

## **Kabudlay, Himakas kag Kalipay: Lived Experiences of Single Mothers with Honor Student Children**

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**ABSTRACT** Single mothers are responsible for raising and nurturing their children alone because they have no husband or live-in partner. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of single mothers with honor student children. The participants were six mothers who were single for at least two years, of legal age and had an honor student child. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews in local dialect or Hiligaynon with audio recordings were used for data gathering. The researchers secured participants' consent letter and practiced ethical considerations of the study. The data were transcribed for analysis guided by the Modified Van Kaam's Phenomenological Method analysis. The findings based on the thematic analysis described the lived experiences of the single mothers with honor student children as "Kabudlay, Himakas kag Kalipay". The themes were: the first theme is "kabudlay" (having difficulties in life as mother and father) with subthemes difficult situation, and difficult being a mother and father; the second theme is "himakas" (striving hard against difficulties) with subthemes striving hard, and discipline and rearing; and third theme is "kalipay" (being grateful and thankful) with subthemes happiness, thankful to the situation, and thankful and prayerful to God. This study concludes that being a single mother is challenging and becomes even more demanding when the child is an honor student. However, single mothers can persevere through these challenges and experience a sense of gratitude and fulfillment. The phenomenon of single mothers can be being in difficult life situations, striving hard, and being grateful. The study's findings can be used for the programs for single mothers to improve their living conditions.

**Keywords:** Grateful, difficulties in life, striving hard, rearing, nurturing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Single motherhood has become a significant demographic trend globally, with more than 300 million single-parent households reported in 2023—most led by women (United Nations, 2023). While early studies framed single mothers primarily in terms of economic hardship and social vulnerability, more recent research highlights their resilience, agency, and educational commitment in raising academically high-performing children (Okafor, Rahman, & Cheng, 2023). This conceptual shift from deficit-based to strength-based perspectives underscores the complexity and resourcefulness within these families.

Global research echoes these findings, indicating that single mothers, especially in low- and middle-income countries, often face intersecting challenges—poverty, limited educational attainment, restricted job opportunities, and stigma (Okafor, Rahman, & Cheng, 2023). However, recent scholarship has begun to shift toward a more balanced perspective, focusing on the strengths, resilience, and agency of single mothers. For instance, Conger and Taylor (2021) emphasized that maternal self-efficacy, optimism, and social support networks significantly influence parenting practices and child outcomes in low-income families.

In Southeast Asia, single mothers contend with entrenched gender norms, limited institutional support, and socioeconomic constraints (Nguyen, Lim, & Sittisomboon, 2023). Still, evidence from Indonesia and South Korea demonstrates that maternal emotional support and involvement significantly bolster children's academic resilience (Hapsari, 2023; Lee & Kim, 2023). Such findings suggest that involvement and emotional availability buffer the disadvantages typically associated with single-parent households.

In the Philippines, solo-parent households number over 14 million, with mothers heading approximately 95% (Philippine Statistics Authority, n.d.). National studies have documented challenges related to poverty, stigma, and lack of policy support (Abao & Villanueva, 2022; Ramos, Cruz, & Mendoza, 2021). However, quantitative research also suggests that resilience, optimism, and social capital among single mothers correlate positively with children's academic achievements, including honor student status (Santos & De Guzman, 2023; Reyes & Tiamzon, 2022).

In Western Visayas, and specifically in Guimaras Island, no indexed or local research has captured this phenomenon. While various programs exist to support student excellence (CHED, 2023), the role of parental influence, particularly from single mothers, remains underexplored. This highlights a critical gap in literature—the lack of localized, in-depth qualitative accounts of single mothers whose children excel academically.

Several theoretical frameworks have been employed to understand the strength-based dynamics of single-parent families. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2023) posits that parental behaviors that nurture autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key to children's intrinsic motivation—qualities that can exist in single-parent households as much as in two-parent ones. In addition, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory has been applied to understand how single mothers manage stress through both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Ramos & Tus (2020) research findings revealed that financial problems (struggles in meeting the basic needs of the children/family) and loneliness as the predominant feeling among single mothers are the common problems and experiences of being a single mother. While, Delos Reyes (2023) documented how faith and gratitude serve as internal resources for Filipino single mothers in rural areas, helping them reframe adversity as a test of faith and perseverance.

The psychological and emotional coping strategies of single mothers are also central to their resilience. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory explains that individuals adapt to chronic stress through various coping mechanisms, including emotional regulation, problem-solving, and meaning-making. In rural areas like Guimaras, where access to institutional support is limited, emotional and spiritual resources often

serve as crucial lifelines (Theron, 2023). Emotion-focused coping includes strategies such as avoiding problems, self-blame, and reinterpreting situations, while problem-focused coping involves instrumental actions, negotiation, and exercising caution (D. Reis et al., 2021). Moreover, research indicates a strong correlation between emotion regulation and resilience in single mothers managing multiple roles (Azara et al., 2022)

On the other hand, educational success in children from single-parent households has been explored through the lens of parental involvement, parenting style, and household dynamics. Research on single parents in Catholic schools explored the relationship between parental involvement dimensions—including parenting, communicating, and collaborating—and high school students' academic performance, though specific outcomes were not detailed in the available abstract (Valencia & Roberto, 2020). Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2023) highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation among learners—attributes that may be nurtured by single mothers who actively participate in their children's education and moral development.

Despite these insights, there remains a scarcity of qualitative studies that explore the intersection of single motherhood and child academic achievement from a strength-based and culturally grounded perspective, particularly in rural Philippine settings. This study contributes to this gap by documenting the lived experiences of single mothers in Guimaras whose children have achieved academic honors—highlighting their struggles, perseverance, and gratitude in parenting amidst adversity.

While literature abounds on the challenges faced by single mothers, few studies have qualitatively explored the lived experiences of rural Philippine single mothers whose children are honor students. In particular, there is limited understanding of how these mothers interpret their dual roles and derive strength, motivation, and meaning through their children's academic success. Moreover, there is little emphasis on such narratives within the Philippine context, particularly in rural or semi-urban areas such as Guimaras. The current research thus seeks to fill this gap by exploring the strengths, struggles, and triumphs of single mothers with honor student children—an area that remains underrepresented in both local and global research.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed descriptive phenomenology as a qualitative approach because it seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences. The phenomenological approach aims to uncover the essence of a phenomenon as it is lived and perceived by participants. The phenomenon under investigation was the lived experiences of single mothers who have successfully raised honor students. Phenomenological research was appropriate in this study because phenomenology allowed the researchers to explore the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of this experience as told in the participants' own words.

## Locale and Participants of the Study

The study was conducted in an island province in the Philippines. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is appropriate in phenomenological research to identify individuals who have firsthand experience of the phenomenon as the mothers of the honor students. All participants in this study identified based in the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The **inclusion criteria** for participant selection were as follows: (1) must be a biological or adoptive single mother; (2) has been a solo parent for at least two years; (3) of legal age (18 years and above); (4) currently resides in the island province; and (5) has at least one child recognized as an honor student under DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2016, which defines honor students as learners with a general average of 90% and no grade below 85%, as well as good moral character and co-curricular participation. Exclusion of the participants when the single mother has a new live-in partner and the honor child is not living with them.

The researchers used pseudonyms of the participants. First, "**Gi**", a 54-year-old housekeeper, has been a single mother for 10 years. She raised her children alone after separation from her spouse. Second, "**Inday**", aged 43, is a supermarket vendor who has been a single mother for 21 years. She resides in a highly urbanized area and works extended hours to provide for her children. Third, "**Er-Er**", a 38-year-old housemaid, is a single mother to three children (two boys and one girl) and has been raising them on her own for the past two years. Fourth, "**Ann**", in her early 40s, is a **person with disability (PWD)** and currently unemployed. She has been a single mother for 15 years. Fifth, "**Anet**", a 59-year-old housekeeper, has been a single parent for six years. She described her dual role as both caregiver and breadwinner as emotionally and financially taxing. Sixth, "**Neneng**", in her 50s, is a farmer and the longest-serving single parent among the participants, having raised her six children alone for the past 12 years.

## Data Gathering Instrument

This study used a semi-structured interview guide. The questions were in Hiligaynon and validated by the qualitative and social science researchers.

## Data Collection

Informed consent was given to the six single mothers who participated in the study. Each shared her unique challenges and strategies in navigating single motherhood while supporting a child to academic excellence. These narratives were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in Hiligaynon, the participants' native dialect, and later translated into English for analysis. The translations were cross-checked by bilingual faculty members to ensure fidelity to the participants' meanings.

## **Trustworthiness**

The researchers followed the trustworthiness of this study. To ensure the rigor of this study, trustworthiness was addressed through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

For the subjectivity statement, the researchers are not single mothers and even being a mother is a distant dimension. However, the researchers are faculty members, gender and development advocates, and college students at the university who have known some single mothers in the island province. The researchers hypothesized that single mothers encountered difficulties in the community.

## **Ethical considerations**

The researchers' major concern is the importance of considering ethics in research involving human participants. The researchers were in adherence to the ethical principles of respect and protection of the participants, beneficence, and justice. Informed consent was secured, which included risks and benefits of the study, the vulnerability of the researchers, and the practice of privacy and confidentiality of the researchers. Ethical considerations were paramount; participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. No identifying information was disclosed in the reporting of the results.

## **Data Analysis**

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the modified Van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1994 as cited in Haghshenas et al., 2022). This seven-step process includes: (1) listing and preliminary grouping, (2) reduction and elimination, (3) clustering and thematizing, (4) validation, (5) individual textual description, (6) individual structural description, and (7) composite textural-structural description. Themes were derived from significant statements and meaning units that emerged from the narratives of the six participants.

# **RESULTS**

## **Thematic Analysis**

The findings of this study based on the thematic analysis using Van Kaam Analysis method described the lived experiences of the single mothers with honor student children as "Kabudlay, Himakas, Kalipay (Being Grateful Despite in Striving Difficulties)." The themes are (1) Having Difficulties in Life as a Mother and Father, (2) Striving Hard against Difficulties, and (3) Being Grateful and Thankful to God.

## **Theme 1: Kabudlay – Having Difficulties in Life as a Mother and Father**

The theme Kabudlay captures the compounded challenges that single mothers face in their dual role. Participants consistently emphasized the emotional and physical exhaustion that comes from being both a mother and a father—providing financial support, emotional care, and educational guidance. The burden of solo parenting is exemplified by Ann, a participant with a disability: “It is hard for me because I am all alone and as a PWD, I do not have work”.

Having Difficulties in life as a mother and father emerged because most single mothers are having difficulties in facing and raising their children all alone. It is hard for them to manage their time at work and in the house. They have problems nurturing the child, but still, they are holding on to their responsibilities as a mother and a father for their children.

**Kabudlay/Difficult situation.** Being alone is not easy, especially in raising a child all alone without a partner. There are times that some of the participants wants to surrender, but then, eventhough they are in a difficult situation they still manage to raise their child well. It is supported with the statement of Ann “Of course it is hard for me, because, I am all alone (raising my children) and ofcourse as a PWD, I do not have a work” and “when my mother died it is very hard for me” (L9-11&L23-30). Moreover, Gi mentioned that “ Of course, it is hard for because I am their mother.” and “I am so stressed because I saw them struggling and exhausted of course and as a mother and I can’t help because I also don’t know what their class is because it is through modular” (L65-67&L24-29). This shows the single mothers with honor student children experienced difficulties and have full of difficult situation.

**Difficult being a Mother and Father.** Participants are sharing their experiences as a single mother. They said that it is very hard for them to raise a child and send them to school. Moreover, they have difficulties in managing their time because they are a father and a mother for their children. It is supported with the statement of Inday that “As a single mother, it is not easy raising and taking care of your children, because of course you’re not just a mother but also a father” (L6-7). Furthermore, Neneng also mentioned “It is hard to raise them alone as a single mother, you’re not just a mother but a father also to your children” (L26-27). Moreover Anet added “It is hard because it is only me, I do not have work, and then I do not have companion, I do not have a husband. In addition, I do not have someone beside me, when I can rely on. When it comes to work my time is divided” (L4-5 & L12-13).

Nurturing and raising a child all alone as a single mother is not easy, some participants are saying. Sometimes, you need to hold your anger and require more patience in raising them. It is supported by the statement of Gi “I cannot easily correct and advice my child” (L11-12). Inday also mentioned that “As a single mother, its not easy for me to give all my time to them” (L12-13). This manifests that the single mother has difficulty in nurturing their children because of the absence of the father. Moreover, there is a difficulty because they need to replace the father’s role and stand as the father of their children.



This theme represents the emotional, physical, and economic burdens borne by single mothers assuming both parental roles. The participants consistently echoed the stress of providing sole financial support, offering emotional nurturance, and making educational decisions alone. Many described this dual burden as “kabudlay,” or hardship, which resonates deeply with literature emphasizing parental role strain in single-mother households (Lim & Tan, 2021).

For instance, Ann, a PWD and unemployed, expressed: “It is hard for me because I am all alone and as a PWD, I do not have work.” Another mother, Gi, shared her difficulties during modular learning: “I saw them struggling... and I can’t help because I also don’t know what their class is because it is through modular.” These statements reflect the limited institutional support and the overwhelming personal responsibility, similar to findings by Nguyen et al. (2023), who reported that Southeast Asian single mothers often experience role overload and emotional isolation due to the absence of co-parenting.

Moreover, the challenge of playing both mother and father aligns with assertion that role multiplicity contributes to maternal fatigue and psychosocial stress. Participants like Inday and Neneng repeatedly described themselves as both “nanay kag tatay” (mother and father), underscoring how cultural expectations shape their identities and emotional labor (Theron, 2023).

This theme is further supported by Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) stress and coping theory, which frame coping as a dynamic response to role-related demands. Despite their hardships, these mothers demonstrate significant resilience, reinterpreting stress not as defeat, but as fuel for persistence.

## **Theme 2: Himakas – Striving Hard Against Difficulties**

The second theme, himakas, emphasizes perseverance and maternal determination. Participants shared powerful accounts of their tireless efforts to provide for their children, even when doing so required personal sacrifice. Gi’s comment, “I will do my best because my children depend on me”, illustrates the deep sense of responsibility these mothers feel.

### **Theme 2: Himakas (Striving Hard against Difficulties)**

This theme emerged because most of the participants are striving to send their children to school and to support and guide them in their studies. As a single mother, they are doing everything to provide all the needs of their children. In all the obstacles in life that they are facing, they are striving hard to discipline their children to win that fight and be a victorious single mother.

**Pagpaninguha/striving hard.** All of the participants are striving hard to give all the needs of their children; they are striving hard to give everything that is for goodness of their children. Even it is hard for them still they are eager to win these battles through determination and striving harder. It is supported with the statement of Gi “I will do my best because my children depends on me.” (L49-51). Neneng also mentioned, “Even though I am a single mother I made sure that my children finished their studies” (L75-77). Anet also

added "Then I focused on him and I'm striving hard" (L26). In addition, Inday mentioned, "Still striving and trying to give their needs as long as I can" (L7-8). These single mothers are striving hard for the needs and education of their children. More than that, as a single mother, they strive harder to cope with needs of their children.

**Discipline and Rearing.** All the participants, as a single mother, has different ways of disciplining their children. Disciplining a child takes work. It is supported with the statement of Gi "The discipline of a father is different from a mother" (L73-75). Anet also mentioned "The hardest experienced I ever had is raising him alone" (L23-24). The single mothers exerted efforts in rearing and disciplining their children so that they could have a better life. Disciplining is one of the roles of the parents, which also the single mother has to do to exercise good parenting.

Being a single mother is a very tough task. They strive to survive their daily challenges but still can cope with them. The participants of this study have a commonality regarding their complaints. Like the difficulty of disciplining their children and struggles to provide their children with all their needs and a better education because they have no husband or partner who can help them. The knowledge that their children have no one to depend on except them pushes the single mothers to strive and act as mother and father to provide their children with good values and education. The participants' claims were relevant to the study by Conger and Taylor (2021), which states that perceived social support and specific internal resources (higher levels of optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem have lower levels of internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety, and higher levels of positive parenting behaviors) that substantially contribute to single mothers' well-being are linked to positive parenting behaviors and are amenable to change.

This finding supports the work of Conger and Taylor (2021), who argue that single mothers who possess internal resources such as optimism, self-efficacy, and strong maternal identity are more likely to engage in positive parenting behaviors.

Disciplinary strategies also reveal the struggle between authority and emotional closeness. Gi noted the difficulty in correcting her child, saying, "I cannot easily correct and advise my child", pointing to the emotional complexity of playing multiple roles. This supports Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2023), where autonomy-supportive environments—not authoritarian ones—lead to better outcomes. Filipino single mothers may hesitate to discipline harshly due to emotional closeness, relying instead on relational and moral suasion.

Overall, Himakas demonstrates the intersection of gendered labor, emotional labor, and aspirational parenting. Unlike the stereotype of the "absent or ineffective" single parent, these women demonstrate that mothering, when rooted in pagpaninguha (effort) and hope, can compensate for material limitations and even produce honor student children. This stands in direct contrast to deficit-based models of parenting still common in policy and media.



### **Theme 3: Pagpasalamat kag Kalipay – Being Grateful and Thankful**

Despite their hardships, many participants expressed profound gratitude and happiness for their children's academic achievements and personal growth. Expressions such as "Happy ako" (I am happy) and "I am thankful because I overcame it all" reflect not only emotional relief but also spiritual strength.

#### **Theme 3: Being grateful and thankful**

The last theme that emerged was "Being Grateful and Thankful to God." This describes that the experiences of the single mothers of the honor students that most of the participants are grateful and thankful to God and to their life despite of their situations. Eventhough, it is hard for the single mothers to raise their children, still they are grateful, thankful and happy especially when their child became an honor student.

**"Happy Ako"/ Happiness.** Most of the participants mentioned "happy ako" and expressed their happiness despite being a single mother. It is supported with the statement of "Gi" that "I am happy because my child has striven to get high grades" (L4-5). "Ann" mentioned, "There are many hardships, there is sadness and happiness, but ofcourse I am happy and proud" (L4-5&L71). Neneng gladly expressed that "of course I am happy, despite I'm raising them alone" (L59-60). In addition, Er-Er stated that "of course, I am happy. It gives me energy to strive harder because they are doing their best" (L71-72). The single mothers experienced happiness despite of their situation and hardships a both mother and father of their children. As their children became an honor student, the single mothers have been glad and motivated to continue supporting their children and to give them a brighter future.

**Thankful to the situation.** One of the participants is very thankful to God for guiding her in their lives and she is thankful to the situations as well, that even though she is alone she surpassed all the struggles and still thankful. It is supported with the statement of Gi "I'm still thankful because when I became a single mother, it was on the stage where all my kids are already grown up" (L17-20).

**Thankful and Prayerful to God.** Most of the participants are thankful and they are facing the problems and hardships in their lives by being a prayerful one, seeking the presence of God to guide them all throughout their lives, and It is supported with the statement of Inday, "of course,I strive; I strive and pray to God to guide me and give me good health as well" (L55-57). Gi also added, "I'm thankful to the Almighty because I overcome it all", "so it's okay because of God's grace and divine mercy" (L17-20, L65-67). Moreover, Er-Er added "Aside from striving, I prayed that I can overcome every challenges in life" (L60-61). Ann mentioned also that "But I overcome through the help of people around me and through prayers, striving hard and praying to God" (L23-30, L45-48, L66-68).

These findings align with Theron's (2023) findings, which assert that resilience is contextually and culturally shaped—not just a psychological trait but a process fostered by social and spiritual resources. The participants' reliance on prayer, faith, and gratitude suggests a coping mechanism deeply embedded in Filipino cultural and religious norms.

This final theme also provides a counter-narrative to global discourses that pathologize single motherhood. Rather than being consumed by hardship, these mothers find meaning, purpose, and joy in raising their children—particularly as they witness their academic success. This narrative of gratitude, despite adversity, offers a compelling contribution to local and global discussions about maternal strength and resilience.

Table 1. Themes of Lived Experiences of the of Single Mothers with Honor Student Children

| Themes  | Sub-themes  |
|---|---|
| Kabudlay (Having difficulties in life as Mother and Father) | A. Kabudlay/Difficult situation<br>B. Difficult being a Mother and Father                     |
| Himakas (Striving hard against Difficulties)                | A. Pagpaninguha/striving hard<br>B. Discipline and Rearing                                    |
| Kalipay (Being grateful and thankful)                       | A. "Happy Ako"/ Happiness<br>B. Thankful to the situation<br>C. Thankful and Prayerful to God |

## Discussion

This study explored the lived experiences of single mothers raising honor student children in Guimaras, Philippines. As highlighted in the introduction, previous literature often presents single mothers through a deficit lens, focusing on financial hardship, emotional stress, and the absence of paternal support. This research, however, aimed to shift the narrative by uncovering the strengths, resilience, and emotional journeys of these mothers through the themes of Kabudlay (struggles), Himakas (perseverance), and Kalipay (gratitude). The findings not only reinforce existing scholarship on the adversities of single motherhood but also offer alternative insights that honor their agency and contribution to their children's academic success.

The theme Kabudlay captures the immense challenges of playing dual roles as both mother and father. Participants expressed ongoing economic strain, emotional fatigue, and social isolation—experiences echoed by previous study of Ramos & Tus (2020) that financial problems in meeting the basic needs of the children/family) and loneliness feeling among single mothers are the challenger of being a single mother. This interpretation offers a more nuanced understanding, suggesting that the struggles of single motherhood may be compounded, but not exclusively caused, by their family structure.

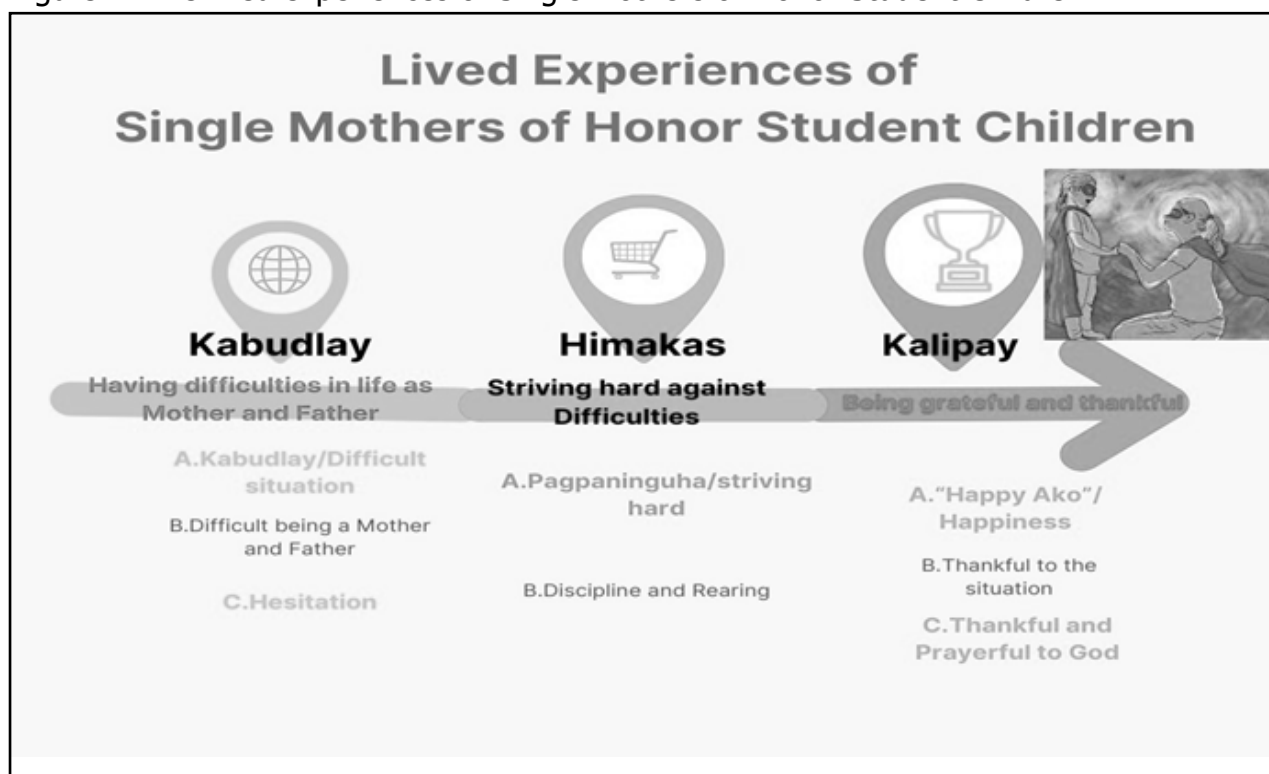
The second theme, Himakas, illustrates the mothers' active role in fostering their children's success through discipline, emotional presence, and unwavering support—qualities that reflect the Filipino cultural value of pagpaninguha(diligent striving). These findings are consistent with Conger and Taylor's (2021) research on resilience and parenting efficacy, and they align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that autonomy-supportive parenting fosters internal motivation in children. Still, it is important to consider that children's academic performance may also be influenced by school environments, teacher mentorship, or peer support. Thus, while maternal influence is significant, it may not be the sole determinant of honor student status.

The final theme, Kalipay, revealed that many single mothers interpreted their children's academic achievements as spiritual or divine affirmation of their efforts. Their expressions of gratitude to God and their children point to the role of faith as a coping and meaning-making mechanism—a finding aligned with Theron (2023), who emphasize the role of spirituality in sustaining maternal resilience. However, gratitude may also be shaped by cultural expectations that women remain thankful and self-sacrificing, potentially obscuring deeper emotional wounds or unspoken needs. Therefore, while gratitude promotes psychological well-being, it may also mask unaddressed stress and pressure.

Therefore, the study's findings present a multi-dimensional portrait of single mothers in Guimaras who have successfully raised honor student children. Their lived experiences—marked by Kabudlay, Himakas, and Kalipay—challenge stereotypical assumptions that single-parent households are necessarily disadvantaged.

These mothers are not merely coping with adversity; they are actively nurturing success in environments that offer little support. Their strategies—emotional resilience, faith, consistent discipline, and deep relational bonds—serve as critical resources in their children's development.

Figure 1. The lived experiences of Single Mothers of Honor Student Children



The significance of these results lies in their challenge to prevailing stereotypes. Contrary to common assumptions that single mothers lead dysfunctional households, this study highlights their resilience, commitment, and ability to raise high-achieving children. These findings make an important contribution to both local and global literature, especially as data on rural Filipino single mothers remains limited. They also fulfill the study's main objective: to illuminate the lived realities and personal meanings behind the parenting journeys of single mothers with honor student children.

The practical implications are substantial. Schools and local government units should recognize single mothers not merely as recipients of aid, but as active partners in their children's development. Programs could include parenting workshops, livelihood assistance, faith-based counseling, and child-care services to reduce their burden and enhance their well-being. Education stakeholders should also provide flexible communication systems that allow single mothers to engage with teachers and school activities despite their work schedules.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was limited to six participants, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the status of "honor student" was self-reported and not verified with school records. Third, the study lacked perspectives from the children and educators, which could have provided a more holistic understanding. Fourth, there may be social desirability bias, as participants might have presented themselves in a favorable light due to cultural and emotional factors.

In future research, a larger and more diverse sample that includes voices from urban and indigenous contexts could strengthen generalizability. Including students and teachers would allow for data triangulation. Mixed-methods approaches may also provide both statistical breadth and qualitative depth. Furthermore, studies on mental health, long-term academic trajectories, and emotional well-being of both mothers and their children would enrich our understanding of the complex dynamics in single-parent households.

The researchers offered the following recommendations. First, the single mothers with honor student children may maintain a healthy lifestyle, which includes getting enough rest and regular exercise, to maintain positive thoughts, and it will improve their outlook in life by making them busy and productive. Second, students and other parents may get inspiration from the struggles and still be thankful to the single mothers as they face the challenges in life. Third, the local government, together with the MSWDO, PSWDO, and Gender and Development (GAD) program, may continue to support the welfare of single mothers by giving and securing them a livelihood so that they can sustain to support the needs of their children. Last, future studies can replicate using other variables from a broader perspective.

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