance adaptive strategies.

Kim and Kim (2020) similarly reported that educational attainment improves employment stability and psychological coping among single mothers. Nevertheless, persistent levels of family conflict and work orientation among both groups suggest that education alone does not eliminate structural barriers such as limited childcare support and rigid work schedules.

Consistent with Chavez et al. (2024), women's awareness of workplace rights is influenced by education, income, and job position, which can shape their perceptions of organizational support and compliance. In their study, single mothers' ability to manage work and family responsibilities may similarly be affected by their knowledge of rights, access to resources, and socio-economic conditions, highlighting the interplay between structural support and psychological resilience. Along with educational attainment, women with lower income levels tend to be less aware of their rights.

Table 3. Typology of Strain Perspectives of Single Woman Parents (N = 60) When Grouped According to Educational Attainment

<i>Typology of Strain Perspectives</i>	<i>With College Degree</i>			<i>Without College Degree</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>VD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>VD</i>
Reinvention	4.09 23	.333 93	To the Great Extent	3.90 07	.643 79	Much
Work-Family Symbiosis	3.96 92	.459 96	Much	3.89 50	.604 93	Much
Work Orientation	3.65 13	.732 40	Much	3.80 71	.768 24	Much
Family Conflict	3.80 00	.357 98	Much	3.79 86	.723 32	Much

Typology of Strain Perspectives When Grouped According to Number of Children

Table 4 presents the strain perspectives when respondents were grouped by number of children. Mothers with only one child demonstrated **work-family symbiosis** to the "To the Great Extent," while those with two or more children showed consistent "Much" levels across all perspectives.

This suggests that having fewer dependents allows greater capacity to align work responsibilities with caregiving demands. Martinez et al. (2022) noted that caregiving burden increases with family size, contributing to financial strain and emotional fatigue. However, the persistence of family conflict even among mothers with one child supports Ramos and Tus (2020), who emphasized that emotional and financial stress are common regardless of household size.

Table 4. Typology of Strain Perspectives of Single Woman Parents (N = 60) When Grouped According to Number of Children

<i>Typology of Strain Perspectives</i>	<i>Only Child</i>			<i>2 or More</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>VD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>VD</i>
Reinvention	3.9354	.56923	Much	3.9506	.63262	Much
Work-Family Symbiosis	4.0141	.45697	To the Great Extent	3.7852	.67844	Much

Work Orientation	3.7111	.79751	Much	3.8494	.71243	Much
Family Conflict	3.7576	.67326	Much	3.8494	.64968	Much

Differences in Typology of Strain Perspectives According to Socio-Economic Variables

Mann–Whitney U tests were conducted to determine whether significant differences existed in strain perspectives when grouped according to age, education, and number of children. Results revealed no statistically significant differences across all variables ($p > .05$), indicating that strain perspectives are consistent across socio-economic categories within the community.

This suggests that structural conditions such as employment opportunities and caregiving responsibilities exert similar pressures across groups. However, this contradicts findings of Kim and Kim (2020) and Van de Velde et al. (as cited in Kim & Kim, 2020), who reported that lower education levels were associated with poorer health and greater psychological distress among single mothers. The difference may be attributed to the homogeneity of employment types in rural settings, where limited occupational diversity minimizes socio-economic variation.

Table 5. Differences in Typology of Strain Perspectives of Single Woman Parents (N = 60)

Variables	Typology of Strain Perspectives				
		Reinvent ion	Work– Family Symbiosis	Work Orientation	Family Conflict
Age		251.50	252.00	255.00	266.00
		-.972	-.962	-.908	-.710
		.331	.336	.364	.478
Education		258.00	286.50	278.00	299.00
		-.855	-.342	-.494	-.117
		.393	.733	.621	.907
Number of Children		428.50	361.00	418.50	379.50
		-.253	-1.258	-.402	-.983
		.800	.208	.688	.326

Results of the Qualitative Study

This portion of the study presents the qualitative findings on the motherhood and work ideologies of single woman parents. The responses of the twelve (12) participants during the focus group discussion were clustered into four major thematic areas aligned with the research objectives, namely: (1) challenges encountered in balancing work and family, (2) internal and external drivers that motivate them to persist, (3) support systems utilized, and (4) management strategies used to achieve work–family balance.

Theme 1: Financial Constraints and Time Pressure

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Participants consistently expressed difficulty in providing daily necessities, school expenses, and healthcare needs of their children while managing work responsibilities. Statements such as *"The challenge that I encounter as a solo parent is financial matter"* and *"Problema sa kwarta kag kulang oras"* (financial problem and lack of time) reflect the economic and time-related pressures experienced by the participants.

In addition to financial strain, time management was frequently mentioned as a major difficulty, especially for those engaged in physically demanding or unstable jobs. One participant stated that balancing time for work, household duties, and bonding with children was *"very hard to manage."* These findings indicate that single woman parents experience overlapping financial and temporal demands, which intensify role strain.

This result is supported by Martinez et al. (2022), who reported that single mothers commonly experience physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion due to financial insecurity and caregiving overload. Ramos and Tus (2020) similarly found that financial hardship and loneliness are among the most persistent struggles of Filipino single mothers, especially in low-income communities.

Theme 2: Children, Faith, and Personal Determination as Key Drivers

Most participants expressed that their children are the main reason they continue to persevere, as reflected in statements such as *"Para sa anak ko lahat ng ginagawa ko"* (Everything I do is for my child) and *"I need to overcome all struggles for the sake of my children."*

Several participants also cited faith and prayer as sources of emotional strength, indicating reliance on spirituality as a coping mechanism. One participant mentioned, *"I just pray always,"* suggesting that religious belief provides comfort and hope during difficult situations.

These findings are consistent with Ramos and Tus (2020), who noted that Filipino single mothers rely heavily on faith, family support, and personal resilience in managing stress and child-rearing responsibilities. Martinez et al. (2022) likewise reported that single mothers' future-oriented motivation is centered on securing better opportunities and stability for their children.

Theme 3: Reliance on Family and Desire for Government Support

Participants frequently cited parents, siblings, and relatives as sources of childcare assistance and financial help. Statements such as *"Si mama ang naga-alaga sa bata kung nagaubra ako"* (My mother takes care of my child while I work) illustrate the dependence on extended family networks.

However, participants also expressed strong desire for government assistance, livelihood programs, and skills training. Many mentioned the need for capital, business opportunities, or vocational training to improve their income stability. Requests such as *"Livelihood in every barangay"* and *"Training for business"* demonstrate the perceived importance of institutional support in promoting long-term economic independence.

This finding aligns with Ramos and Tus (2020), who found that while family support remains central in coping, lack of formal social services limits the capacity of single mothers to achieve financial sustainability. The results also reflect structural gaps in community-based assistance for solo parents.

Theme 4: Adaptive Management Strategies for Work-Family Balance

The fourth theme highlights various adaptive strategies employed by single woman parents to manage work and family responsibilities. Common strategies include strict budgeting, engaging in multiple income-generating activities, time management, and promoting children's independence. Participants mentioned selling food, farming, online selling, and part-time jobs as ways to supplement household income.

Some participants emphasized teaching children to help with household chores and become more self-reliant, which helped reduce caregiving burden. One participant stated that helping children become independent is *"a big help while I am working."*

These strategies reflect proactive coping and role negotiation, consistent with the reinvention and work–family symbiosis perspectives identified in the quantitative phase. This supports Gasse and Mortelmans (2020), who emphasized that single mothers actively modify both work arrangements and family practices to reduce strain. Thielemans and Mortelmans (2019) also noted that adaptive strategies are crucial in sustaining employment and caregiving roles among single-parent households.

Conclusion

The study reveals that single woman parents in Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo, experience multidimensional work–family strain, negotiating caregiving and employment responsibilities through diverse coping strategies. Quantitative findings show that reinvention and work–family symbiosis are the most prevalent strain perspectives, indicating that mothers actively adapt their motherhood ideologies and workplace behaviors through psychological resilience and flexible role management. Work orientation and family conflict perspectives reflect prioritization of employment or persistent tension between rigid caregiving expectations and inflexible work conditions, highlighting the psychological stressors inherent in single motherhood.

Socio-economic variables, including age, educational attainment, and number of children, did not significantly affect strain perspectives, suggesting that structural and psychological stressors—such as employment rigidity, limited childcare options, and emotional strain—are common across groups. Qualitative data emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation, emotional attachment to children, and faith as key psychological drivers, complemented by family and community support as external resources. Adaptive strategies, including time management, multiple income-generating activities, and fostering children’s independence, reflect problem-focused and emotion-focused coping that enables work–family balance.

Overall, the findings illustrate the psychological resilience, motivation, and agency of single woman parents in navigating economic, emotional, and social challenges. Interventions should focus on enhancing workplace flexibility, expanding livelihood and skills training programs, and strengthening social protection measures, while also addressing psychosocial well-being. Future studies could examine longitudinal psychological outcomes of strain perspectives and evaluate the effectiveness of targeted interventions in promoting mental health and work–family integration among single mothers..

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