EXPLORING CHALLENGES FACED BY URBAN SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS IN BANGALORE

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Abstract

The objective of this phenomenological or experiential study is to understand the challenges and issues faced by urban working single mothers in a multi cultural city such as Bangalore. At this stage of the research and for the purpose of the study, a single mother will be generally defined as an uncoupled individual who shoulders most or all of the day-to-day responsibilities for raising a child or children. A mother is more often the primary care giver in a single parent family structure that has arisen due to divorce or unplanned pregnancy or death of a spouse or through adoption.

The objective of the study is in part is a passionate pursuance of knowledge for academic and for personal benefit. The findings of this study aimed to benefit future researchers who wish to study single parenting and also use this study to contribute towards the impact of single parenthood on the parent as well as the children.

Keywords: Single parenting, challenges and working mothers.

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1.1 Introduction

Parenthood is a process of raising children from infants to adults who will provide continuity within the family for years to come. There is no greater responsibility or challenge, and for many who do the job well, there is no greater satisfaction than seeing one's children grow, learn, and enjoy life (Olson & DeFrain., 2000. P. 394). A parent's job is to give a child both "roots and wings" (Orr & Van Zandt, 1987 as cited in Olson & DeFrain, 2000).

Single parenting is attributed by either the death of a spouse or divorce or a woman's choice to have a child out of wedlock and also in the case of a single woman deciding on adoption. Single parents face the stressful psychological, emotional and physical needs alone while concurrently attending to her child or children's needs. Hence single parents need extra help and attention especially single working mothers (Maznah Baba, 2007 as cited in Hamid, Salleh., 2013), because most of them fail to balance their time between work and family roles, a situation which leads their children into developing social ills, emotional depression and school dropout (Heterington et al, 1985 as cited in Hamid, Salleh., 2013).

In the Indian context, research needs to take into account that changing patterns in marriage and divorce in the Indian community relate to the changing structure of the Indian family system (Mahabeer, 1987 as cited in Naidoo.1998). Adverse effects of divorce on children and adults alike are often sought, and found. The view emphasizes one form of family, the intact nuclear family, as most desirable is reinforced and preserved, while the increasing prevalence of single parent families is viewed as a deviant phenomenon (Naidoo., 1998). Existing research on single-parent families is characterized by quantitative methodology.

There is a dearth of information on the status of single mothers in India and that does not negate its reality. Single mothers face inexplicable challenges in India basically due to cultural stereotype and religious orientation (Naidoo., 1998). In Malaysia, single parenting issue is on the rise, it was reported that single working mothers are producing delinquent children (Leman, 2005 as cited in Hamid, Salleh., 2013). Due to the absence of additional support in handling household issues, working single mothers, were reported to show high level of psychological distress. The problem of insufficient income among many single mothers living in urban area is reported to

cause social problems indirectly. In this respect, the scope of this study is on understanding urban working single mothers on how they nurture their children and take care of themselves while facing challenges.

There are also studies that compare single-parent families to two-parent families, suggesting that single mothers are more disadvantaged and stressed than single fathers and parents from intact families in terms of educational level, job status, economic strain, coping with their multiple roles, support networks and parenting (Hilton & Devall, 1998 as cited in Cakir., 2010). Single mother homes have also been increasing in Turkey. Although many Turkish researchers have acknowledged problems of single mothers, the research interest have mostly concentrated on problems during divorce process (Cakir., 2010).

1.2 Analysis of Previous Findings:

Siti Rafiah Hamid and Sakinah Salleh (2014) conducted a study to explore the coping strategies adopted by a sample of single Malay working widows and divorcees. The two main objectives of the study were to explore the nature of single parenting process and to examine the patterns of their coping strategies in handling their parenting role. The method adopted is analytical and phenomenological by nature through selected interviews in order to gauge perspectives towards understanding this phenomenon. It involved in-depth interviews with 6 working single mothers from different career backgrounds. The verbatim was coded and significant themes reflecting the participant's experiences and their coping patterns were tabulated. The themes were psychological, single parenting process, work-family conflict and financial constraint. Under these themes the sub-themes were shame and inferiority complex, child-care, household and work demands and supporting children's education. The coping strategies were utilization of internal and external support systems such as family, friends, neighbours and social support. The creative coping styles were balancing roles, prioritizing task, personal development and managing time (2013)

Serap Kavas conducted a qualitative study examining cultural and structural factors facing single mothers in a patriarchal society. The objective of the study was to identify strategies single mothers devise to handle the hardship of bringing up a child alone and to stand up for themselves

as single parents. The study was done drawing on 24 interviews with single mothers in Turkey. The results of the study demonstrate that single mothers face numerous challenges including difficulty to maintain authority in their family setting, struggle to keep sense of a complete family and the experience of negative attitudes towards single mothers and their children. The literature on boundary ambiguity was used as a theoretical framework for understanding these women's single parenting experiences (2013).

Anthonia Essein and Agapetus Bassey conducted a study on social and religious challenges of single mothers in Nigeria. The reasons for single motherhood vary greatly ranging from personal choices to involuntary circumstances. The study was done through oral interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of this research are that single mothers face discrimination, rejection and blackmail from society, culture and religion. This study was done to highlight the plight of single mothers and to pave way for and acceptance based on human right and dignity (2012).

S. Gulfem Cakir, conducted a study that investigated specific stress producing experiences encountered by single parents and their perceived sources of support from their point of view. The study involved 25 single mothers in a middle class area of Turkey. The mothers were telephonically interviewed with semi-structured questions. The questions aimed at probing about stress producing experiences of the mothers and sources of support in terms of financial, social and moral support. The interviews ranged from 15-25 minutes. The interviews were analyzed for similar thematic content. The results of the study in terms of problems faced by them were grouped into 6 categories such as financial problems, children's problems related to father's absence, role overload, cultural attitudes towards widowhood, concerns over parenting and others. In terms of sources of support, responses were categorized into 6 groups such as family, friends, grandmothers, self-support/resourcefulness, ex-husband, relatives and others (2010).

L.A. Keswet and A.E. Dapas conducted a study on challenges and coping strategies of single parents focusing on a case study in a region in Nigeria. The study focused on the major causes of single parenthood in that region, the challenges of single parents in that region and the coping strategies used by them. The study was a survey which used qualitative technique to generate

data. The target population was single mothers living with their children in that region of a population of 175,267. They were either divorced, separated, widowed, teenage and unmarried women. A focus grouped discussion technique was used for data collection. The findings of the study were that there were 7 major causes of single parenthood which were violent crisis, rape and sexual harassment, divorce or separation, sickness, teenage pregnancy, dissertation by one parent and for personal reasons. There were 11 challenges faced by them which were substance abuse, lack of cooperation from in laws, financial problems, lack of security, rejection due to partners cause of death, emotional distress, aborted life aspirations, secret society or cult, exhaustion due to lack of help, perverted liberty and denial of widow's rights. The six coping strategies used by them were formation of a parent-children quarterly discussion group to foster unity among parents and children, counseling by pastors and fellowship groups, financial help from the church, loan schemes, participation in skill acquisition workshops and extra income ventures (2010)

Therefore, in conclusion, single mothers irrespective of their psychosocial environment, culture and habitation have common challenges. The major findings of these studies highlight challenges such as unresolved trauma, shame and inferiority complex, child-care problems, household and work demands, supporting children's education, difficulty to maintain authority in their family setting, struggle to keep sense of a complete family and experience of negative attitudes towards single mothers and so on.

2.1 Research Question

The research question for the topic of study is, "What are the challenges faced by urban single mothers in Bangalore?"

2.2 Paradigms

The phenomenological approach undertaken is the theoretical approach for this study. This study intends to look into the experience of working single mothers in Bangalore in handling single parenting challenges. The method adopted by this study is analytical and phenomenological by nature, which draw much of the data through selected interviews conducted by the researcher in order to gauge a wide range of perspective towards understanding this phenomenon. The study

involves semi structured interviews with six working single mothers from various career backgrounds.

Phenomenology is a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in his or her grasp of that world (Bryman. 2014: Pg 30). The qualitative data analysis the researcher used is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, unlike strategies like grounded theory or critical discourse analysis is not an approach that has an identifiable heritage. However, the search for themes is an activity that can be discerned by many. The general strategy is provided by framework an approach that has been developed at the National Centre for Social Research in the UK. Framework is described as a 'matrix based method for ordering and synthesizing data' (Richie et al. 2003: 219 as cited in Bryman. 2014: Pg 579). The idea is to construct an index of central themes and subthemes, which are then represented in a matrix with its display of cases and variables. The themes and subthemes are recurring motifs in the text that are then applied to the data. The themes and subthemes are the product of thorough reading and rereading of transcripts or field notes that make up the data (Bryman. 2014: Pg 579).

2.3 Settings

The setting of the semi-structured interviews with the research participants was at their residential homes on an individual basis. This was due to the fact that each of the participants has careers and so had specific available timings to meet the researcher for the interviews. Their availability was usually during the weekends when they would not be at their workplaces. In addition, the participants felt more comfortable discussing the topic of study at their homes.

2.4 Population and Participants

Since the research study is phenomenological and is based on thematic analysis, the researcher gathered a total of six research participants which is the minimum number required for the purpose of the study. The research participants were single working mothers who had at least one child living with them. Because the research participants have careers, there was a time constraint involved therefore; the researcher had to restrict it to the minimum required

participants. Additionally, the researcher had limited time to interview the participants which was restricted to the weekends.

2.5 Data Sources and Collection Process

After the researcher identified the participants, they were contacted telephonically to set a convenient time for a face-to-face semi structured interview. The collection process was done by asking the questions to the participants. The interview process was done only once which means that each participant was interviewed only once. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed into narrative verbatim, and coded carefully via reading through the transcripts and looking for significant themes reflecting the participants' experiences. Each interview was between 30 minutes to an hour in length.

The researcher used snowball sampling as an intervention to gather data from the research participants. The researcher made initial contact with a small group of people relevant to the research topic and then used these contacts to establish other participants. Therefore the sample is in no sense random. It would not have been possible to draw a random sample since no one knows that nature of the universe from which it needs to be drawn (Becker. 1963: 46 as cited in Bryman. 2014: Pg 203). While meeting the participants for the first time, the researcher discussed the confidentiality clause. Once they understood the clause, the participants signed the consent form to proceed with the interview which was digitally recorded. The relevant informed consent form for the recorded interview and questions of the semi-structured interview is attached at the appendix.

2.6 Data Coding and Analysis strategy

Participants were interviewed using semi structured questions. The questions were aimed at probing challenges that an urban single working mother could face in a city. The questions were based on experiences of the mothers and their experiences of bringing up her children. After the interviews were digitally recorded, the researcher transcribed the recordings into verbatim. For each question that was intentionally asked, the researcher identified a general theme which was coded. After re-reading the verbatim, subsequent sub themes were identified and coded. A co-analyst was used in analyzing the same verbatim and the same method was used to identify the

general themes and subsequent sub themes. The analysis done by the co-analyst was unbiased as the co-analyst was not informed of intention of study. The co-analyst was only given instructions to identify the general themes of the recordings. Finally, the researcher compared both the analyses and identified and pulled out common themes and sub themes.

2.7 Ethics

The tone of the interviews suggested that giving voice to what it means to be a single parent was (still) a very painful experience for the participants. At the outset, the participants were assured that they were in charge of their own degree of disclosure. They were not obligated to answer all the questions or comment or continue talking about issues that were uncomfortable for them. The researcher clearly reminded the participants during the course of the interview that the interview will be conducted in anonymity and would be used only for research purpose to benefit the universal goal of lending a voice to single mothers. The participants were also informed of the objective and the goals of the research study.

2.8 Data demographic

This exploratory study involves six volunteer single working mothers. The definition of a single mother is an uncoupled woman who shoulders most or all of the day-to-day responsibilities for raising at least one child. A mother in this case is the primary caregiver in a single parent family structure that has arisen due to divorce or unplanned pregnancy or death of spouse or through adoption. The research participants are mothers of school going children attending schools located in the urban city of Bangalore. Their ages ranged from 34 to 40 years old. They are a mixed group of recently divorced to widowed to unmarried mothers. Their minimum level of education was graduate level. Table 1 summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Participant characteristics

Participant	Marital status & years of divorce/widowed /unmarried	Age	Number of children	Level of education
1	Widowed for 3 years	39	2	B.E. engineering
2	Divorced for 1 year	34	1	M.Com
3	Unmarried for 12 years	36	1	B.A.
4	Divorced for 11 years	38	1	B.A.
5	Divorced for 1 year	35	1	M.B.A.
6	Unmarried for 9 years	40	1	M.A.

3.1 General themes of significance from the participants

The challenges faced by single mothers were found related to financial constraints, psychological matters, roles and cultural influence being investigated. There was one glaring theme that also stood out from the interviews which basically highlighted the positive experiences that each mother faced in retrospect. Therefore, there were four general challenges and one positive context experienced by these single mothers. These findings were also consistent with findings from other studies. These issues apparently create a sense of anxiety, stress, guilt and adjustments as they are not able to provide enough attention and basic needs for their children in the absence of a father figure at their household (Mathews., 2014; Kavas., 2013; Hamid, Salleh., 2013; Bassey., Essien., 2012; Cakir., 2010; Keswet, Dapas., 2010; Kotwal, Prabhakar., 2009; Naidoo., 1998). All the mothers expressed at least one challenge faced as a single mother and all of them mentioned more than one. The challenges expressed by them were grouped into 5 groups which were financial constraints, positives, psychological, roles and cultural attitudes towards single mothers. Table 2 summarizes the common themes and sub themes that were identified from the participants.

Table 2

Major themes and sub themes

Major theme	Sub theme
Financial constraint	Support for child's education, saving for future financial requirement
Positives	Capability, strength
Psychological changes	Guilt, anxiety, stress
Dual role	Adjusting parenting role without spouse
Cultural influence	Cultural attitude towards single mothers

3.2 Theme one: financial constraint. More than half the participants i.e. four out of six expressed financial constraints. Common aspects of financial problems were related to not having enough income and feeling inadequate in attending to their children's needs especially in supporting their child's education and saving for future financial requirements that they anticipated as their child grows up.

Examples:

Participant 1, 39 years commented (on 27/3/2016),

"*Financial challenges had been when he was sick; money was spent only on his treatment; I had cut down on almost everything; my lifestyle has gone through a drastic change from what my spending pattern was.*"

Participant 3, 36 years commented (on 9/4/2016),

"*I never got the support from my family in terms of taking care of my daughter so I have to balance; we had our own challenges in terms of our finances.*"

Participant 5, 35 years commented (on 31/3/2016),

"*I would assume as she is growing older that there might be lot of expenses that requires a lot of planning.*"

Participant 6, 40 years commented (on 4/4/2016),

"*We have to think about the future; medically something to fall back on so it gets a little difficult at times but the other challenge is the school fee.*"

These were some of the comments that highlighted the struggle that the single mothers have to go through on a regular basis. The sub themes that were thus identified from financial constraints

were supporting the child's education and saving for future financial requirements that were basically for medical well being and for other miscellaneous requirements that they anticipated in the future.

3.3 **Theme two: positives.** While there were many challenges that were expressed in the interviews with the mothers, they were also delighted to express the positive aspects of single parenthood. The researcher also gathered from all the interviews that the mothers were eventually happy to be able to single handedly bring up their child despite all challenges that they faced. They seemed to imbibe a lot of confidence and their experiences have made them aware of the strengths that they actually possessed. All the mothers expressed positives that they saw in themselves while they embark on their journey of single parenthood.

Examples:

Participant 1, 39 years commented (on 27/3/2016),

"*I realized my strengths, my potential; I am bouncing back I am very happy with what I am.*"

Participant 2, 34 years commented (on 3/4/2016),

"*It has made me a much stronger person and also an organized person; confident and stronger person than I used to be before.*"

Participant 3, 36 years commented (on 9/4/2016),

"*But I know that it is also a learning process for me as well as my daughter so overall I am learning as well as enjoying.*"

Participant 4, 38 years commented (on 7/4/2016),

"*My daughter and I we are very close, we have very good relationship so that's one thing because we do everything together like watch movies and like I basically we are more like friends.*"

Participant 5, 35 years commented (on 31/3/2016),

"*I get to decide, I get to choose how I want to raise my daughter and I like that there should be a method to it; I think it helps me because in terms of communication, a single message goes to her.*"

Participant 6, 40 years commented (on 4/4/2016),

"You have your kid to yourself; we learn to go ahead and be their own person sometime when you have a partner you lose your own identity. You learn to know yourself, you learn to go ahead and do things yourself."

The sub theme that was identified from all the mothers were that they found that they were capable in bringing up their child single handedly and that they found that they each had strength in doing so.

3.4 Theme three: psychological changes. Five out of six mothers expressed psychological changes that they began to have after their divorce, death of spouse and general feeling of anxiety brought upon having a responsibility in single handedly bringing up a child. The researcher sensed during the interviews a feeling of anxiousness with the mothers when the topic of their experience bringing up their child alone was introduced. While there was a lot of good meaning derived from this responsibility, it seemed to have awakened them to a sense of reality that they were doing it by themselves without support from a partner.

Examples:

Participant 1, 39 years commented (on 27/3/2016),

"My daughter started rebelling back at me. From January she started crying, she said she came and told me even though you're there, I miss having you around."

Participant 2, 34 years commented (on 3/4/3016),

"For the first two years of my life which was very, very bad, because either I had to work, it was quite difficult because I had to be working at work which I can't compromise, my work involves a lot of travel. It is a huge responsibility because not only the accountability; even the responsibility."

Participant 3, 36 years commented (on 9/4/2016),

"Sometimes you have to put work first then your child but which again at the same time you also have to put your child so sometimes I have so much work to do that I don't have time for my daughter like I don't give her the attention that I am supposed to be giving her."

Participant 5, 35 years commented (on 31/3/2016),

"Its constant balancing act and I feel like I constantly need to like engage her. I am ridden with guilt, I feel terrible; I want her to be happy which is very difficult for any human being."

Participant 6, 40 years commented (on 4/4/2016),

"*Sometimes I work like 14 hours in a stretch, she starts cribbing that she doesn't see me, she doesn't see enough of me, that is when I start to have that guilty feeling*."

The sub themes that were thus identified from the major theme were feelings of guilt of not being there for child, anxiety on raising child the 'correct' way and stress put on themselves by striving to be a 'good' mother. The researcher after analyzing these sub themes realized that the single mothers were generally ambitious and not aware of the standards that they have been setting for themselves since they became single mothers. The reality of their situation seems to be taking a constant psychological toll on their emotional well being.

3.5 **Theme four: dual roles.** Five out of six mothers expressed the balancing of roles in terms of fulfilling both as a mother and compensating the role of the absent father. There was frustration felt on the part of the mothers when their child would question the absence of a father during specific events or situations. For example, during birthday celebrations of their child with friends, the absence of a father becomes quite evident or when there is a sudden noticeable comparison made by the child themselves during a regular school day.

Examples:

Participant 1, 39 years commented (on 27/3/2016),

"*My 7 year old comes and cries saying I miss him because I don't have anybody to learn football from.*"

Participant 2, 34 years commented (3/4/2016),

"*Once a situation where you know we were in a party, birthday party so all the kids were you know they have these games; so all the kids were asked to come with their fathers so she was a little confused…*"

Participant 3, 36 years commented (9/4/2016),

"*She says mummy I wish you could drive because this aunty drives, this aunty drives and stuff and then yeah even guys also drive but I wish my daddy comes with his car.*"

Participant 5, 35 years commented (on 31/3/2016),

"*When I started talking to her about it, that's when I realized that she thought her situation was unusual and sometimes she also thought it was her fault. She would say I wish you guys could be together but I know it is not going to happen.*"

Participant 6, 40 years commented (4/4/2016),

"There are some things that I have learnt to go ahead and do for example building a tent house, learning how to go ahead and carry her on my shoulders."

The common sub theme that was identified was the mother's adjustments made on the parenting roles in the absence of the father. This was quite evident based on the responses made by the mothers when they had to take on a masculine role of the absent father. For example, taking the role of playing activities such as football, carrying the child on the shoulders, driving a car and so on…

3.6 **Theme five: cultural influence.** All six mothers expressed their challenge in facing their culture as single mothers. The general theme of cultural influence seems to have an impact on all the single mothers that the researcher interviewed. Irrespective of what culture each mother belonged to, the researcher found that there is a general consensus that culture and society does affect single mothers. This plays out in a lot of ways on their behavior in bringing up their child and also makes them scrutinize their actions on whether the child's upbringing is right or wrong. The cultural influence seems to overlap with the psychological theme that was previously mentioned above.

Examples:

Participant 1, 39 years commented (on 27/3/2016),

"Parenthood is all about doting and taking care of your children with both husband and wife involved. When I became single, people start noticing more about how I dress up; noticing when I speak to male colleagues. "

Participant 2, 34 years commented (on 3/4/2016),

"With my extended family, they are a little conservative, for them it is very important that things have to be the way it should be, a man and a woman have to be together especially with regards to the children and even if there is immense violence from the man or it can be the woman also who can be wrong at times."

Participant 3, 36 years commented (on 9/4/2016),

"It is more based on the society like parenthood because they don't have a say much because there they want to live up to the standard of the society. I am against it honestly but that's the way that they are expected to do if not then they will be an outcaste, they will be someone like who is not fit in the society."

Participant 4, 38 years commented (7/4/2016),

"*In every culture there is a mother, there is a father, there is a, I mean the marriage, the sacred marriage whatever so even in our culture that is there and I guess that is it. They are not very open to it; yeah they are still a little close minded about it*."

Participant 5, 35 years commented (on 31/3/2016),

"*My culture is my family. They have very different approach to parenting than I do. My folks don't believe in communication, they don't believe in talking things out, I believe in you know uniformity in how you raise her. But I don't think there is any thought given to being a single parent, I don't think they realize what it takes, how hard it is*."

Participant 6, 40 years commented (on 4/4/2016),

"*A parent has to be two people and it has to be a man and has to be a woman, married legally, with God as their witnesses, vows have to be said; it doesn't matter whether you are miserable in that marriage or in that relationship you have to go ahead and you know bulldoze through it, turn one blind eye and keep your other eye open, you have to go ahead and make a lot of compromises, these are the things in our culture*."

The sub theme that was identified from cultural influence is the attitude that the families and society had towards their single parenthood status. The researcher found the mothers to be facing similar challenges when it came to what their culture and society said and the standards they set on how a child should be brought up.

4.1 Summary of major themes and sub themes

To summarize the general themes and sub themes of the findings, the major themes that the researcher identified and pulled out from the interviews of the six single mothers were financial constraint, positivity, psychological matters, work family conflict and cultural influences. Out of the five major themes that were identified, four of them were common challenges that they faced and one was a positive awareness that they realized they possessed in retrospect.

For the first theme on financial constraint, the sub themes that the researcher identified were in supporting the child's education and saving for future financial requirements. Four out of six mothers expressed these concerns which means 67% (N=6) of the respondents mentioned these challenges.

For the second theme on positive aspects, the sub themes that the researcher identified were the mothers' capability in handling their child's upbringing and the strength that they possessed in doing so. Six out of the total of six respondents that is 100% (N=6) expressed in agreement of the two characteristics that they possessed.

The third major theme of psychological changes that the single mothers faced, the researcher found the sub themes of feelings of guilt of not being there for their child, anxiety of raising their child the 'correct' way and stress they felt on being a 'good' mother. Five out of the total of six mothers expressed the challenges they faced because of these feelings which accounts for 84% (N=6) of the respondents.

The fourth theme identified by the researcher was roles and the sub theme identified was adjusting to parenting roles in the absence of a father. Five out of the six mothers identified this as a challenge that they regularly faced during certain events and situations. This theme accounts for 84% (N=6) of the mothers agreeing to this challenge.

The last theme that the researcher identified was on cultural influence that the single mothers faced. The sub theme that was identified is the society and family's attitude towards being a single mother. Again, all six mothers faced the same challenges despite the difference in their cultural background. This theme accounts for 100% (N=6).

Table 3 summarizes the general framework for the themes and sub themes identified by the researcher.

Table 3

Summary of major themes and sub themes

	Financial constraint	Positives	Emotions	Dual roles	Cultural influence
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	None	Yes	None	None	Yes
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The major patterns that were found by the researcher were that the single mothers were able to relate to challenges such as finance, dual roles and cultural influence based on their experiences. These challenges seem to have an impact on their psychological well being as single mothers. The major theme that stood out was when the single mothers were asked to express their experiences on how single parenting has been a positive influence in their lives. They were happy to note very similar emotions in terms of their capabilities and strengths that they had as single mothers.

Summary

To summarize and conclude the research study findings, the researcher will summarize the research findings and compare each theme to previous literature reviews.

Theme one: financial constraint

The researcher found common aspects of financial problems related to not having enough income and feeling inadequate in attending to their children's needs especially in supporting their child's education and saving for future financial requirements that they anticipated as their child grows up. The theme of financial constraints was also found in similar studies conducted by other researchers. In line with four existing literature single mothers' major problem was related to financial matters (Richards & Schmiege; 1993 as cited in Cakir, G.S., 2010; Hamid, Salleh., 2013; Kotwal, Prabhakar., 2009; Keswet, Dapas., 2010).

Theme two: positives

The researcher gathered from the interviews that the single mothers were happy to be able to single handedly bring up their child despite all challenges that they faced. They seemed to imbibe a lot of confidence and their experiences have made them aware of the strengths that they actually possessed. This theme has not been highlighted in any of the literature reviews that were conducted for this study. This particular theme could be an outlier for this study as it almost stands out in that there was a uniform consensus from all six of the single mothers that were interviewed. They were happy to share this experience and also expressing this seemed to give them a renewed sense of purpose.

Theme three: psychological changes

Almost all the mothers expressed psychological challenges or rather changes that they began to have after their divorce, death of spouse and general feeling of anxiety brought upon having a responsibility in single handedly bringing up a child. The impact of single parenthood on the psychological well being of the mother has also been in line with seven existing literature (Mathews., 2014; Hamid, Salleh., 2013; Kavas., 2013; Bassey., Essien., 2012; Keswet, Dapas., 2010; Kotwal, Prabhakar., 2009; Naidoo., 1998).

Theme four: dual role

Almost all the single mothers expressed the balancing of roles in terms of fulfilling both as a mother and compensating the role of the absent father. There was frustration felt on the part of the mothers when their child would question the absence of a father during specific events or situations. The problems related to absence of fathers in children's lives and role overload is also found in three of the existing literatures (Cakir., 2010; Hamid, Salleh., 2013; Keswet, Dapas., 2010).

Theme five: cultural influence

The general theme of cultural influence seems to have an impact on all the single mothers that the researcher interviewed. Irrespective of what culture each mother belonged to, the researcher found that there is a general consensus that culture and society does affect single mothers. This plays out in a lot of ways on their behavior in bringing up their child and also makes them scrutinize their actions on whether the child's upbringing. The problems related to the impact of culture and society is also found in five of the existing literatures (Kavas., 2013; Bassey., Essien., 2012; Keswet, Dapas., 2010; Cakir., 2010; Kotwal, Prabhakar., 2009).

4.2 Conclusion and recommendation

Counseling services can be one of the platforms for understanding, supporting and fulfilling the single working mothers' emotional, psychological and biological needs. Trusted and effective counseling services may result in mentally and emotionally healthy single working mothers, effective single parenting dynamic and emotional stable and successful children of single parent

families. This could help reduce their pain and burden in assuming their roles as single working mothers. Pulling from the major theme of positivity expressed from the study, one can highlight this aspect to provide hope and resilience for their future in terms of finances, psychological well being and role overload.

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Research questions

Based on the literature review of nine qualitative studies, the questions framed for the purpose of the semi structured interview are:

- Can you tell me how has it been to be a single mother, what are some of the positives?
- What are the financial challenges that you have experienced?
- How do you experience being both a working woman and a parent?

- Tell me about your experience with bringing up your child?
- What are the things that you do to help your child cope with the absence of a father?
- Have you had any experience when your child is experiencing his/her father's absence?
- What is your culture's understanding of parenthood?
- What are your thoughts on how your culture treats single parenthood?
- When you experience challenging times, where do you get support?

Informed consent form

I, Lalpeki Ralte a student of 4th semester of MSc Counselling Psychology in Sampurna Montfort College, Bangalore am doing a psychological study on "**Exploring challenges faced by urban single others in Bangalore**". I would like you to participate in this study and I require your consent for the same. If you volunteer to participate in this study, I would require you to answer the questions posed by the researcher related to this study. I will audio-tape the interview and make a written copy for later analysis.

The result of the study will be presented at Martin Luther Christian University during my exams as a part of my Counseling Psychology course. Your identity will be kept confidential, only data will be used. All reference to information will be coded and analyzed. All research materials will be kept safe. All audio recording will be erased at the completion of the study unless the information is required for future studies.

Participation in this study is voluntary; you will not be penalized if you decide not to participate. If you wish to withdraw from the research, you may do so at any time without hesitation. The result of the study will be given to you after the completion of the study. I assure you that your participation in this study will not cause you any psychological or physical harm beyond what you encounter in everyday life. However, if you are uncomfortable answering a particular question, you are free to refuse to answer the question.

If you have any doubts or clarifications, please feel free to ask me or contact my research supervisor, Sritha Sandon Associate Professor, Montfort College, 184 Old Madras Road, Indiranagar, Bangalore - 560058.

If you consent to volunteer in my study, please indicate by filling in your name and signature below.

Thank you.

Date: _____   Student's signature_____

Place:_____   Student's Name_____

Date: _____   Supervisor's signature_____

Place:_____   Supervisor's Name_____

I, _____ aged about _____ years, have accepted to voluntarily participate in this research and reserve my right to withdraw from the same at any time for any reason.

Date: _____ Signature of participant: _____

Place: _____Name of participant: _____

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

"Exploring challenges faced by urban single others in Bangalore"

Full name:

Number of Children: ☐   Gender of Children: 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐

Name of Child/Children:

Date of Birth: ☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐☐☐
          dd   mm   yyyy   **INDEX CODE**

Gender: Femal ☐   Male ☐   Birth Order ☐ │ ☐

Nationality:

Place of Origin: State:

City/ Township/ Village:

Mother Tongue:

Religion:

Education: _____   Occupation:

Marital Status: Single ☐   Married ☐   Separated ☐   Divorced ☐

Widowed ☐   Remarried ☐   Other (Specify) _____

Any chronic illnesses:

On any medication for above: _____

Any disability: _____

Any psychological problems: _____

On any treatment for above: _____