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## **Examining the Lived Academic Experiences of Learners Raised by Solo Parents During the Post Pandemic Transition**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to explain the lived academic experiences of learners raised by solo parents. Mainly, the study focuses on determining learners' academic pursuits, difficulties encountered, and their coping mechanisms during the post-pandemic transition. The research employs phenomenological qualitative design and was conducted among the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) Major in Sciences students from the College of Education, Central Mindanao University, selected through a purposive sampling procedure. A one-on-one interview was conducted to gather the data from eight (8) selected participants. Colaizzi's Method of interpretation were employed to analyze the data. Results of the study showed that continuing academic pursuits during the post-pandemic transition was harder for learners raised by solo parents. Five (5) categories of difficulties were identified: Financial Difficulty, Academic Difficulty, Emotional Difficulty, Psychological Difficulty, and Physical Difficulty. For each difficulty, learners were able to establish a coping mechanism. Moreover, despite the challenges experienced, the learners managed to maintain a positive outlook on life, influenced by parental engagement. The study recommends that a core support group for learners raised by single parents be established. Future researchers may also consider conducting a similar but more in-depth qualitative study focusing on a specific gender, such as children raised by an opposite-gender parent or a same-gender parent.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Lived academic experiences, Learners raised by single parents, Post-pandemic transition, Face-to-face learning, Difficulties, Coping mechanisms.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As the spread of the virus decreased and situation began to normalize, the CHED or the Commission on Higher Education announced on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of July 2022, the transition to in-person classes, allowing universities and colleges to choose appropriate learning modalities, including flexible learning (Magsambol, 2022). This shift necessitates new adaptive measures. The rising cost of living in the country has further strained single parents, raising concerns about how children cope with their studies during the post-pandemic transition.

Several studies have focused on the lived experiences of solo parents. Nelson (2006) found that most single mothers face daily parenting challenges, difficulties, and family conflicts, affecting their parenting methods. Neblett (2007) noted that single mothers experience many

stressors impacting their daily lives. According to Dufur et al. (2010) men find it a harder adjusting to and accepting their acquired role, often feeling more negative about single parenting, especially with younger children. Conversely, Doucet (2004) found that single fathers experience fewer struggles and family conflicts than single mothers. Raising children is challenging, especially with low-income stress or single-handedly (Waldfoegel et al., 2010). Dyk (2005) identified that all single parents struggle to balance family and work responsibilities.

Pagan and Kulukjian (2015) found that children raised in single-parent families benefit from mothers' expressive care and acknowledgment of their child's uniqueness, which contribute to their success. Nearly 50% of respondents highlighted the positive examples set by their mothers in instilling hard work and ambition. Despite the struggles, children remained optimistic, attributed to the strong relationship with their mothers. Conversely, Barajas (2011) argued that children from single-parent families face significant disadvantages compared to those from two-parent families, including lower graduation rates, lower GPAs, and a higher risk of substance abuse. Zulu and Munro (2017) supported this view, noting poor academic performance as a common trait among children raised by single mothers. However, many children from single-parent households still achieve educational success.

Recent studies have examined the academic outcomes of students in relation to parenting styles and the impacts of single parenting. However, these studies primarily focus on the perspectives of single parents and overlook the learners' experiences. Additionally, the post-pandemic transition experiences of learners with solo parents remain understudied. Researchers aim to address these gaps by exploring the factors affecting learners' experiences and providing insights from their viewpoints throughout the post-pandemic shift from online to in-person learning.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Examining the lived academic experiences of students with single parents throughout the post-pandemic is the focus of this study. This research particularly seeks to obtain answers to each of the following questions

1. How would learners raised by single parents describe their academic pursuit during the post pandemic transition?
2. What are the different difficulties encountered by the learners raised by solo parents during the post pandemic transition?
3. How did the learners cope with the different difficulties encountered during the post pandemic transition?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research, specifically a phenomenological approach, aimed at describing actual academic experiences of learners raised by solo parents during the post-pandemic transition. An interview questionnaire, content validated by experts, was utilized to gather qualitative data from eight (8) BSEd Sciences or Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Sciences students from the College of Education of Central Mindanao University. These

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participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring they met the criteria of being raised by solo parents during the post-pandemic transition.

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Dean of the College of Education and the chairperson of the Science Education Department. Ethical approval was also secured from the Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC). Participants were provided with informed consent, and face-to-face interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached.

Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, which consists of seven (7) steps structure was used to analyze the data. First is familiarizing oneself with the data, second is determining significant statements, third is constructing implications, fourth is assembling themes, fifth is generating detailed descriptions, sixth is reporting the fundamental structure, and lastly verifying.

The scope of the research is focused on learners with solo parent's real-life academic experiences during the post pandemic transition, but it is delimited to the experiences of the mentioned learners' during the shift from online to in-person learning modality. The research focused solely on addressing the research questions and attaining the research goals.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### ***Theme 1 – Harder than Before***

Majority of the participants affirm that continuing their academic pursuit during the post pandemic transition is harder for them as a learner with solo parent.

*“We could say that it is harder when it is only your mother that provides your financial needs. Nevertheless, my mother had always been very supportive we talk about to my studies, as she's a teacher herself and can provide our educational needs”.* (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 1, Translation Line 22, p.2)

*“It's harder because for example when it comes to finances, my mother shoulders all the expenses, but it can be managed because we have our own business. Sometimes there are complication, but we were able to handle it”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 2, Translation Line 18, p.7)

Participant 1 claimed that the difficulty was only lessened due to the stable job that her mother has. This collaborated with the experience of Participant 2 who somehow managed financial expenses due to her mother's small, owned business.

*“It's difficult. Being a student with a single parent, it's hard as I face many challenges.”* (Participant 3, Significant Statement No. 3, Translation Line 18, p.9)

*“Uhm... so uhm... I am raised by my mother and as I continue my academic pursuit, during the post pandemic transition we experienced at most difficulty especially when it comes to my transportation, sometimes I would compute if my allowance would fit but thinking about it, it would only be enough for both transportation fee and food expense”* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 4, Translation Line 20, p.11)

Participant 3 stated that what makes it harder is the difficulties that she experienced during the transition. This was supported by the experience of Participant 4 which claims to have encountered difficulties at most difficulty during the transition.

*“Harder because you need to budget the money. Compared to online classes, face to face is more expensive.”* (Participant 5, Significant Statement No. 5, Translation Line 28, p.15)

*“As I have seen (experienced) it’s harder when you are raised by a solo parent due to financial needs of school, in addition, it is emotionally challenging because not all the financial income will be enough for you and for your studies.”* (Participant 6, Significant Statement No. 6, Translation Line 20, p.17)

The higher rate of expense that is accumulated for face to face compared to online class is what Participant 5 claims to make it harder. Participant 6 added that the family’s income is no longer enough to support the expenses. By extension, Participant 7 supports the claim by testifying:

*“To grow up with only one parent, particularly a single mother, it is difficult for me, especially in the transition from online class to in person. “Change is not only that, like also in our economy also there has been a huge change that occurred and with the current educational set up, it was really hard for me.”*  
*“Our academic pursuit becomes a lot more difficult on my part as a learner that is raised by a single mother during this educational transition or post pandemic transition.”* (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 7, Translation Line 26, p.20)

According to Pavlidou (2021), The shift to in-person instruction positively impacts students, as information gathering is more effective. However, this cannot be generalized to learners raised by single parents during the post-pandemic transition. Most participants find continuing academic pursuits harder when raised by a single parent. Studies by Gibson-Davis (2008), Coles (2002, 2009), and Waldfogel et al. (2010) support that solo parenthood involves extra challenges, significantly affecting children’s academic experiences.

**Theme 2 – Facing Difficulties**

Table 1. Difficulties encountered by learners raised by single parents during the post pandemic transition.

Financial Difficulties	Academic Difficulties	Emotional Difficulties	Psychological Difficulties	Physical Difficulties
Number of children to be supported. Unstable to No source of income. Parents lack a	Dual academic struggle for first year students. (Adjusting to the shift in the mode of learning and adjusting to the college environment).	The pressure of responsibility based on birth sequence Emotional difficulties are a product of other difficulties (emotional	Thoughts of having paternal care. Thoughts on how to assist parents. Anxiety caused	Being physically drained due to the burden caused by the siblings’ behavior/attitude.

stable job. Parent's low salary. Expensive commodities. Budgeting allowance for multiple school expenses.	Culture shock (Course adjustment) Adjusting to academic pace (allocated time in accomplishing tasks), Time management. Change in studying habits. Second thoughts towards teacher interaction.	disturbance caused by financial and academic problems. Emotional distress causes learners to develop lesser interaction with parents and are ashamed to ask for assistance.	Extra effort to assist parents due to graduate siblings that are financially dependent.
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Table 1 shows the different difficulties with their underlying factors that have been identified to be encountered by learners' raised by single parents during the post pandemic transition. It is categorized based on the field that it covers. The difficulties have been categorized into Five (5). For Simplification purposes the following sub-themes are utilized in order most frequently: Financial Difficulty, Academic Difficulty, Emotional Difficulty, Psychological Difficulty and Physical Difficulty.

### **Financial Difficulty**

Poverty prevails among most single parents. The financial struggle on the parent alone would affect their children's experience as solo parents are the main provider in the family.

*"Sometimes my mother would struggle financially, like extremely. Because there are four children in the family and two of us are in college."* (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 10, Translation Line 25, p.2)

*"The majority of financial issues are unavoidable, even for children with by both their parents. However, it is more difficult for me because I only have one parent and her pay is insufficient. Now that the three of us go to school, it's a lot more difficult as there are times that we literally have nothing."* (Participant 3, Significant Statement No. 15, Translation Line 20, p.9)

Participant 1 remarked that one reason for their financial struggle is the number of children that need support from their mother. Participant 3 collaborates on this remark and added in her statement that financial problems are unavoidable when you are not raised by both parents and the low salary of the parent is one major contributing factor to the difficulty.

*"As a solo parent you are also responsible for everything for your children."* (Participant 5, Significant Statement No. 21, Translation Line 30, p. 15)

*"Knowing that I am not the only child that she is raising, financially, is uhm... In terms of balancing my expenses for fare and other fees such as food."* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 19, Translation Line 22, p.11)

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According to Participant 5, a higher salary is required to support everyone when there are more children.. Budgeting a minimal provided allowance for fares and school becomes another difficulty that the learner needs to deal with in accordance with Participant 4.

*“So financially we are really challenged since my mother does not have a proper job and our income is from the tracking service business that we have, yet it does not always produce money, plus the three of us and her children are being supported.”* (Participant 6, Significant Statement No. 23, Translation Line 22, p.17)

Participant 6 explained that her parents' inability to support all three of the family's children was due to their inconsistent income and lack of steady employment. Participant 7 conforms and added that expensive commodities lead to higher priority for home expenses than school allocated budget, testifying that:

*“Financial problems, like the commodities right now, are very expensive so my mother’s budget that is supposed to be fairly divided for house expenses and school fees is now affected. Usually right now a higher budget is allocated for house expenses than our school expenses therefore our academic pursuit becomes a lot more difficult on my part as a learner that is raised by a single mother during this educational transition or post pandemic transition.”* (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 26, Translation Line 26-30, p.20-21)

The identified factors contributing to learners’ financial difficulties include the number of children to support, unstable or no income, lack of a stable job, low salary, expensive commodities, and budgeting for multiple school expenses. Research by Waldfoegel et al. (2010), Gibson-Davis (2008), and Coles (2009) confirm that raising children is especially challenging with low income or as a single parent. Census Bureau (2024) notes that single-parent households have lower incomes than those run by couples. Budget constraints, as highlighted by Cheadle and Amato (2010), make raising a child alone difficult. Mulkey et al. (1992) also found that low family income negatively affects the educational performance of learners raised by single parents.

### **Academic Difficulty**

It is undeniable that as the learning modality shifts back to face-to-face from online, a new challenge emerges.

*“When it comes to studies, currently there are many problems I experience.”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 14, Translation Line 20, p.7)

*“It was a struggle as college was new to us plus the transition to face to face.”* (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 9, Translation Line 24, p.2)

Participant 2 admits that among the challenges she encountered most is Academic Difficulty. Participant 1 further elaborated that she experienced dual academic struggle. It is both in the context of adjusting to a new modality of teaching and learning as well as adjusting to college environment as she is a first-time college student. She also added that:

*“I was culture shocked with the new environment. It was just like, ‘I’m still undecided about my course and I do not want it to sound this way, but it seems like I’m unsure with the path I’m taking.’ “Actually, sometimes the sciences*

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*(course) lead me to shock because of how serious it gets sometimes.”*  
(Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 13, Translation Line 76-78, p.5)

Learners that are also first-time college students experienced dual culture shock. Being undecided on the course she is taking is caused by the culture shock she experiences and oftentimes makes her question her academic path of choice.

*“When it comes to academics, probably it was a bit difficult for me due to lack of guides. Like online you can search for answers. On the other hand, when you talk about the transition to face to face, I think that you might feel brilliant online because you can do anything at your own pace, but now I would think twice regarding how I would review for my quizzes and exams especially for my major subjects. (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 20, Translation Line 30, p.12)*

The transition of academic modality causes difficulty for learners academically in terms of personal pace in accomplishing tasks, studying the in-person subjects according to Participant 4. This collaborated with the experience of Participant 7 towards adjustment in his study habits, and second thoughts towards teacher interaction testifying that:

*“First is the adjustment that I did from online to face to face, this is the very first because it was two years or almost two years that we underwent online classes, and it was difficult to adjust. My study habits obviously changed, like before I would take my time in accomplishing given tasks but right now that there is actual interaction between me and my teachers as well as the direct submission of requirements it became harder, very inclined with your study being raised by a single parent.” (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 20, Translation Line 30, p.12)*

Factors contributing to learners’ academic difficulties include first-year students’ dual academic struggle (adjusting to new learning modes and college environment), culture shock (course adjustment), academic pace (time allocated for tasks), time management, changes in study habits, and second thoughts about teacher interaction. Studies by Siegel (2020) and Guangul et al (2020) support that inadequate time for assessment tasks, online assignments, and lack of space for activities during the transition are major contributors to these difficulties. Lim, J (2022) found that post-pandemic satisfaction with instructors’ teaching methods also affects experiences. Different teaching styles in mixed online and face-to-face settings significantly impacted student behavior, as noted by Jia et al. (2022).

### **Emotional Difficulty**

Like all the other difficulties that the learners raised by solo parents’ experience, emotional difficulty is also composed of factors.

*“He (eldest sibling) added to my mother’s problem and right now the pressure is on me because I am the second eldest and I should do better in my studies. It added to my stress because being in CMU is not easy itself.” (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 12, Translation Line 34, p.3)*

Participant 1 claims that the birth sequence becomes the basis of responsibility. High pressure is given towards eldest children and the degree of responsibility is passed down based on birth sequence.

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*“When it comes to studies, currently there are many problems I experience. Sometimes I feel pressured, yet I am the type of person that is shy of sharing or opening to my mother.”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 14, Translation Line 20, p.7)

Participant 2 added that emotional difficulties are oftentimes a product of other difficulties such as academic pressure. In addition, Participants 4 and 5 collaborate with the idea that financial struggles that the learners experience leads to disturbance in their emotional well-being. This includes large school fees to be paid and budgeting finance which leads the learners to develop the feeling of being ashamed to open towards parents.

*“Emotionally, maybe of course sometimes there are large fees that need to be paid, sometimes I would hesitate to tell my parents that I need to pay such huge amounts.”* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 18, Translation Line 22, p.11)

*“Emotionally I am still challenged, especially thinking about how I will budget my finances. I should budget it to be enough for me because I have no other choice because that is the way it is, and it is what my mother can only afford and provide.”* (Participant 5, Significant Statement No. 22, Translation Line 30, p.15)

Factors contributing to learners’ emotional difficulties include the pressure of responsibility based on birth order and emotional challenges from academic pressure and financial problems. This distress leads to reduced interaction with parents and reluctance to seek help. Participants’ experiences align with Zulu & Munro (2017), who found emotional disadvantages in solo parenthood. Low-income solo parents are more likely to be socially isolated, though stress can be managed with assistance. Solo parenting also involves higher stress levels due to task overload, leading to less private and leisure time (Riina & Feinberg, 2012; Respler-Herman et al., 2011; Coles, 2009; Coltart & Henwood, 2012; Castillo, 2012). Lempers (1989) noted that Children's struggle and pessimistic views are greatly influenced by the state of the parent-child relationship and financial difficulties.

### **Psychological Difficulty**

All the participants are raised by single mothers. With the absence of father support and physical presence affects the mental wellbeing or psychological perspective of the learner.

*“Mentally, oftentimes I would think about the feeling of being raised by both parents, like having been raised by a father.”* (Participant 3, Significant Statement No. 16, Translation Line 20, p.9)

*Mental is that I would often think about what I can do to help my parents since she is raising us alone. I would often think about what I can do to lessen the expense now that we are face to face.”* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 17, Translation Line 22, p.11)

Participant 3 asserts that she would often long for paternal care or the thought of having a father would often cross her mind. With only one parent providing for the whole family, Participant 2 would often think about what she can do to help lessen the amount of expenses to give assistance to her parents. Participant 3 collaborated with the idea elaborating that the psychological issue developed from the other difficulties he had encountered. The



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accumulated thoughts of financial problems as well as the need for academic adjustments caused him to develop anxiety, testifying that:

*“Psychological issues after the shift back to face to face really occur. I had accumulated problems financially together with that of academic difficulties and personal problems which caused me to develop anxiety, but it did not reach into depression which would probably worsen the stress.”* (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 27, Translation Line 30, p.21)

Factors contributing to learners’ psychological difficulties include thoughts of paternal care, assisting parents, and anxiety from financial problems and academic adjustments. Participants’ experiences align with Ciabattari (2007) and Corcoran et al. (2000), who found that low-income single parenthood leads to greater physiological and psychological concerns and family imbalance. Stress is exacerbated by variables like profession, support networks, and income, and is intensified by solo parenting (Respler-Herman et al., 2011).

### **Physical Difficulty**

As the mental well-being of the learner is challenged, the physical well-being of the participants is challenged as well.

*“Physically speaking it is really draining because as the second eldest child, my eldest sibling is very hardheaded. He was supposed to graduate this year, but he did not do well in school. Right now, his standing is still in his second year. He was given all the support and yet he took it for granted and did not go to school without us knowing.”* (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 11, Translation Line 32-34, p.2-3)

Participant 1 claims that she had experienced being physically drained due to the burden caused by the sibling’s behavior or attitude. With the eldest child not doing well in school, being the second child, she needs to double the effort exerted in her studies and help her mother. Participant 6 collaborated with it, adding that it gets more difficult when graduate siblings are still financially dependent on their mother, testifying that:

*“The two (siblings) have actually already graduated but it’s still hard because they still depend on us for support and still live with us to sustain their needs.”* (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 11, Translation Line 32-34, p.2-3)

Factors contributing to learners’ physical difficulties include being physically drained by siblings’ behavior and extra effort to assist parents due to financially dependent graduate siblings. Participants’ experiences align with Ciabattari (2007) and Corcoran et al. (2000), who found that socioeconomically disadvantaged solo parents face greater physical difficulties, leading to family and work imbalance. Many solo parents struggle to meet their family’s physical needs (Cotman, 2022). Unpredictable income also leads to internal conflicts among children (Usakli, 2018; Duriancik & Goff, 2019).

### **Theme 3 – Coping up with Difficulties**

Table 2. Coping Mechanisms of learners’ raised by single parents during the post pandemic transition towards the difficulties encountered.

Coping Mechanism for Financial Difficulties	Coping Mechanism for Academic Difficulties	Coping Mechanism for Emotional Difficulties	Coping Mechanism for Psychological Difficulties	Coping Mechanism for Physical Difficulties
Financially independent learners are working to earn personal income. Parental dependents learners cope up through budgeting and lowering expenses.	Placing extra effort in studying the lesson. Twice the effort in adjusting to the new mode of learning. Proper time management. Setting focus towards goal	Leaning toward religion. Emotional support from mother. Emotional support from grandparents and other relatives. Emotional independence. Self-motivation. Setting personal boundaries.	Social interaction. Listening to music. Self-Reflection. Setting Focus towards goals. Assurance of support received from parents.	Leaning towards religious belief. Motivation that she receives from parent.

Table 2 presents the different Coping Mechanisms of learners raised by single parents during the post pandemic transition towards the difficulties encountered. With the categorized difficulties, some coping mechanisms are established by the learners. Participants' coping strategies have been divided into five (5) categories based on their responses. For Simplification purposes the following sub-themes are utilized: Coping Mechanism for Financial Difficulty, Coping Mechanism for Academic Difficulty, Coping Mechanism for Emotional Difficulty, Coping Mechanism for Psychological Difficulty and Coping Mechanism for Physical Difficulty.

### **Coping Mechanism for Financial Difficulty**

*“Sometimes I would find a way to support my own financial needs like...Sometimes I would think of doing online selling like that, to also help my mothers in terms of the expenses.”* (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 29, Translation Line 38, p.3)

*“I tried to work as a laborer and sometimes just to earn some money so that I will no longer ask from my mother for my financial wants and needs.”* (Participant 6, Significant Statement No. 41, Translation Line 26, p.18)

To cope with the financial difficulties, learners find other ways like working to earn money to support personal needs and address financial difficulties. Participant 1 addressed her needs through online selling during the. Participant 6 collaborated with the idea as he himself worked as a laborer to provide for his own needs and no longer ask financial support from parents.

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*“What we do to cope up with our financial difficulties is proper budgeting. I don’t spend too much”* (Participant 3, Significant Statement No. 35, Translation Line 23, p.10)

Financial dependent learners cope up in different ways. Participant 3 copes up with financial difficulties through budgeting her allowance and lessening her expenses to fit with the budget. Participant 7 admits the same financial dependence and added that her mother manages to provide their need therefore he does not hesitate to ask for support anytime, testifying that:

*“So, in terms of finances I could not really do anything about it because I don’t have my own work. My mother is very supportive like she would give her full support with my studies, so if ever I need something I would ask her, and she would directly supply my needs like school fees.”* (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 43, Translation Line 36, p.22)

Results show that learners cope with financial difficulties in different ways. Financially independent learners work to earn personal income, while those dependent on parents manage by budgeting and reducing expenses. Williams (2014) found that students work due to budgetary needs, meeting necessities, and supporting future goals. Furr and Elling (2002) also noted that financial problems drive students to work part-time.

#### **Coping Mechanism for Academic Difficulty**

*“Academically, I double the effort in reviewing and adjusting, note taking, and managing my time well.”* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 38, Translation Line 32, p.12)

*“As it is not easy to work and study at the same time therefore in the meantime, I still can’t do both, I just do my best towards my study.”* “I just set my focus towards my goals that I should do better in my studies, something that my eldest sibling was not able to accomplish.” (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 31, Translation Line 58, 70, p.4, 5)

Findings show that participants agreed on addressing academic difficulties during the post-pandemic transition. Participant 4 suggested extra effort in studying, adjusting to new learning modes, and proper time management. Participant 1 agreed, adding that focusing on goals was also part of her strategy. According to Aun et al. (2011), ability to cope enhances learners’ participation, and attendance in class, leading to a more positive learning experience. Sullivan (2010) noted that academic coping strategies, including approach, avoidance, and social support, help undergraduates perform better. Yasin and Dzulkifli (2009) highlighted that these strategies also support physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being. Mahajan (2010) observed that first-year students typically use emotional coping strategies, while later years see a shift towards cognitive and confrontive problem-solving.

#### **Coping Mechanism for Emotional Difficulty**

*“My mother would always tell me that I should not hesitate to ask for guidance and always pray and give up everything to the Lord including your struggles in life and in studies. She would often request that I do my best in studies, and I*

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*made my mother my main motivation to keep doing better in school.”*  
(Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 30, Translation Line 58, p.4)

Religion plays a major role in Participant 1's way of coping with emotional difficulty. Whenever she feels emotionally unstable, she leans on her religious belief. Parental guidance or active involvement of parents serves as motivation and coping mechanism. Participant 2 concurs to the idea as she herself seeks emotional support in her mother, testifying that:

*“She (mother) would often ask for me to feel more comfortable sharing and she offers me support and advice for me to feel better.”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 32, Translation Line 20, p.7)

*“Love from my family relatives like my aunt. We are very close, as we have the same background that they lost their husband at an early age so we share sentiments and my cousins if ever there is one that struggles everyone will cheer that person.”* (Participant 8, Significant Statement No. 46, Translation Line 41, p.26)

*“I was raised by my grandparents then when I was around 5 years old, when I started elementary it was my mother that raised me by then.” “I did not experience having a father, but my grandparents fill the gap by making me feel special for them. My grandfather serves as my father.”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 33, Translation Line 24, p.7)

Participant 2 added in her statement that she receives additional emotional support from her grandparents and her grandfather filled the role of a father to her. Participant 8 collaborated with the idea stating that she herself has received emotional support from her relatives such as aunts and cousins who share the same sentiments.

*“I overcome the challenges and difficulties by taking the responsibilities that come in. Considering that I was only raised by my mother, I became independent because of her. She taught me how to become independent despite the challenges I face.”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 34, Translation Line 28, p.8)

*“Emotionally, as much as possible I avoid showing emotional weakness or when I am unstable emotionally. I make sure that when I go to school or when I am at home, I show them that I am stable emotionally.”* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 37, Translation Line 32, p.12)

Participant 2 with reference to her mother, as she grew up, she also learned emotional independence which was taught to her by her own mother. Participant 4 collaborates with the statement adding that she learned to self-motivate herself and refuse to show signs of weakness. As for Participant 6, he also learned to self-motivate but as much as possible avoids confrontation towards his family members and chooses to set personal boundaries, testifying that:

*“For the emotional aspect, I cope with it by dealing with it myself. Although my siblings are with us, I learned to adjust and avoid drama or asked for advice towards them regarding my academic needs. I learned to adjust to cope up with them for my studies.”* (Participant 6, Significant Statement No. 42, Translation Line 28, p.18)

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Findings show that learners cope with emotional difficulties through various mechanisms: leaning toward religion, emotional support from mothers, grandparents, and other relatives, emotional independence, self-motivation, and setting personal boundaries. Mahmoud et al. (2015) found that coping strategies significantly relate to stress and anxiety levels in college students. Solis and Durband (2015) noted that common strategies include support from family and friends, extracurricular activities, exercise, relationships, religious affiliation, and avoidance.

### **Coping Mechanism for Psychological Difficulty**

*“In terms of mentally my coping mechanism is that I socialize with people or sometimes I will be in my room listening to music to calm myself and forget all difficulties. (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 36, Translation Line 32, p.12)*

To deal with psychological difficulty Participant 4 Socializing with peers as well as music to calm her mind and help in managing her psychological well-being. The assurance that her mother gives him is one of the ways on how Participant 7 addressed his psychological difficulty. He also added that to address his anxiety he would self-reflect and think about his future goals, testifying that:

*“I get assurance that I no longer had to think about this problem in terms of fees because If I would think about it, my parents give her full support for me, so it no longer became a problem for me. Like my mother is very dependable, so I depend on her.” (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 44, Translation Line 38, p.22)*

*“With that of my psychological problems like anxiety is like self-motivation or I encourage myself that it will soon all be over. I would also think about how I started my journey and why I started because that way it motivates me towards seeing my goal.” (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 44, Translation Line 38, p.22)*

Results show that learners cope with psychological difficulties through social interaction, listening to music, self-reflection, focusing on goals, and assurance of support from their mothers. Laukka (2007) found that music listening positively affects psychological well-being through emotion regulation strategies. Social interactions are linked to cognitive changes, as learners engage with and resolve cognitive conflicts (Lim, 2012). Gillies et al. (2012) showed how scaffolds during interactions in classes can help educators encourage more complex thinking. Psaltis et al. (2009) noted that socio-cognitive conflicts, whether epistemic or relational, lead to cognitive progress. Roskos et al. (2001) categorized reflection based on function, structure, and timeline, highlighting its role in understanding past actions and avoiding mistakes. Heyler (2015) emphasized that reflection helps make sense of events. Parental support is crucial for students' educational success, providing motivation and quality instruction despite busy schedules (Swap, 1993).

### **Coping Mechanism for Physical Difficulty**

*“My mother would always tell me that I should not hesitate to ask for guidance and always pray and give up everything to the Lord including your struggles in life and in studies. She would often request that I do my best in studies, and I*

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*made my mother my main motivation to keep doing better in school.”*  
(Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 30, Translation Line 58, p.4)

Participant 1 experienced physical exhaustion due to siblings’ behavior. Her mother advised her to lean on religious beliefs and provided additional motivation. Solis and Durband (2015) support that learners use religious affiliation as a coping strategy. They also found that college students commonly use support from family and friends to address stressors.

#### **Theme 4 - Outlook from experience**

Outlook is defined as one's mental attitude or point of view in life. Learners that are raised by single parents based on the previous result are identified to have experienced greater hardships during the post pandemic transition period. This theme tackles what is the impact of the challenges they have encountered and the realization they have established on their experiences.

*“What I can say is uh... right now I am okay, happy and content with my life. Though challenges will always be there, you just had to admit that some things are beyond our control. (Participant 1, Significant Statement No. 47, Translation Line 70, p.5)*

*“I am used to thinking that everything happens for a reason.”* (Participant 3, Significant Statement No. 50, Translation Line 22, p.10)

*“Just continue with your life because sooner or later everything will be alright, all problems will be left in the past and as you go back to that moment you will realize how you’ve been responsible and strong enough to cope up without the help of other people. Overall, just continue to move forward.”* (Participant 4, Significant Statement No. 51, Translation Line 42, p.13)

*“Always just be grateful and don’t take for granted, lucky to those who have both parents who can sustain their needs especially in academics.”* (Participant 5, Significant Statement No. 52, Translation Line 40, p.16)

Even with experienced challenges, the learners still managed to establish a positive outlook in life. Participant 1 claims that there are just things that are beyond our control and although she experienced challenges, she views life positively, happily and with much satisfaction. Participant 3 shared that for her all things happen for a reason supporting the statement of participants 1 that some things are beyond our control. Participant 4 believes that sooner or later everything will be all part of the past and hardships will not last. She believes that based on her experience, one must keep moving forward. Participant 5 established the essence of being grateful especially if you still have both parents that can sustain one's needs.

*“I became independent because of her (mother). She taught me how to become independent.”* (Participant 2, Significant Statement No. 49, Translation Line 28, p.8)

*“My realization is that it’s growing with just one parent because life is not easy and when you are all alone in this world and you have no partner to cope up with those challenges in life uhm you won’t be able to handle it emotionally and physically, but my mother did well by that I have seen that she endured*

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*everything for us.” (Participant 6, Significant Statement No. 53, Translation Line 36, p.19)*

Parental involvement greatly influences the outlook of the learners. Participant learned to become independent due to her mother’s influence. Participant 6 realized the hardship of his mother as she raises them all by herself and sees her as his role model. Participant 7 added that his experiences during the post pandemic transition led him to develop strategic outlook, testifying that:

*“Soon we will be the ones to finance ourselves and our family and if ever we will need to find our own ways to earn to be able to support, you must be strategic. (Participant 7, Significant Statement No. 54, Translation Line 44, p.23)*

Findings show that learners raised by single parents have different experiences compared to those raised by both parents. Despite challenges, these learners maintain a positive outlook on life. Parental or relatives’ involvement significantly influences their perspective, fostering a strategic outlook. Myers (2000) supports that close, supportive family relationships contribute to happiness. Positive relationships give people meaning and purpose, and training in positive thinking can help parents who have kids live better lives (Sadeghloo et al., 2019).

Parents serve as role models, and their experiences influence their children’s outlooks. Vygotsky’s (1986) Sociocultural Theory states that interactions with parents and the broader culture contribute to a child’s development. Jung-qing (2020) found that the the quantity as well as quality of time that the parents allocate around their child has significant impact on how they develop their personality as individuals.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, academic pursuits became more challenging for learners raised by single parents during the post-pandemic transition. With only one parent supporting the family, the difficulties faced by the parent became a struggle for all family members. Learners experienced significant challenges as the learning modality shifted, with many difficulties being interconnected. Despite these inevitable challenges, learners adapted and developed strategic coping mechanisms. They reflected on their parents’ experiences, viewing them as role models. Participants in the study indicated that their parents were not only sources of support but also their main motivation in life. This perspective fostered optimism and positive thinking among learners. Overall, despite the challenges, the learners maintained a positive outlook on life.

The study recommends that school administration may establish a core support group for the learners could be beneficial. This group would address their specific needs and help them cope with their challenges. Additionally, a program offering scholarships exclusively for these learners should be considered.

Future researchers might explore a similar but more in-depth qualitative study focusing on children raised by an opposite-gender parent or a same-sex couple. Studies could also include children raised by solo guardians, including relatives or non-biological parents. Considering that all study participants were raised by mothers alone, future research could examine the experiences of learners raised by single fathers. Moreover, investigating the social

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interactions of these learners, particularly the influence of peers, would be valuable. It is also recommended that future studies select participants from specific year levels, as different year levels during the post-pandemic transition have shown varied experiences affecting data saturation.

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