Navigating Work-life Balance in Academia: Challenges and Triumphs of Single Mothers
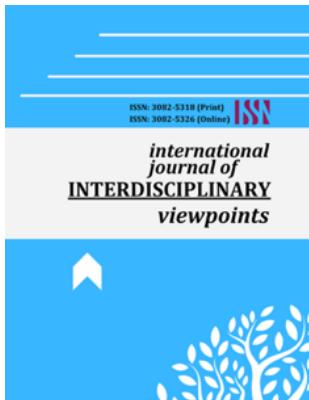
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Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study examined the lived experiences of single mothers in academia as they balanced professional and family responsibilities. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, five single-mother educators were interviewed, revealing six major themes: child-rearing and work conflict, unique family arrangements, financial struggles, capitalizing on stolen moments, pragmatic support networks, and steadfast care. Participants experienced burnout, emotional strain, and financial hardship; yet, they demonstrated resilience through faith, optimism, social support, and adaptive coping strategies, such as effective time management and self-care. The findings underscore the importance of institutional support and gender-sensitive policies that promote inclusivity and work-life balance, thereby enhancing the empowerment of women in higher education.

Keywords

education, work-life balance, phenomenological study, single-mother educators, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Work–life balance is often seen as a personal issue rather than one that affects all academics worldwide. This makes it harder to see the deep human costs of academic production cultures. Academic work often has fuzzy lines, invisible work, and standards of being available all the time. These conditions affect women with caregiving roles more than men. In these places, motherhood changes professional identities because teaching, research, service, and emotional labor are intertwined with childcare and housework. This creates ongoing work–family tensions that are lived rather than just managed (Beigi et al., 2016; Clark, 2000; Miller & Riley, 2021). These problems are made worse for single mothers because they are the only ones who care for their children, pay their bills, and are responsible for their emotions. This makes work-life balance more of a negotiation based on strength, sacrifice, and finding meaning rather than a state of balance (Radcliffe et al., 2021; Ségeral, 2020; Squires, 202). These facts about the world show that work-life balance in education is not just about how time is spent, but also about how institutional rules affect real life.

In developing and local settings, such as higher education in the Philippines, these problems are made worse by cultural norms and built-in constraints. Women teachers often have many students to teach, little freedom, and greater responsibilities at work. They also have to deal with gender-based standards that see caring for others as a moral and social duty (Dapiton et al., 2020; Lao, 2017; Tancinco, 2016). There are laws in place to protect single parents, but they are not always followed. This makes things more complicated for single moms who work and go to school. Plus, there are social stigmas about being a single parent, and it can be hard to get help from institutions. Working single mothers, student teachers, and Filipino teachers all talk about how hard it is to be emotionally present for their kids while also meeting professional expectations. This shows that work-life balance is fragile, situation-dependent, and highly relational (Aquino et al., 2023; Pecson, 2024; Mendoza & Cabrillas, 2024). These events show how academic life is connected to bigger societal issues that affect how people think about and live in balance.

There is more research on work-life balance, being an academic mother, and being a single parent than ever before. However, significant gaps remain in how these situations are understood in academic settings. Many studies focus on outcomes such as productivity, stress, or policy consequences, and they often use broad categories like "women academics" or "working mothers" that do not capture the reality of single parenting (Gallardo, 2020; Ceci et al., 2014; Baba et al., 2025). Quantitative trends show patterns of inequality and conflict, but they do not tell us much about how single mother scholars make sense of their lives, stay strong, and find meaning when they have a lot on their plates (Dziak et al., 2010; Gasse & Mortelmans, 2020). Without ongoing, in-depth attention to lived experience, the opinions of single mother academics will remain silenced, making the emotional and identity work, and the quiet victories that shape their academic paths, invisible (Chawla et al., 2023; Burk et al., 2020).

To fill this gap, this study examines the real-life experiences of single moms in education as they seek to balance work and family life. This study uses phenomenological analysis to examine balance not as a fixed outcome but as a living process shaped by situation, relationships, and the way institutions are set up (van Manen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study knows that the stories of single mother academics are important sources of information because they show how academic systems are experienced from the edges. Following calls for welcoming and culturally sensitive teaching methods, this study aims to create more caring school environments that value caregiving as an important part of school life and support the worth, power, and toughness of single mothers who stay in school and do well (Cariaga et al., 2025).

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Research Design

This investigation adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design to examine the lived experiences of single mothers employed within academia. A phenomenological approach was selected to ascertain how participants perceive, interpret, and ascribe meaning to their personal and professional lives. The researcher employed bracketing, deliberately setting aside pre-existing assumptions and biases to facilitate an objective and genuine comprehension of the phenomenon under study (Giorgi, 2012).Furthermore, the study incorporated interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and thematic analysis to facilitate a comprehensive examination of the participants' narratives. Data collection involved in-depth interviews, direct and participant observations, and audio recordings conducted in naturalistic environments. These qualitative methodologies were deemed suitable for generating rich, descriptive, and non-numerical data pertinent to the research aims (Krathwohl, 1998). Qualitative research was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of participants' experiences, giving equal weight to their subjective realities and factual information. To ensure the study's reliability and trustworthiness, reflexivity and ongoing self-assessment were used throughout the research process (Creswell, 2015).

Study Participants

The study included five (5) single mothers who were also instructors. They were between 35 and 55 years old and had been single parents for three to six years. These participants were chosen from selected colleges and universities in the Municipality of Makilala and Kidapawan City. They were selected to take part in in-depth interviews, which were the primary means of collecting data.

Procedures

In-depth interviews were considered appropriate for this phenomenological study because they provide detailed, first-hand accounts of the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016). This method is particularly suitable for exploring sensitive, emotionally charged experiences, such as those encountered by single mothers in academia, as it provides a safe, confidential environment for reflection and narration (Seidman, 2019; Liamputtong, 2007). Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to identify participants who met the specific study criteria (Palys, 2008). According to Creswell (1998), a sample size ranging from five to twenty-five participants is sufficient for phenomenological research. The inclusion criteria required that participants be solo parents under legal or de facto separation as defined by Republic Act 11861 (Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act); currently employed as instructors in higher education institutions in Makilala or Kidapawan City; carrying a teaching load of 18–24 units per semester; handling class sizes of 35–60 students per section; and willing to share their lived experiences, coping strategies, and insights.The exclusion criteria included public school teachers, individuals whose socio-economic status did not meet the study requirements, and those unwilling to provide informed consent.

Instrument

This investigation employed a researcher-created qualitative interview guide that included open-ended inquiries. The interview guide was organized around three primary research questions, supplemented by five supporting sub-questions. During the comprehensive interviews, participants were presented with a standardized set of open-ended questions and were permitted to elaborate and offer supplementary information as deemed necessary. Coding methodologies were implemented to safeguard anonymity and uphold the confidentiality of the participants' responses. To ascertain the instrument's validity and suitability, it underwent review by four internal validators and one external validator affiliated with the University of Mindanao and other higher education institutions. The validators were chosen for their scholarly qualifications, professional backgrounds, and understanding of the academic context relevant to the investigation.

Data Collection

Before commencing data acquisition, the researcher obtained authorization from the relevant ethics review committees. Official approval letters were dispatched to the municipal authorities of Makilala and Kidapawan City, their respective Social Welfare and Development Offices, and the Human Resource Offices of the participating higher education institutions. Data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews in a private, conducive environment, thereby safeguarding confidentiality and promoting candid disclosure. With the participants' explicit consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure precision. A consolidated description of the phenomenon was then formulated and presented to the participants for validation, with subsequent revisions made in response to their input (Colaizzi, 1978; Morrow et al., 2015).

Statistical Analysis

Given the qualitative design of this investigation, statistical analysis was not employed. Thematic and interpretative phenomenological analyses were used to interpret the data, thereby elucidating the depth, significance, and intricacy of the participants' lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical protocols were rigorously adhered to throughout the research process. The researcher abided by the ethical standards established by the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee and secured approval under UMERC Protocol No. UMERC-2024-340. Prior to their involvement, participants received comprehensive information regarding the study's objectives, methodologies, potential hazards, and anticipated advantages. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were explicitly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without repercussions (Miracle, 2016). All collected data were treated with the utmost confidentiality. Furthermore, the study conformed to Guba's (1981) standards for trustworthiness, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher expressed gratitude for the participants' significant contributions and disseminated the study's results to them to acknowledge their time, trust, and willingness to engage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Lived Experiences of Single Mothers in Balancing Work and Family Life

Through careful analysis and categorization of participant responses, six major themes were identified: Child Rearing and Work Conflict, Setting Up Unique Family Arrangements, Addressing Financial Issues, Capitalizing on Stolen Moments, Building Pragmatic Support Networks, and Practicing Steadfast Care.

Child-Rearing and Work Conflict

Participants constantly talked about the tension between their job duties and their caregiving duties. This tension often showed up as emotional exhaustion, guilt, and feelings of not being good enough, especially when work obligations kept them from going to school events or meeting their kids' needs right away. Mothers talked about feeling burned out, having emotional breakdowns, and painfully realizing that in order to fulfill one role, they often had to give up another. In addition to making people physically tired, the dispute had very negative effects on their emotions. People in the study felt guilty when their kids were sad or when they compared their situation to that of their friends who had healthy families. Not having a father figure added to the mental stress and made the person feel more responsible and guilty about themselves. Even though mothers were very good at doing many things at once, it often came at the cost of their physical and mental health. These events are similar to what researchers have found: conflict between work and family makes parenting more stressful and guilty

for single mothers, which makes them less satisfied with their job and more emotionally stressed (Ramos & Tus, 2020; Zhi et al., 2022). Globally, these pressures are made worse by financial uncertainty and social stigma, which makes people even more vulnerable even though they keep working (Kim, 2019; Li, 2020). Even if the economy gets better, many single women are still more likely to be stressed out and poor (Salas-Betsch, 2024; Dierker et al., 2024).

Setting Up Unique Family Arrangements

Single moms talked about changing family life to fit their two jobs as caregivers and providers. People took on many roles, such as mother, housekeeper, breadwinner, daughter, and brother, and they often didn't get a break. Even though the kids were mostly understanding and mentally grown up, their moms felt bad all the time for raising them without a dad. Stories showed that being independent, while empowering, came with physical and mental costs. The mother did all the housework, dealt with the family's feelings, and made all the decisions. This made her tired and limited her free time. Participants also talked about being labeled negatively and carrying that shame around with them, which had an effect on how they saw themselves and their confidence. These results are in line with other research that shows single mothers have more emotional and household responsibilities than women who are married, which can lead to increased role strain (Agarwal & Lenka, 2015; Akanji et al., 2020; Girisken, 2021). The Spillover Theory says that stress at home often moves to work and work at home, making the ongoing strain worse (Schnettler et al., 2021). These kinds of situations show how important it is to have formal, emotional, and community-based support systems (Bisht, 2025), especially for single moms in school and the workplace (Squires, 2023)

Addressing Financial Issues

Instability in the economy became one of the biggest problems that kept coming up. People who took part said they borrowed money, racked up debt, and questioned their ability to meet their kids' needs. Many of them needed more than one source of income, like teaching and freelancing, to cover their daily costs. Financial stress got worse when they got sick or had an emergency that they weren't expecting, which showed how fragile their finances were. Even when they were careful with their money and made budgets, mothers often felt like they were at a disadvantage compared to homes with two parents. Existing study shows that single mothers are constantly struggling with money and are economically vulnerable, even when they have jobs (Affandy, 2023; Malmqvist et al., 2017). Unexpected problems, like health issues, make uncertainty worse and put people at constant financial risk (Cruz et al., 202).

Capitalizing on Stolen Moments

People who took part said they purposely valued short times with their kids, which they often called "stolen moments," even though they had busy lives. These times were mental anchors that kept both mom and kid going. But these kinds of experiences often came with emotional problems. For example, kids would long for a father role, and moms would feel like they had failed or that things were not fair. Mothers put their children's emotional safety ahead of their own wants and took less time to care for themselves. Even though it was hard on them mentally, many of the participants said that hardships made them more determined to keep going. Consistent with previous studies, single mothers often experience grief, emotional fatigue, and heightened vulnerability to mental health concerns, while children may struggle with emotional adjustment following family disruption (Sukmana & Hanami, 2023; Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024). These mixed-up feelings show how much effort is involved in being a single parent.

Building Pragmatic Support Networks

Support networks became important ways to keep people from getting emotionally worn out. To handle daily tasks, participants leaned on family, close friends, coworkers, support groups, and childcare arrangements. Offering emotional support brought comfort, acceptance, and a sense of having a common battle. Even though they had access to help, mothers talked about continuing emotional cycles of anger, denial, acceptance, and forgiveness. This showed that healing and adjusting don't happen in a straight line. Support networks didn't get rid of stress, but they did make it easier to deal with. More research has shown that social and emotional support can help single mothers deal with stress and make their lives easier (Cariaga, 2023; Cariaga, 2024; Mendoza & Cabrillas, 2024; Sukmana & Hanami, 2023; Salsabilla et al., 2023). That result supports those studies.

Practicing Steadfast Care

Even though they were upset and blamed themselves, the volunteers showed unwavering dedication to their kids. They went to school events, made memories together, and talked about how thankful they were to be moms. Caregiving was a big part of who they were, even when their health was at risk. This steadfast care represents existing evidence that single mothers continue to prioritize children's needs despite psychological strain, drawing strength from maternal love and gratitude (Ramos & Tus, 2020; Sukmana & Hanami, 2023). However, without sufficient financial and institutional support, they stay among the most vulnerable family groups (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024).

How single mothers deal with the problems that come up between work and family

Making Real Sacrifices, Bearing All in One, Working Really Hard, Fighting Battles with Support Groups, and Unwavering Care and Provision were the five themes that emerged. Across all themes, people showed resilience by making sacrifices, managing their time well, being spiritual, reflecting on themselves, and putting their children's well-being first. By planning, making limits, and controlling their emotions, they were able to balance work, school, and parenting. These methods align with research showing that resilience, adaptive coping, social support, and spirituality are important for single mothers to keep their families running (Rahman et al., 2022; Pangestu & Tohari, 2024; Singh & Shweta, 2022).

The Best Work-Life Balance Thought up by single moms

Participants thought balance could be achieved through self-motivation, community communication, quality family time, and prioritizing mental health. They stressed spending quality time with kids, maintaining mental peace, forgiving others, practicing spirituality, communicating honestly, being flexible at work, and growing as a person. Success in the material world was not what made people happy; presence, peace, and shared experiences were. It became clear that hope, gratitude, religion, and institutional support can make people more resilient (Odacı et al., 2022; Lidiawati et al., 2024; Dewi, 2022). Policies like RA 8972 and RA 11861 protect people in the Philippines, but there are still problems with implementation and significant stigma (Hispano, 2025; Legarde, 2023). This study looked into what it is like for single mothers to balance work and family life. It showed how mental stress, financial risk, role overload, and adaptive resilience interact in complex ways. The results show that work-life balance for single mothers is not just about how much time they spend working. It is also a deeply relational, emotional, and structural process that is shaped by gender norms, standards for caring for others, working conditions, and access to social support. According to both old and new models of work-family relationships (Clark, 2000; Ryu, 2024), participants' stories indicated ongoing problems with work and family. It was hard to tell the difference between paid work and caring for others, which supported the idea that for single mothers, job and family life do not exist separately but always overlap. This pattern aligns with the Spillover and Border Theories, which explain how stress, feelings, and responsibilities can spill over from one area of life to another, especially when support systems are weak (Clark, 2000; Schnettler et al., 2020). Work–family problems and emotional work. The mental burden that the

participants showed through feelings of guilt, exhaustion, and self-blame is similar to what other studies have found: single mothers have a lot more parenting stress than mothers who are married (Dziak et al., 2010; Zhi et al., 2022). When mothers thought they were not living up to the popular standards of "intensive mothering," which include being there all the time, being emotionally available, and taking moral responsibility for their children's outcomes, they felt especially inadequate (Slobodin, 2022; Miller & Riley, 2021).Such expectations are further intensified in academic and professional situations where productivity norms often disregard caregiving realities (Beigi et al., 2016; Chawla et al., 2023). Studies across higher education regularly show that mothers, especially single mothers, do work that isn't recognized or compensated by institutions (Armenti, 2004; Squires, 2023; Hong et al., 2025). Scholars call this the "motherhood penalty," meaning that women's work skills are implicitly questioned when they are seen caring for others (Benard & Correll, 2010; Ceci et al., 2014).

Uncertainty about money as a structural stressor

Financial stress became a major and ongoing issue, adding to the growing body of evidence that economic vulnerability remains one of the most important characteristics of being a single mother (Affandy, 2023; Li, 2020; Salas-Betsch, 2024). Even though they had jobs, the participants still felt unsafe, had a lot of debt, and were worried about situations, especially health-related ones. According to Malmqvist et al. (2017) and Cruz et al. (2024), this supports the idea that single mothers cannot be financially stable just because they have a job. This is especially true when wages, child care, and social safety are limited. As for the Philippines, laws like RA 8972 and RA 11861 officially recognize and support single parents, but studies show they are not always implemented or widely known (Pinatil et al., 2023; Legarde, 2023). That is why many moms rely more on informal ways to deal with stress than on formal support, which widens the gap between what policies are supposed to do and what actually happens.

Multiple roles and negotiating one's identity

The participants' stories showed how they constantly negotiated their roles as moms, workers, daughters, caregivers, and decision-makers. This variety relates to the idea that single mothers often rebuild their identities out of necessity, figuring out what it means to be strong, independent, and a woman outside traditional family structures (Maher, 2013; Dor, 2021; Hispano, 2025). Instead of losing their identities, many of the subjects were able to adapt them. This is similar to research showing that resilience among single mothers is not fixed but constantly changing as they make sense of and accept experiences (Caragata et al., 2021; Danurswari et al., 2024). This backs up the idea that real experience is made up of reflection, interpretation, and emotional negotiation that happen over time (van Manen, 2016; Giorgi, 2012).

Spirituality, emotional strength, and finding meaning in life

One important result was that spirituality, gratitude, and positive thinking are very important for maintaining emotional health. The participants' reliance on faith and their efforts to make sense of things align well with research showing that spiritual coping helps single mothers cope with stress, especially in religious and collectivist societies (Dewi, 2024; Ladiba & Utami, 2022; Lidiawati et al., 2024). It has been shown that hope, forgiveness, and gratitude can help single moms deal with stress and be happier with their lives (Odacı et al., 2022). In line with resilience theory and transactional models of stress (Ryu, 2024), these psychological tools helped participants see hard times not as failures but as opportunities to grow as people. What Role Does Social and Community Support Play? Support networks, such as family, friends, coworkers, and paid caregivers, were very important in reducing stress. Research has shown that both formal and informal networks can greatly increase life happiness and parenting confidence (Zhou & Taylor, 2022; Gill et al., 2023; De Guzman Natividad & Mateo, 2024). The fact that participants relied on emotional support supports this. However, the emotional cycles participants discussed show that support does not eliminate pain; instead, it makes it easier to keep going. This fits with phenomenological ideas that coping is not a straight line and is heavily influenced by context rather than result (Smith et al., 2009; Seidman, 2019).

Flexibility at work and institutional responsibility

A lot of research has shown that organizations that support workers can help them find a better work-life balance (Augustine et al., 2023; Bartova et al., 2022). This is why people want flexible schedules, understanding bosses, and helpful workplace cultures. Flexible work arrangements free up more time for caregivers and ease emotional stress, but how well they work depends heavily on the company's mindset and culture and on the people who run it (Lantsoght, 2025; Rabin et al., 2024).In schools and classrooms, women who care for others remain at a disadvantage due to heavy workloads, performance-based evaluations, and the assumption that they will always be available (Dapiton et al., 2020; Miller & Riley, 2021). If nothing is done to change the system, building resilience could be seen as a duty rather than a choice, placing all the responsibility for adaptation on moms.

Self-Motivation, Empowerment, and a New Definition of Success

Despite the problems they faced, the participants were highly self-motivated and saw freedom as a source of strength rather than a sign of not being good enough. This view goes against negative stereotypes about single motherhood and aligns with new research that views single parenting as an acceptable and effective way to raise a family (Chamberlain et al., 2024; Franco & De La Rosa, 2021). Researchers have already found that having children can make people more persistent and emotionally strong (Fadilah, 2023; Manansala & Eje-Dimaculangan, 2024). This finding supports a previous study that found this to be true. Participants did not look for traditional signs of success; instead, they found satisfaction in peace, stability, presence, and emotional connection. This fits with phenomenological ideas of lived meaning. Overall, the results show that for single mothers, work-life balance is not a fixed state but something constantly negotiated and shaped by factors such as emotional labor, financial constraints, social norms, institutional support, and making sense of one's own life. Even though the people who took part in the study were very resilient, it shows that resilience alone cannot fix societal injustices. For long-term well-being, you need to be strong on the inside, but you also need responsive companies, well-executed policies, and social systems that include everyone. This study adds to the growing body of qualitative research that views single mothers not just as people who have been through hard times but also as those actively rebuilding family life, identity, and purpose within social systems that are not always supportive.

What the Experience Was All About

Single mothers who have to balance work and family life often feel alone and have a strong sense of responsibility. They also have to constantly balance the needs of survival and nurturing, showing strength and vulnerability, and meeting obligations while also satisfying personal desires. Every day for a single mother starts with responsibility, not only to herself but also to her child's mental, physical, and future well-being. Employment goes beyond the usual definition of a job; it becomes the necessary support system that makes care, stability, and hope possible. Being present and taking care of their families is always at odds with what they are going through. Single moms go about their daily lives knowing that every choice will have an emotional impact. For example, time spent working means time away from their kids, and time spent caring for others can put their finances at risk. This ongoing struggle has not been solved; instead, it is constantly dealt with, often while feeling guilty, doubting oneself, and emotionally worn out. People feel loss very strongly, especially when it manifests as a child's silence, sadness, or longing to be whole again. From this point of view, being a mother means taking on all the duties. There is no shared decision-making, mental reciprocity, or freedom from responsibility. People who took part thought they were both mothers and fathers, acting as

protectors and providers, nurturing and disciplining. People thought of independence as more of a necessity than a personal choice, even though it was praised by society. The word "independent" did not mean freedom; it meant sticking with something. Financial life was marked by constant evaluation; every expense had to be thought through in terms of what it was really for and how much it would cost; and sickness or unplanned events were seen as times of extreme vulnerability. Even with careful planning and multiple ways to make money, there was still uncertainty, and people were always aware that the balance could be upset at any time. Money wasn't linked to ease; it was linked to duty, fear, and survival. When it came to emotions, being a single mother showed up in cyclical patterns instead of a straight line of healing. Acceptance and sadness went hand in hand, as did strength and tiredness. The people who took part went back and forth between being strong and being tired, forgiving and being angry, and having hope and doubt. Weeping in silence, reflecting on past choices, and temporarily avoiding taking responsibility were not signs of weakness; they were normal human reactions to long-lasting stress. Despite this, meaning was always being rethought in the face of hardship. Mothers found meaning in their children's lives—short moments of connection, laughter, meals shared with others, and calm habits became sources of rejuvenation. When these "stolen moments" happened, they had deep emotional meaning and helped me remember why I needed to keep going. Even though time was limited, it became deeper instead of just more plentiful. When help was offered, it was seen as a relief rather than a means of salvation. Family, friends, coworkers, and religion all provided people with places to temporarily put their problems aside. Support, however, did not eliminate loneliness; instead, it made it easier to keep going. For moms, spirituality in particular helped keep them stable by seeing hard times not as punishment but as part of a bigger plan. When people's strength was weak, faith gave them the words to express hope. Because of these events, single moms slowly changed how they thought about success. Achievement was no longer measured by professional growth or money accumulation. Instead, it was measured by inner peace, mental balance, and the ability to be fully present for their children. Being able to get through each day, provide stability, and raise emotionally safe children became clear as important goals. The main thing that makes it possible for a single mother to balance work and family is quiet heroism, not big actions but unwavering commitment. It includes the truth of keeping going even when you are tired, putting love first when you have limits, and staying positive when things are not clear. They do not feel like they are lacking anything; instead, they feel like they are growing all the time. They learn to be strong through duty, resilient through love, and find meaning through care.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This investigation ultimately finds that single mothers in academia face enduring difficulties stemming from the convergence of professional obligations, financial pressures, and childcare responsibilities. Their lived realities expose consistent emotional distress, fatigue, and a lack of equilibrium between work and personal life, while simultaneously showcasing significant resilience, dedication, and flexibility. Despite the scarcity of institutional and societal backing, these women maintain their academic positions through personal sacrifices, robust maternal drive, and informal support systems. Their accounts illuminate not only the weight they bear but also the fortitude they exhibit as educators and caregivers, underscoring the need to acknowledge their distinct circumstances within the higher education framework.

Consequently, based on these observations, academic institutions and policymakers are strongly urged to establish inclusive, family-oriented initiatives that cater to the specific needs of single-parent educators. Flexible work options, mental health and counseling services, mentorship and peer-support initiatives, and accessible childcare or family-friendly provisions are potential components. To mitigate structural impediments and foster equitable working environments, collaboration among educational institutions, governmental bodies, and community organizations is crucial. Further investigation could examine the enduring effects of institutional support on the well-being and professional stability of single mothers. Consequently, reinforcing systemic support structures guarantees that the resilience exhibited by single mothers is complemented by substantive care, protection, and opportunities for advancement.

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