

Stress Level and Adversity Quotient among Single Working Mothers

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Abstract - *The study identified the profile of the single working mothers in terms of number of children, number of years as a single parent and reason for being a single parent; assessed the single mothers' stress level and adversity quotient; determined the significant difference of stress level and adversity quotient of single mothers when grouped according to profile variables; determined the best predictor of stress level and adversity quotient. Moreover this research endeavoured to test significant relationship between the adversity quotient and stress level of single working mothers. Lastly, it proposed a stress management program for single working mothers for them to cope with their stress and adversities in life.*

The researcher employed quantitative method using standardized questionnaires namely Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS) and Adversity Response Profile (ARP). The respondents were twenty five (25) single working mothers of the students of Batangas State University. From the results, majority of the respondents have 3 children, widow and in early years as single parent; with a normal level of stress and an average adversity quotient. There are no significant differences on the stress level and adversity quotient of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables. Finally, stress level has no significant effect on adversity quotient of single working mothers. From the findings, the researcher further recommends that the Office of Guidance and Counseling should update the student information database to determine students with a single working mother. The Parent-Teacher Association may form a single-parent subgroup for the single working mothers to be able to identify to other mothers with same situation. Moreover, the proposed stress management program may be reviewed and implemented by the Office of Guidance and Counseling in coordination with the Parent-Teacher Association of Batangas State University. Future researchers may conduct further studies using other measures for stress level and adversity quotient or they may focus on the children of single working mothers.

Keywords: *Stress Level, Adversity Quotient, Single working mothers*

INTRODUCTION

Parents' dream for their children is for them to be happy in their lives. This can be the simplest yet challenging desire of parents for their children. Although, raising children is one of the toughest and most fulfilling jobs in the world and the one for which many individual might feel the least prepared, there are challenges, needs, adversities, and other stresses that needed effort from parents as the building blocks of a family and of course, there is always an effect to their children and the whole harmony of the family as well.

However, there are situations that sometimes lead a family to stand alone without one of the parents. Female headed households are increasing. The number of solo parents living in Batangas City is on rise.

According to the 2014 Solo Parent Statistics, there are 2,008 solo parents living in Batangas City listed; 198 Males and 1,810 Females [1].

The life of a single parent can be very busy. In addition to parenting and taking care of home, some may be working or going to school. Other times, the juggle of caring for their child, expenses, shortage of quality time with children, balance work and home duties, and economic struggles are among the seemingly endless problems these families must solve. Single parents are faced with stresses that they cannot run away from because of their families.

The concept of stress has been identified as being a major protagonist of ill health and poor sense of well-being amongst all age-group. Even though some stress is helpful for individuals in meeting new challenges, persistently high and unrelieved stress can

lead to psychological, physical, and behavioral ill health. In the short-term, stress affects the sympathetic nervous system leading to behavior change, including increased arousal and alertness [2]. With long-term exposure to stress, an individual's eating, sleeping, drinking, smoking, physical activity and social functioning can be disrupted [3].

It is a fact that people are surrounded by life-challenging situations and stressful conditions. As Great Roman poet, Virgil, quoted, handling life's setbacks goes in two ways. Some may cope well with these stress and gain strength from adversities and other may do the opposite in which people adapt and deal with it with a certain kind of uncertainty. When experiencing adversities, people are tested on their overall handling of these challenges, which can be a successful adaptation of an individual who has been exposed to biological risk factors or stressful life events, and it also implies expectations of continued susceptibility to future stressors [4].

These single mothers are often working parents because someone needs to earn money to buy food, clothing, and a place to live. Having a job means, the ability to provide these things and being a single parent is not easy since they need to fulfill both obligations at one time: taking care of the kids, house, and school and pay their bills [5]. They also should be able to have the ability to see if their children can already take care of themselves. But, they always need to move on even its really hard, they have to be strong in order to live despite of the absence of someone that can support and help them raise their children.

On the other hand, mothers have this kind of fascinating ways to alter directions that enables them to start in a positive pathway. They have unique coping capabilities that despite their situation, in general, they can come up with a dynamic support for their children even if they are one raising them [6].

Adversity quotient is a measure of how a person responds to adversity (change and challenges). It provides the tools for improving how people respond and thus overall professional effectiveness. According to Stoltz[7], the Adversity Quotient (AQ), is the science of human resilience. AQ measures one's ability to prevail in the face of adversity. A person who uses AQ successfully easily surpasses the big and small challenges that confront us every day. It is also proven that mothers do not only mean that they can easily cope up with these situations but it is better said that they can easily respond better and faster. Stoltz said that life is like mountain climbing and that people

are born with a core human drive to ascend. Ascending means moving toward one's purpose no matter what the goals are [8].

At present, the burden is greater if the mother is the only one who is left behind with her children because it is the mother who takes the bigger role in the growth of a child. The reversal role of a mother becoming the father at the same time is never easy. It is of significant interest to the researcher because of her work in the Office of Guidance and Counseling, wherein mothers are often very worried about their children. They are also sharing their struggles as single mothers who are working at the same time.

These situations motivated the researcher to conduct this study. It was the researcher's great desire to conduct a study about single working mothers in order to extend them help by understanding their situations. Hence, this study was conceived to determine the Stress Level and Adversity Quotient of Single working mothers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted to identify the profile of the single mothers in terms of number of children, number of years as a single parent and reason for being a single parent; assess the single mothers' stress level and adversity quotient; determine the significant difference of stress level and adversity quotient of single mothers when grouped according to profile variables; and determine the best predictor of stress level and adversity quotient. Moreover, this research endeavored to test significant relationship between the Adversity Quotient and Stress Level of Single mothers. Lastly, it aimed to propose a stress management program for single working mothers for them to cope with their stress and adversities in life.

METHODS

Research Design

The researcher used descriptive research design to better facilitate the study and to achieve best possible results. The descriptive research design is most suitable to employ to assess the demographic profile and the variables of the study (Stress Level and Adversity Quotient). It also determined the significant differences of the mentioned variables when grouped according to profile.

Participants

Twenty five (25) single working mothers of students of Batangas State University were the

participants of the research. The researcher utilized the purposive sampling technique in selecting the participants for this research where the researcher determined who to include in the study.

Measures

The instrument used in this study was divided into two parts. The first set is the assessment of the profile of the respondents. The second part is the utilization of the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS), and Adversity Response Profile (ARP).

The researcher used Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) because it has general description of environmental events and circumstances that induce negative emotion and contains statements which tend to be partly general and partly specific. It is a 42-item self-report instrument designed to measure the three related negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and tension/stress. The DASS was constructed not merely as another set of scales to measure conventionally defined emotional states, but to further the process of defining, understanding, and measuring the ubiquitous and clinically significant emotional states usually described as depression, anxiety and stress. Omitting a scale would not have any noticeable effect on scores for the remaining scales.

Adversity Response Profile (ARP) is a self-rating questionnaire designed to measure Adversity quotient of a person and an individual's style of responding to adverse situations [8]. The ARP describes ten scored situations and each scenario is followed by four questions to be answered in a 5-point bipolar scale. Its standard, electronic form is an online, interactive questionnaire designed to measure an individual's pattern of response to a broad range of adverse situations. It took most respondents 7-10 minutes to complete the ARP. Reliabilities (alpha coefficients) of AQ is exceptionally high (over .90 for AQ), indicating that scores are suitable for drawing reliable inferences about individual test-takers. It was used by the research because it has been tested extensively and shows no age, gender, or ethnicity bias aside from being the most robust instrument in existence for measuring resilience.

Procedure

After the approval of such topic and thorough research about single working mothers, the researcher acquired Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) and the Adversity Response Profile (ARP).

Upon purposively determining the participants for the research, the researcher located the students who have single mother based on their Student Information Sheet. Since not all of the participants were residing with their mothers, they were not considered in this study. Each of the questionnaires has request letters and number of the researchers in case they have questions about the questionnaires. After administering the research instruments, the researcher retrieved the questionnaire for evaluation and scoring, tallying and interpretation. They have undergone statistical treatment.

Data Analysis

The data about the Stress and Adversity Quotient of Single Working Mothers were presented in tabulated form, analyzed and interpreted using the following statistical tools:

Frequency and Percentage. These were used to find out the distribution of respondents according to profile

Weighted Mean. This was used to determine the Stress Level and Adversity Quotient of single working mothers.

Cross Tabulation. This showed the table in a matrix format that displays the frequency distribution of the stress level and adversity quotient.

Chi-square Test of Independence. This determined the significant relationship between the Stress Level and Adversity Quotient of the single working mothers. To facilitate the computation of data, the SPSS statistical software was utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

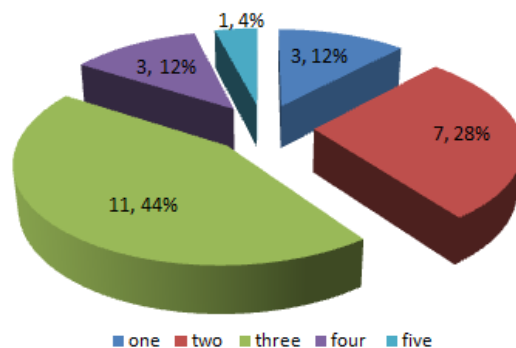


Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of the Mothers' Profile in terms of Number of Children

Based on the figure, most of the single mothers have 3 children which obtained the highest frequency of 11 or 44 percent. Some have two (2) children with

28 percent and the least, with one child which is 4 percent only. This implies that most of the single parents have an ideal number of children.

The result showed that it is known that single parenting is already a challenging role. Respondents would have to definitely multiply their work to provide for their children's needs and their own needs as well. The physical, emotional, psychological, and economic toll on the single mother can become overwhelming that many single mothers draw strength and support from different things.

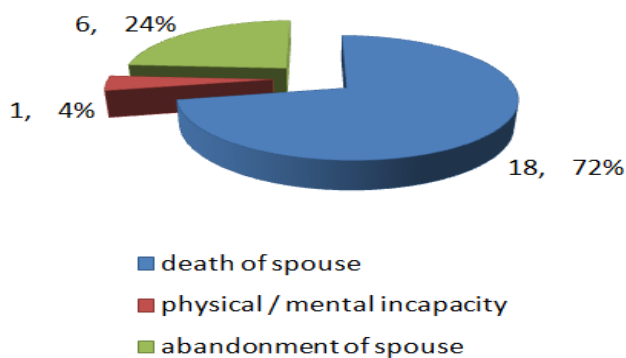


Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of the Mothers' Profile in terms of Reasons for Being Single

Based on the figure, most of the reasons for being single mother was the death of their spouse which obtained highest frequency of 18 or 72 percent. Some of the reasons include the abandonment of their spouses, 24 percent and physical/mental incapacity which has 4 percent only.

The death of a spouse is one of the most difficult events a person can experience. Several studies have demonstrated that bereaved spouses show increased morbidity [9] and mortality. Although pain and grief seem natural in the aftermath of a loss, widowhood does not have to lead to long-term suffering and dysfunction. Based on the studies, the widowed deserve full attention.

With this, it is natural that single mothers would go through the process of bereavement after the death of their spouses. This 72 percent of these single mothers would be facing challenges of being a solo parent at the same time felt the feeling of loss in the family. Although it was said that in general it does not lead to dysfunctions, single mothers would still need to balance family matters as the head of the family.

Based on the figure, most of the single mothers have been single for 1 to 5 years which obtained the highest frequency of 14 or 56 percent. Some have

been single for 6 to 10 years with 32 percent and the least has been single for less than a year.

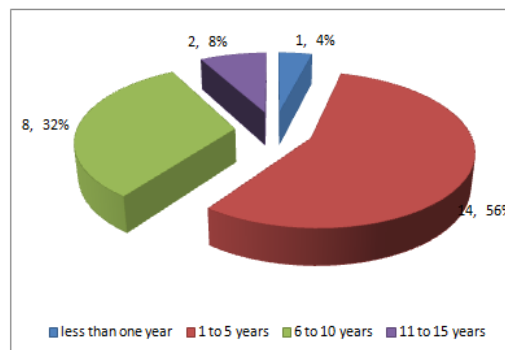


Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of the Mothers' Profile in terms of Number of Years Being Single

Respondents' profile showed that single mothers are in their early years of being single. There are changes and uncertainties associated with becoming a single mother and emotions that can run high: anger, sadness, frustration, fear, shock, guilt, regret, relief, or hope. This is in the early years of planning the needs of their families and to fulfill both obligations of being a caring mother and a provider at the same time.

Table 1. Level of Stress of Single Working Mothers

| Level of Stress | f | % |
|-------------------------|---|------|
| Normal Level of Stress | 9 | 36.0 |
| Mild Stress | 5 | 20.0 |
| Moderate Stress | 7 | 28.0 |
| Severe Stress | 3 | 12.0 |
| Extremely Severe Stress | 1 | 4.0 |

Legend: 0- 14 = Normal Level; 15 - 18 = Mild; 19 - 25 = Moderate; 26 - 33 = Severe; 34+ = Extremely Severe

The table discloses that single working mothers have normal level of stress which is 36 percent of the 25 respondents or represented by frequency of 9. People with normal level of stress have life in fairly good control. It also indicates that even if they are still vulnerable to stress, they can deal with stress in healthy and non-aggressive way.

These suggest that some of the respondents are showing normal level of stress in their lives. A study by Day and Livingstone [10] showed that females indicated that when they perceived stressful, they would turn to their partner and friends to a greater extent than men would. Females also reported that they would seek emotional support to a great degree than men did [10]. Relating to this study, single

mothers do not have partners whom they could turn to if they have problems or challenges. They just have their children and their reference group to provide emotional support for them. Even if single mothers have normal level of stress, it was noted that in their answers to the questionnaire they scored the normal level of stress, the highest.

This contradicts the study made by Bronnimann [11] which claimed that single mothers experience excessive stress and that the stress is a result of the need to provide financially for the family concurrently with caring for the home in ways traditionally handled by husbands and wives, acquiring new skills and parenting. In this study, Single mothers may juggle many responsibilities including financial provision, housekeeping and parenting and lacks a supportive spouse to turn for counsel, cooperation and comfort but finds way in dealing with them. Opposing this study, the present study would suggest that single mothers can manage different challenges of being a single mother.

A qualitative study on working mothers versus stay at home mothers indicated the impact of stress on children. There are other stresses that working mothers are running into include when one of the children are sick. The responsibility of caring for the sick child still falls predominantly on the mother. The mother feels guilty about missing work or they feel guilt for having to leave the child with someone else when they are sick. In connection to the present study, this suggests that there are feelings of guilt on the side of the mothers that they might be able to handle in time because they are not stressed about it anymore. Maybe there are times that they tend to think about their situations but economical need is much more important than this.

Table 2. Adversity Quotient of Single Working Mothers

| Level of Adversity Quotient | f | % |
|-----------------------------|----|------|
| Low AQ | 5 | 20.0 |
| Below Average AQ | 9 | 36.0 |
| Average AQ | 10 | 40.0 |
| Above Average AQ | 1 | 4.0 |

Legend: 177 – 200 = High; 165 – 176 = Above Average; 145 – 164 = Average; 134 – 144 = Below Average; 40 – 133 = Low

It could be gleaned from table 2 that most of the single mothers' adversity quotient was on the average. From the total of 25 respondents included in the study, 10 or 40 percent obtained this level. People with this

level of Adversity indicates that single mothers exercised patience while performing their task to provide for their family and considered problems as something temporary and will somehow end. This AQ scores indicated a normal or average capacity to resolve challenges, difficulties, setbacks and demands and to make every effort to overcome them so as not to affect ones work [8].

It is also proven that mothers do not only mean that they can easily cope up with these situations but it is better said that they can easily respond better and faster. Life is like mountain climbing and that people are born with a core human drive to ascend. Ascending means moving toward one's purpose no matter what the goals are [8]. It affirms to the present study that single mothers may have that drive to ascend for the upkeep of their growing children. Single mothers would not abandon their climb or their situation; also they would not refuse the opportunity to take care of their children and providing with their families. This only suggests that single mothers have lifelong growth and improvement of one's self that drives them to ascend.

This was also valid about them when looked at the number of years they have been single mothers. Respondents seemed to have a control over their adversities in life. Single mothers seemed to center their attention on their family particularly on their children rather than the lost they had.

Others were below average and have low AQ with 36 and 20 percent accordingly. These single mothers have the tendency to foresee events with great catastrophe. A sense of helplessness and despair arises to them and problems may take a significant and unnecessary toll in their lives.

On the other hand, only 1 out of the total sample got an adversity level of above average. This implies that mothers who got an above average adversity quotients tend to have an increased capacity, productivity, and innovation with high morale but lower in attrition.

Differences in Stress level and Adversity Quotient

Table 3 as shown on the next page, indicates the differences in adversity quotient and stress level when grouped to profile variable. As can be gleaned from the table there is no significant difference in adversity quotient and stress level when grouped to profile variable since the computed p values is greater than 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3. Differences in Stress level and Adversity Quotient when grouped according to profile variables

| | Stress level | | | | Adversity Quotient | | | |
|--|--------------|------|----|----|--------------------|------|----|----|
| | F | P | D | I | F | P | D | I |
| Number of children of the single mothers | 0.77 | 0.56 | FR | NS | 1.30 | 0.30 | FR | NS |
| Reason for being a single mother | 0.62 | 0.55 | FR | NS | 1.22 | 0.31 | FR | NS |
| Number of year as a single mother | 1.58 | 0.22 | FR | NS | 0.83 | 0.49 | FR | NS |

Table 4. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis on the Predictive contribution of independent variables to adversity quotient and stress level

| Variables | R | R ² | p | D | I | R | R ² | p | D | I |
|--|------|----------------|------|----|----|------|----------------|------|----|----|
| Number of Children of single mothers | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reason of being single mother | 0.37 | 0.14 | 0.37 | FR | NS | 0.47 | 0.22 | 0.15 | FR | NS |
| Number of years of being single parent | | | | | | | | | | |

Thus, the null hypothesis that there are differences in adversity quotient and stress level when grouped to profile variables failed to reject.

This implies that number of children, reasons for being single parent and number of years of being single do not affect the stress level and adversity quotient of the single working mothers. There might be other factors that are presumed to have an effect on the stress level and adversity quotient of the mothers. Factors might not be within the family or work area of the single mothers but in the interaction or socialization to other people. It seems like stress level of single mothers would be inevitable but manageable enough for them.

Table 4 reveals that using the three independent variables (number of children, reasons for being single parent and number of years of being single parent) to predict adversity quotient and stress level of single working mother yield a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.37 and 0.47 and a multiple correlation square (R²) of 0.14 and 0.22 accordingly are not statistically significant at 0.05 level.

This implies that the combination of all the factors as to number of children, reasons for being single parent and number of years of being single parent is not adequately predictive of adversity quotient and

level of stress. The predictive contributions of each of the personality traits are presented in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, in terms of adversity quotient, number of children, reasons for being single parent and number of years of being single parent had t-values of -1.47, -0.31 and -1.12 respectively while, the values of the beta weights for the variables are -0.25, -0.02 and -0.27 respectively. With regards to stress level, number of children, reasons for being single parent and number of years of being single parent obtained t-values and beta weights of 0.18, 2.06, 1.49, 0.06, 0.29 and 0.64 respectively.

From the values of beta weights and t-ratio for each independent variable, it is shown that among the factors, number of children got the highest contribution in the prediction of the adversity quotient while reasons for being single working mother had the lowest contribution in the prediction of the said dependent variable. On the other hand, reasons for being single working mother had the highest contribution in the prediction of the stress level while number of children had the lowest contribution. These imply that combination of the independent variables of number of children, reasons for being single parent and number of years do not significantly predict the adversity quotient and stress level of single working mother.

Table 5. Predictors of Stress Level and Adversity Quotient

| | Adversity Quotient | | | | | Stress Level | | | | |
|--|--------------------|------|---------|----|----|--------------|-------|---------|----|----|
| | B | t | p-value | D | I | B | t | p-value | D | I |
| Constant | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.99 | FR | NS | 3.68 | 4.47 | 0.00 | R | S |
| Number of Children of single mothers | 0.06 | 0.18 | 0.86 | FR | NS | -0.25 | -1.47 | 0.16 | FR | NS |
| Reasons of Being Single mother | 0.29 | 2.06 | 0.05 | FR | NS | -0.02 | -0.31 | 0.76 | FR | NS |
| Number of Years of Being Single mother | 0.64 | 1.49 | 0.15 | FR | NS | -0.27 | -1.12 | 0.27 | FR | NS |

Table 6. Relationship between Adversity Quotient and Level of Stress of Single Mother

| | r-value | p-value | Interpretation |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Adversity Quotient vs. Stress | -0.213 | 0.307 | Not Significant |

Legend: Significant at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

As seen from the table, the computed r-value indicates weak negative correlation and the resulted p-value of 0.307 is greater than 0.05 alpha level, Thus the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between adversity quotient and level of stress of single mother. Since the kind of relationship is very small negative, there is very little to zero tendency that as the adversity quotient gets lower, the stress level gets higher, or vice versa. This means that no significant relationship exists and implies that the mothers' adversity quotient is not affected by their stress experienced and vice versa.

The result of the study implies that the stress level of the single working mothers would not be affected by their adversity quotient. It seems like single working mothers' stress level would not suggest an average adversity quotient. Stressors will always be available. However, single working mothers' ability to bounce back from the challenges would not be stable.

The result shows that when the score of the Adversity Quotient is higher, job stress will be lower. Hence, a high Adversity Quotient can effectively moderate and lower job stress. Adversity Quotient has relationship with job stress. When workers with androgynous characteristic have high AQ, their job stress will be lower than androgynous. This contradiction in the study suggests that single working mothers have different kind of adversity which they are using to cope with their situations.

Table 7. Stress Management Program for single working mothers

| Specific Objectives | Strategies | Target Persons | Responsible Person | Success Indicator |
|--|---|-------------------------------|---|--|
| To provided assistance to single mothers' needs | Collaborating with the Gender and Development Office of the Batangas State University in terms of seminar | Single working mothers | Gender and Development Office | Number of attendees in the seminar |
| | Uplifting the morale of single mothers by providing much needed help on their families | Gender and Development staffs | Office of Guidance and Counseling | Percentage of students who rated the seminar-workshop as good or better |
| | | Guidance Facilitators | Parent Teacher Association | |
| To provide single mothers the relaxation they need | Collaborating with different agencies that supplement a work life balance program for working mothers | Single Working mothers | Office of Guidance and Counseling | Number of satisfied mothers |
| | Spa, day of massage and "me" time for them | | Parent Teacher Association | Percentage of students who rated the relaxation as good or better |
| To create a personal stress plan | To provide assistance in the flow of the busy schedules of single working mothers | Single Working mothers | Office of Guidance and Counseling Parent Teacher Association | Number of successful plan |
| To provide stress management training | Psycho educational training for single working mothers to address all the aspects of their needs | Single Working mothers | Office of Guidance and Counseling Parent Teacher Association | Number of attendees Percentage of students who rated the seminar-workshop as good or better |

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Majority of the respondents have 3 children, widow and in early years as single parent. Single working mother respondents have a normal level of stress and an average adversity quotient. There are no significant differences on the Stress Level and Adversity Quotient of single working mothers when grouped according to profile. Profile of the single working mothers are not predictors of stress level and adversity quotient. Stress level has no significant effect on adversity quotient of single working mothers. Stress Management Program was proposed for single working mothers to cope with their stress and adversities in life. \

It is recommended that single working mothers clinging to moderate stress may find time to attend in the time management seminar as part of Parent-Teacher activities. Proposed Stress Management Program be reviewed and evaluated by the Office of the Guidance and Counseling for its implementation as part of the Extension Service Office of Batangas State University. Future researchers may conduct similar study involving additional respondents and variables like symptoms of depression and quality of life as indicators of stress and adversity quotient of single working mothers. Results of the study be incorporated in discussing professional subjects in psychology like Current issues in Psychology, Counseling and Psychotherapy.

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