

Level of Challenges of Criminology Students with Single Parents

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the real problems that criminology students from single-parent homes face. These problems included financial, mental, emotional, and personal issues that many of the respondents called challenging. Sometimes, emotional and social obligations got in the way of their focus and schoolwork. The problems weren't very different by age or gender, though most of the respondents were young guys aged 23 to 27. The outcomes showed that, to help students as effectively as possible, teachers and leaders need to know where they come from. It taught students how to manage stress, making it easier for them to go to school and use community resources. It also meant setting rules that helped kids do well in school and made them feel good about themselves. The study said that the DSWD should help both the students and the single parents. Getting stronger mentally, better at getting back on their feet after setbacks, and more open to change should help these kids do better in school.

Keywords: single parent household, financial, personal challenges

INTRODUCTION

There is a lot of information out there about the problems that kids from single-parent homes face. Studies indicate that children and adolescents from such familial structures frequently exhibit inferior academic performance, heightened stress levels, and diminished social support compared to their counterparts from two-parent households (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023; Ellis & Bjorklund, 2012). These challenges are intensified by socio-economic inequalities, as single parents—particularly women—are disproportionately affected by poverty and limited access to resources (Stack & Meredith, 2017; Dixon et al., 2023). Studies conducted in various contexts, including Australia and the United States, highlight the importance of parental support, peer networks, and school engagement as critical protective factors against these risks (Bradley et al., 2021; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2023). The global research underscores that single-parent family structures are not merely individual issues but significant challenges to educational and social justice.

The rise in single-parent homes in the Philippines has caused its own set of cultural and economic problems. Filipino single parents often have to juggle caring for their kids with jobs that aren't very stable. This could put their kids in a bad financial situation and make it harder for them to spend time with their parents (Carlo et al., 2018; De Castro, 2023). Local studies show that students who live with only one parent face stigma, a lack of guidance, and emotional distress that hurt their grades (Balacuit & Lopio-Alas, 2022; Abad, 2024). For criminology students, whose studies encompass emotionally challenging topics such as crime, justice, and victimhood, these obstacles are exacerbated. The combination of financial problems, emotional problems, and hard schoolwork makes a group of people in higher education very vulnerable. Even with a lot of research done around the world and in the US, criminology students are still not well studied in the literature. A considerable segment of the existing literature has focused on students in general education, psychology, or social work (Adil et al., 2023; Mahmood & Sangeetha, 2023). However, criminology students face unique challenges, such as

demanding internships, involvement with sensitive case studies, and the imperative for resilience in their preparation for careers in law enforcement or corrections (Darvi et al., 2025).

While research has examined resilience and coping strategies among students broadly (Deng et al., 2022), there is a paucity of understanding regarding the specific impact of single-parent family dynamics on the academic and emotional experiences of criminology students. This divide inhibits educators and policymakers from employing evidence-based strategies to support this demographic. Students studying criminology who are reared by single parents may encounter additional difficulties that have an impact on their future employability, emotional fortitude, and academic achievement. Single-parent criminology students can face additional challenges that hinder their academic, emotional, and employment success. The socio-economic and emotional restrictions students confront daily are crucial because Cariaga (2024) views student accomplishment as a multidimensional construct produced by internal ability and external factors. Critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and creativity let kids thrive with less support (Cariaga, 2024). Culturally responsive education and design thinking might assist these students transcend personal adversity into community-oriented innovation, especially in social justice and systemic reform criminology programs, according to Cariaga and El Halaisi (2024). ICT and creative teaching methods promote engagement and mastery in rural and poor settings, especially for students with disordered educational trajectories (Cariaga, Pospos, & Dagonan, 2024). According to Cariaga (2023), inclusive changes of the Philippine education system should address structural disparities and help underprivileged learners, especially single-parent households, through holistic, participatory, and emotionally responsive pedagogies.

This study is significant as it seeks to illuminate the actual experiences and challenges faced by criminology students from single-parent households. By addressing this gap, the research improves our understanding of how family structure affects academic resilience, coping strategies, and readiness for work. The findings can help school leaders, guidance counselors, and policymakers come up with programs that meet the needs of this group of students who are at risk. The study aligns with broader objectives for educational equity by ensuring that criminology students, who will ultimately uphold justice and community safety, receive assistance in surmounting institutional and familial obstacles to success.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to examine the challenges faced by criminology students from single-parent households. The design was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to describe and analyze the academic, emotional, psychological, and personal difficulties of the respondents without manipulating any variables. By focusing on naturally occurring conditions, the study was able to capture an accurate picture of the lived experiences of the participants.

Participants

The participants of the study were 30 criminology students enrolled in one higher educational institution in Misamis Occidental. All respondents came from single-parent households and were purposively selected to ensure that the sample represented the population of interest. To strengthen the validity of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 17 criminology students from the 2nd to 4th year levels who also came from single-parent households. The results of the pilot test provided the basis for refining the questionnaire and establishing its reliability.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a 40-item researcher-made questionnaire designed to measure four domains of challenges: financial, emotional, psychological, and personal. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale (Doronila & Cariaga, 2025). The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded values of .930 for the financial scale and .934 for the emotional scale, both indicating excellent reliability. The psychological and personal scales obtained values of .778 and .724, respectively, which are considered acceptable levels of reliability. These results confirmed that the instrument was both consistent and dependable for data collection.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through direct engagement with the respondents. The researcher explained the objectives of the study, obtained verbal consent, and assured participants of confidentiality and anonymity. Respondents were given sufficient time to answer the questionnaire in a comfortable and non-coercive environment. The process emphasized voluntary participation, and no student was compelled to take part in the study.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, several statistical tools were employed. Frequency distribution and percentage were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. The weighted mean was applied to determine the overall level of challenges experienced by the students across the four domains. To test for significant differences in the challenges faced by students when grouped according to age and sex, an independent t-test was utilized. These methods ensured that both descriptive and inferential insights were drawn from the data.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that no identifying information was disclosed in the reporting of results. All data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes, in line with the ethical principles outlined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis was presented in accordance with the statements of the problem providing answers to the questions given to the criminology students with single parents. The findings and discussions are based on thoroughly analyzing the data gathered.

Because older students have to take breaks during the school year, there are more criminology students aged 23–27 who are single parents than there are students aged 18–22. They usually stop going to school because they need to work part-time or full-time to pay for their own needs or those of their family. They are older when they start and finish college again. This suggests that the financial responsibilities of these older kids have a substantial effect on their education, especially for those who come from single-parent homes and may be under more financial stress. Sarona-Pedro and Villanueva (2025) arrived at analogous conclusions. They said that problems with money and family responsibilities often make people change their plans and take longer to finish. The fact that criminology students with only one parent are more likely to be older (23–27 years old) shows that family and financial responsibilities restrict people from finishing education. Schools should look about giving flexible learning options like evening sessions, modular programs, or blended learning to aid students who have to work and study at the same time. This would keep students from dropping out and help older students finish their degrees while still taking care of their families. The government might establish customized financial aid and income-generating initiatives for single-parent households at the policy level. This would make sure that youngsters can go to college without having to take long gaps. Not only would this increase the number of graduates, but it would also end the cycle of poverty that comes from not finishing school.

Table 1. Frequencies of Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-22	14	46.7
23-27	16	53.3

The fact that 73.3% of criminology students with single parents are men illustrates that criminology and law enforcement have historically been male-dominated fields. Jardine (2025) stated that criminology is predominantly perceived as a discipline for men due to its emphasis on physique and jobs within law enforcement. Guzman and Doronio (2025) noted that learning styles and the classroom environment significantly influence student engagement, irrespective of gender. This suggests that even while men currently dominate, supportive classroom techniques might get more women to apply to criminology degrees. The fact that most criminology students are men implies that the profession is still biased toward men, which aligns with the assumption that criminology has always been a male-dominated field. Universities should actively encourage women to study criminology by giving them scholarships, mentoring them, and running public awareness campaigns. This will help make things more equal between men and women. To make sure that male and female students have the same opportunity, teachers and management need to make sure that training places and courses are gender-sensitive. This includes dealing with the preconceptions that can stop women from working as police officers or in jails. This would make the criminal justice system more available to everyone.

Table 2. Frequencies of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	8	26.7
Female	22	73.3

The weighted mean of 3.08 shows that money troubles are "Challenging." Many students sought part-time jobs to help pay for their education since they felt it was hard to pay for items like fees, books, and transportation. These findings corroborate the assertions of Rabbani (2023) and Stack & Meredith (2017) regarding the challenges faced by children from single-parent households in pursuing higher education, specifically financial difficulties. Bongabong and Doronio (2025) demonstrate that parental support and instructional strategies

significantly influence a student's motivation to learn. This means that when kids don't have money or assistance from their parents, their drive and determination to do well in school are affected. If you find that money concerns are "Challenging," it suggests that money troubles are a key factor why people don't do well in school. Kids whose parents don't live with them should be able to get additional scholarships, lower tuition, and work-study opportunities at school. This would mean that people wouldn't have to work too many part-time jobs, which can damage their grades. Colleges, local governments, and NGOs might work together to find long-term solutions to support students with money, such as offering them stipends, transportation allowances, or free textbooks. The research discovered that these measures would immediately tackle the identified financial vulnerabilities.

Table 3. Level of Financial Challenges among BS-CRIM Students with Single Parents

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I have part time jobs to support my tuition.	3.47	Very Challenging
2. I find it difficult to purchase textbooks or other educational material.	3.40	Very Challenging
3. I am confident in my ability to overcome our financial difficulties then achieve my academic goal.	3.33	Challenging
4. I feel that my financial limitations affect my ability to participate in extracurricular activities.	3.23	Challenging
5. I worry about my single parents' financial stability and how it affects our future.	3.13	Challenging
6. I worry about graduating due to a lack of financial budget.	3.00	Challenging
7. I struggle to afford transportation to and from school.	2.97	Challenging
8. I feel a sense of responsibility to contribute financially, which can impact my school work and social life.	2.97	Challenging
9. I need to borrow money to cover my tuition and school fees.	2.87	Challenging
10. I prioritize work over study due to my financial needs.	2.47	Slightly Challenging
Weighted Mean	3.08	Challenging

*Legend: 1.00-1.80: Not challenging at all; 2.61-3.40: Challenging; 4.21-5.00: Extremely Challenging
1.81-2.60: Slightly Challenging; 3.41-4.20: Very Challenging;*

The weighted mean of 3.07 makes it obvious that psychological problems are "Challenging." Students reported feelings of anxiety, guilt, and an inability to concentrate. This aligns with the findings of Deng et al. (2022), which indicate that stress stemming from family and school contributes to increased sorrow and anxiety. Fudolin and Dioso (2025) also discovered that peer pressure significantly influences academic achievement. This supports the idea that psychological stressors come from both family and social influences. This highlights how hard it is for criminology students whose parents don't live with them to deal with their mental health issues. Students' reports of mental stress show that they need help with their mental health right away. Universities should improve their counseling services, peer support groups, and classes on how to deal with stress for students who come from homes with only one parent. This would help you feel less stressed, guilty, and angry, which can make it hard to study. At the policy level, teaching crime with mental health programs could normalize asking for help and teach students how to deal with problems. This is in line with the Mental Health Act of the Philippines, which says that schools must offer mental health services to everyone.

Table 4. Level of Psychological Challenges among BS-CRIM Students with Single Parents

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I feel anxious and it affects my academics and even my personal life.	3.37	Challenging
2. I have little focus and can do only a few things in school.	3.30	Challenging
3. I feel guilty about not being able to do enough for my family or my studies.	3.27	Challenging
4. I need more support from my single parent and my school for my mental health.	3.07	Challenging
5. I have trouble expressing myself because I only have a single parent.	3.07	Challenging
6. I worry about failing my studies and my personal goals.	3.00	Challenging
7. I always feel frustrated because my academic and house responsibilities never end.	2.97	Challenging
8. I feel unsupported at home and at school.	2.93	Challenging
9. I am overwhelmed with managing many tasks.	2.90	Challenging
10. I feel anxious or depressed sometimes about my school and home activities.	2.83	Challenging
Weighted Mean	3.07	Challenging

*Legend: 1.00-1.80: Not challenging at all; 2.61-3.40: Challenging; 4.21-5.00: Extremely Challenging
1.81-2.60: Slightly Challenging; 3.41-4.20: Very Challenging;*

The average for emotional problems was 3.13. The most common feelings were loneliness and pressure to do well. Chavda and Nisarga (2023) found that kids whose parents are single often feel emotionally stressed because they don't have a second parent role. Freeman (2017) also said that a lot of people feel like they have to do well to remember their parents' sacrifices. According to Villocino and Villocino (2025), the quality of the teacher has a big impact on how engaged and motivated the students are to learn. This means that socially supportive teaching methods may help students from single-parent families deal with the stress and loneliness they experience. Students need better social support systems because they are under a lot of emotional stress, especially from being alone and feeling like they need to do well. Schools can set up programs where upper-year criminology

students can help and guide their younger peers who live with only one parent. Community-based interventions, like working together with neighborhood groups, can also offer safe places to talk about feelings. This would make students feel less alone and help them become more resilient, so that mental problems don't get in the way of their schoolwork.

Table 5. Level of Emotional Challenges among BS-CRIM Students with Single Parents

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I experience loneliness as a criminology student with a single parent.	3.73	Very Challenging
2. I feel pressured to succeed in school because of my family's situation.	3.30	Challenging
3. I have friends and siblings that I can depend on for emotional support.	3.20	Challenging
4. I am overwhelmed in balancing my academic and family duties.	3.17	Challenging
5. I find it hard to be motivated and focus on my studies because of my responsibilities.	3.17	Challenging
6. I struggle to find time for myself to relax because of my responsibilities.	3.10	Challenging
7. I find it hard to manage everything on my own while focusing on my studies.	3.10	Challenging
8. I often doubt my abilities or my future because of the challenges I face.	2.93	Challenging
9. I can handle relationships and social interactions well.	2.90	Challenging
10. I have feelings of stress or anxiety due to a lack of support from my parents.	2.73	Challenging
Weighted Mean	3.07	Challenging

Legend: 1.00-1.80: Not challenging at all; 2.61-3.40: Challenging; 4.21-5.00: Extremely Challenging
1.81-2.60: Slightly Challenging; 3.41-4.20: Very Challenging;

With a mean score of 3.08, personal difficulties show how much these students have to do at home, including caring for family members, doing chores, and being there for them emotionally. Usakli (2018) talked about how single-parent kids often act like adults before they are ready to. Mahmood and Sangeetha (2023) also talked about how these kinds of homes don't provide mental support. Cole (2025) said that collaborative practices and inclusive education can help meet the needs of all kinds of students. He also said that working together as a school could make things easier for students who live with only one parent. Personal tasks like taking care of others and doing chores around the house show how important it is to have help managing time and flexible rules in school. Universities could make it easier for students to balance school and home life by giving them flexible dates, modular coursework, or online submission methods. Family and community awareness efforts could get family members and other people in the community to share caregiving duties. This would make it easier for single parent students to handle their workload. They would be able to concentrate better on their schoolwork.

Table 5. Level of Personal Challenges among BS-CRIM Students with Single Parents

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I often feel the weight of additional responsibility at home, such as caregiving and household chores, affecting my ability to focus on academics.	3.67	Very Challenging
2. I experience feelings of loneliness and long a complete family structure thus affecting my sense of belonging.	3.20	Challenging
3. I lack emotional support and guidance feeling the absence of a second parent figure in my life.	3.17	Challenging
4. I struggle with managing my time effectively between school, home obligation, and personal responsibilities as a student with a single parent.	3.10	Challenging
5. I can manage both academic responsibilities and household duties at the same time.	3.10	Challenging
6. I have difficulty in handling disagreements and stress with my parents.	3.00	Challenging
7. I am determined to succeed in my studies despite having a single parent to raise me.	3.00	Challenging
8. I miss having two parents involved in my education and extracurricular activities.	3.00	Challenging
9. I often worry about the future and the impact of growing up in a single parent household on my growth and academic performance.	2.93	Challenging
10. I am working hard to prove my worth and independence from others.	2.60	Challenging
Weighted Mean	3.07	Challenging

Legend: 1.00-1.80: Not challenging at all; 2.61-3.40: Challenging; 4.21-5.00: Extremely Challenging

1.81-2.60: Slightly Challenging;

3.41-4.20: Very Challenging;

With a mean score of 3.09, the whole thing is "Challenging" in every way: money, mental health, feelings, and relationships. The most important problems are the emotional ones, but all four areas are linked. The ideas in Dixon et al. (2023) and Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory are in line with this. To back this up even more, Lazaga (2025) shows that welcoming classrooms that focus on participation, representation, and expression can greatly enhance student outcomes. This suggests that all-encompassing solutions are needed to handle the connected issues criminology students with single parents face. Overall, the fact that all areas are "Challenging" means that interventions need to be whole, not just a few here and there. Universities should come up with support programs that take care of students' physical, mental, emotional, and financial needs all at the same time. This shows policymakers how important it is for education, social services, and local government units to work together across sectors. By sharing their resources, stakeholders can make complete programs that make sure no kid falls behind because of how their family is set up.

Table 7. Summary of Levels of Challenges of Criminology Students with Single Parents

Areas	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Emotional	3.13	Challenging
Financial	3.08	Challenging
Personal	3.08	Challenging
Psychological	3.07	Challenging
Grand Mean	3.09	Challenging

Legend: 1.00-1.75: Not challenging at all; 2.60-3.39: Challenging; 4.20-5.00: Extremely Challenging
 1.80-2.59: Slightly Challenging; 3.40-4.19: Very Challenging

Table 8 shows that the age of criminology students with single parents have no significant difference according to the level of challenges they have encountered. The p-values as stipulated are higher than the 0.05 threshold and became the basis of the 'not significant' remarks for all the variables being tested for statistical difference.

Since there were no big changes based on age, it seems that both younger and older students have the same problems. This result is very interesting because it means that being a single parent is the best way to make everyone equal. According to Pedro and Dioso (2025), the way an educator leads has a big effect on how many students stay in school. This means that helpful leadership could help students of all ages stay in school. There aren't any big differences between the age groups, which shows that the problems are the same for everyone. This means that solutions shouldn't be based on age, but should be open to all criminology students from homes with only one parent. However, older students may still benefit from career guidance and programs that help them get back into the workforce after being out of school for a while. This makes sure that delays caused by getting older don't lead to long-term problems.

Table 8. Age of Criminology Students with Single Parents and their Challenges

Variables	p-value	t-statistic	Remarks
Financial Challenges	.886	-.145	Not Significant
Psychological Challenges	.684	.411	Not Significant
Emotional Challenges	.594	.539	Not Significant
Personal Challenges	.092	1.745	Not Significant

Legend: p-value > 0.05 level of significance

Table 9 shows the no significant difference between the sex of criminology students with single parents according to their level of challenges encountered. The p-values indicate that all variables are greater than the 0.05 threshold that makes all the variables not connected and thus, not significant. Thus, the level of challenges of criminology students with single parents according to sex that male students face challenges tied to societal expectations of stoicism, while female students are more burdened by caregiving and emotional labor. The fact that there are no major differences between the sexes suggests that both male and female students have similar problems. In comparison, Sangeet and Singh (2022) found that female students often have to care for others more than male students. But Guzman and Doronio (2025) tell us that student engagement is affected by the classroom environment and the way people learn. This could be why both male and female criminology students report the same level of difficulty when the academic environment is equally difficult. There aren't any big changes between

the genders, which means that both male and female students have similar problems. This means that solutions should include both men and women and focus on problems that both groups face instead of reinforcing stereotypes. Still, code that takes gender into account is still important. Some female students may still have to deal with extra caring duties, and some male students may find it hard to be as tough as society expects them to be. Taking these small details into account makes sure that help systems are fair and effective.

Table 9. Sex of Criminology Students with Single Parents and their Challenges

Variables	p-value	t-statistic	Remarks
Financial Challenges	.626	-.493	Not Significant
Psychological Challenges	.617	-.506	Not Significant
Emotional Challenges	.817	.233	Not Significant
Personal Challenges	.605	.522	Not Significant

Legend: p-value > 0.05 level of significance

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study showed that students whose parents are single face problems outside of school. Their problems don't just affect school; they also affect their money, their mental health, and the things they need to do for themselves. No matter their age or gender, everyone has to find a way to survive and do well at the same time. They often have to work part-time, clean the house, deal with stress and loneliness, and do well in school at the same time.

Towns and schools should be kind to these kids and do things that make them feel strong. More grants and awards can help students pay for school and live. Therapy and friend support groups that are easy to get to can also help people get better and heal. Academic policies that are open can help people balance their many responsibilities without giving up their education. For example, they can change due dates, offer hybrid learning options, and set up mentoring programs. Kids who live with only one parent may do better in school if they get help with money, feelings, and schoolwork.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest in the preparation and publication of this research.

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