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Bittersweet Metamorphosis: Lived Experiences of Emerging Adult Single Fathers on Parenting in a Rural Community

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Abstract. With the increasing number of single-father family households worldwide, there is a need to conduct substantial research to provide sufficient information about this understudied population. This qualitative phenomenological study seeks to describe, explore and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adult single fathers on parenting. It utilized the purposive and snowballing sampling techniques to select the participants. The data were gathered through face-to-face interviews guided by interview protocol. Lichtman's 3 C's of Data Analysis was employed to generate themes extracted from participants' verbatim transcripts. Five themes emerged from their lived experiences: Providing Care and Nurturance, Rearing One's Child Properly, Dealing with Drawbacks in Single Fatherhood, Receiving Relief from Empathic Hands, and Appreciating Blissful Moments in Solitary Parenting. The findings provided insights that a transformation is required to adjust to their current situation and, most significantly, to change for their children's sake. To conclude, single fathers can truly nurture and raise their children with tenderness, warmth, care, and affection like single mothers and dual-household families. Given the limitations of this qualitative research, quantitative research is suggested for further research to create a comprehensive intervention program for mental health professionals to promote single fathers' quality of life.

Keywords. Single fatherhood, emerging adult single fathers, phenomenological study, Philippines

1. Introduction

Single-parent households headed by fathers increased over the past decades from 16% in 1994 to 20.1% in 2018 (Grall, 2020), and more than three million children live under the custody of fathers' households (Alon et al., 2020). According to the United States Census Bureau, there is an increase from 12.5% in 2007 to 16.1% in 2017 in families headed by single fathers and no spouse present (Institute for Family Studies, 2017). The percentage of families headed by single fathers in the United Kingdom gradually increased after a decade, from 12.95% in 2010 to 15.06% in 2020 (Office for National Statistics, 2021). In Denmark, the number of single fathers reached approximately 9,800 with one child. Only one father had seven children or more (Statista Research Department, 2021). With the increasing divorce rates, separation, and domestic violence, single fatherhood continues to rise throughout Western countries.

However, the percentage of families headed by single fathers in South East Asian countries is relatively low compared to Western countries. According to the United Nations (2017) survey, only 2% in Cambodia and 3% in Myanmar, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam are households headed by single fathers. In 2017, the Labor Force Survey in Thailand revealed that 1.46% of the total population of single parents were single fathers (OECD Korean Policy, 2019). The statistics provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (2020) in Malaysia revealed that fathers rule 6% of single-household families. The Singapore Ministry of Social Family and Development (2019) showed that single fathers headed 18.3% of households. This percentage dropped from the previous statistics of 19.5% in 2015 since single mothers in Singapore can quickly obtain sole custody compared to single fathers (Moynihan, 2019). Perhaps, Southeast Asia's family culture, traditions, and legislation explain the low percentage of single fathers.

According to the World Health Organization report, the Philippines has approximately 15 million single parents, representing 5% or more than one million single fathers (Garcia et al., 2021). Further, the country has existing laws given to single mothers to govern child custody: Presidential Decree No. 603 and Article 213 of the Family Code. Child care is a mother's primary responsibility in traditional Filipino culture (Kamaruddin et al., 2013). However, Filipino fathers differ in how they act as primary caregivers – the total involvement with their children and household concern, disciplinary techniques for children, ensuring children are free from sickness, and medicating them when sick (Edris et al., 2018).

Research on single parenthood has focused mainly on single mothers (Brawer, 2018; Zhao & Basnyat, 2021) and their struggles amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Garcia et al., 2021; Febrianto, 2021), single college mothers (Cabaguing, 2017; Vowels, 2019), single (Haudar et al., 2016) and divorced fathers (Diesta, 2018), full-time working single fathers (Iztayeva, 2021) and college unmarried students (Cuba et al., 2018). Still, there is a shortage of substantial research conducted on emerging adult single fathers' parenting experiences. Hence, this study aims to describe, explore, and interpret the lived experiences of emerging adult single fathers in a province in Western Visayas.

2. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive-phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research describes an ordinary meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher used the phenomenological approach due to its characteristic of studying comprehensive human experiences and digging deeper into their thoughts, feelings, and actions to understand their experiences.

The participants of this study were emerging adult single fathers. The inclusion criteria of this study were (a) single father, (b) has at least one child, (c) age ranges within 19 to 25 years old, (d) living in a province in Western Visayas, and (e) living with their parents. This research study employed a purposive sampling approach and snowball sampling technique to look out for the participants. Moreso, I reached saturation point when the participants responded to the same questions even though paraphrased, evidently on the fifth and sixth participants. Hence, I concluded the interview on the sixth single father.

This study used an unstructured in-depth individual interview. I employed open-ended questions and took down notes during the interview. The data collected from the participants were thematically analyzed using Lichtman's 3 C's of data analysis – coding, categories, and concepts.

The participants were given informed consent before participating in the study, including their right to withdraw anytime in the research process, right to privacy, and confidentiality. They were given appropriate psychological processing after the interview.

3. Results

3.1 Providing Care and Nurturance

I am taking good care of him/her. Ensuring a child's nutrition is a top priority in parenting. Single fathers have to take good care of their children by providing for their basic needs. In traditional Filipino families, mothers provide milk and food to infants. Since participants were separated and abandoned by their partners, they were the ones to provide milk and food to their children when hungry.

Yes, I cook him various viands like hotdogs and eggs. He chooses the food he wants. Sometimes, he eats vegetables when my mother cooks.

I am the one who provides milk, even before when I was attending college. We sleep with our child together with my ex-partner, and when he wakes up around two or three o'clock in the morning, I will give him milk. It will take a long time for my son to sleep, and I gently caress his body.

I will comb, bathe, and provide her milk.

I am taking good care of my son. I wash his body properly, provide him milk, enhance his nutrition and lull him to sleep.

When she wakes up in the afternoon, I will bathe and give her milk and fall asleep. When she wakes up again in the middle of the night and asks for milk. Sometimes, I will hug her tight when she does not fall asleep with milk.

Generative Fathering Roles. Society perceives fathers as financial providers while mothers are in-charge of child care. The participants combined these roles for the sake of their children. From their direct experiences, the participants acknowledged their roles as guides, supports, and good role models.

We are here as parents to guide and support her.

I have a significant role in nurturing and providing for her needs. I will continue to support her if she's still by my side. Part of fatherhood is to support your child and give all their needs.

My responsibility is to nurture, provide a good life, and send him to school.

She always sees me smoke, but I tell her it is bad. She will then report to her grandmother when we smoke.

My role as a father is to show affection to my child. Wherever you go, you must be with him so that he can love you in return.

If I have work, I will give him everything he needs. However, I don't have the means to provide it.

A Passionate Teacher. Early as six months, infants form simple sounds and rhymes, which prepare them for more understandable language. Three out of six participants had children under the age of two. The participant's role as a teacher was to nurture and stimulate their children's cognitive and language development.

I teach him how to speak. I teach him to speak various colors like "yellow", "green".

My mother and I teach her to speak like "Mama, Papa."

I can only teach him how to speak because he is still young. I teach him names like "tito, mama, papa, baby, nene."

I let her watch English movies with counting and words like "ABCDE" to retain in her memory. The next time we talk, she already knows how to count and speaks in full words. Children sometimes are curious about words.

3.2 Rearing One's Child Properly

Gentle But Tough. The participants employed discipline by reprimanding and explaining when their children misbehaved. The authoritative style will enhance the child's cognitive abilities to distinguish between positive and negative behaviors.

I reprimand and explain to her when she speaks bad words. I made her look to the image of Mama Mary and Papa Jesus for her to stop crying.

I scold instead spank him when he speaks bad words. When he became unruly, I told him not to do it again.

My child imitates his uncle in teasing their grandmothers. I scolded and told him not to do it anymore because it was bad. Then, he will stop.

I scold without hurting her. I gently explained the reason why she couldn't have everything. I say to her, "Not now, maybe later".

I don't beat him. I also told my parents not to do so. I gently talk and explain to my son. For example, if he commits mistakes, I told him, "Son, please don't do bad things, don't be like me, don't smoke and drink alcoholic beverages."

I don't get mad at her. Rather, I gently explain to correct her mistakes. If she does not listen, then I will call her mother. Her mother will be the one to punish her because my heart bleeds when I see her cry.

Comforting Arms of a Father. The participants conceded the positive effects of warmth when handling a child's emotional outbursts. Giving warmth and tender touch as a strategy establishes a positive father-child attachment as they serve as a secure basis for their crying toddlers.

I carry him in my arms when he cries. Often, we roam around together to calm him down.

I pity her when she cries, and I cuddle her immediately.

She stops crying when I put her in my arms. She is attached to me and my mother, compared to my siblings. She always sleeps in my arms when I lull her down to sleep,

I try everything to comfort her. I gave her baby bottles and hugged her tightly. If it persists, we go to the living room and watch television.

Overindulged Kids. The participants were inclined to grant every single wish of their children. Three participants employed indulgent parenting, which manifests compensatory behavior to fill in the mother's absence.

I need to give whatever she asks because she is a spoiled child. When she requests for ice cream, you really have to find ice cream somewhere else.

I grant her every request because my heart bleeds seeing her cry.

I give him everything he wants: toys, food, and slippers.

3.3 Dealing Drawbacks in Single Fatherhood

Financial Constraints. The outcomes of living in rural areas are lack of job opportunities, limited transportation movement, and low production of agricultural products, which leads to financial instability. Due to unstable employment, the participants experienced financial difficulties meeting their children's basic needs.

It's financially difficult, especially I can't leave my mother because she feels unwell. My father is also employed and cannot attend to her needs. If I choose to work far from home, no one will help her in difficult times. So, I decided to find work nearby; any type of job would do as long as I am earning money.

It isn't easy to find money to buy his milk.

It is financially challenging to buy a child's diaper.

It is challenging to buy a child's diaper and milk without money.

When my mother is not available, I have no choice but to be responsible for child-care. Despite the various job offers nearby, I can't commit myself to work because I am the one who is taking care of my son.

Disturbed Sleep Patterns. A disturbed sleep pattern is expected with actively involved fathers. Five participants had children under two years of age. This age can be very demanding for a single parent who juggles all the responsibilities in child care. As part of their fatherly sacrifices, they endured this challenge in single parenting.

I could not get enough sleep because of babysitting. My daughter sleeps during the day and usually wakes up in the evening. I only sleep three to four hours a day.

Child care is tiresome. It involves a lot of wakefulness at night because my child cannot fall asleep. You can't sleep when she's still awake because she might fall from bed.

The most challenging experience is to wake up early in the morning, around three.

I also have to stay up late because my mother is tired. I should be the one responsible of being awake.

I can't bear staying awake until ten to twelve because my son is still playing.

Desire for Assistance from the Government. Parenting is a shared involvement of parents, social workers, charities, and the government. In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is a government agency created to support the marginalized sector, including the less privileged members of the community, especially single parents. The participants expressed their wishes to the government to offer various support.

Financial assistance is the only thing needed.

They can give financial assistance and vitamins. Any support as long they have something to offer.

They have to give some kind of incentive every month to buy milk and diapers. Of course, some taxes are also ineffective. They should have to provide a subsidy to other single parents, too.

I hope they can give us decent work. A job that can provide us with an everyday income to support our child's needs.

Business is a better option so that we can monitor our children. Moreso, they can also provide financial support weekly or monthly.

Difficulties in Dual-Role. There are social and parental roles expectations distinct for each parent. According to Cable (2017), mothers contribute to daily grooming, routine, and care, while fathers protect the family's financial provisions and are in charge of disciplinary aspects of parenting. The feelings of entrapment experienced by the participants resulted from role strain and conflict, as dual roles in parenting can be challenging for them.

As a father, you need to be a mother to make my child feel the presence of a mother. Sometimes I comb her hair and imagine that she also has a mother.

I need to be a mother and a father.

You need to do everything to be a mother and father to your child.

Fear of Future Conflict on Child Custody. Three single fathers were concerned about the child's separation. According to Article 176 of the Family Code, illegitimate children under the age of seven must be under the parental authority and custody of their mothers except by default. The participants were given child custody due to infidelity, the death of a spouse, separation, and the mother's decision to pursue a college degree.

My fear is when she decides to take custody of my son. But if she insists, I have to give it to her since she is the mother.

If she wants to get our son, I have no choice but to give it to her. The child will really go to the mother if the child is given a chance to choose. It is not allowed to force my child to be in my custody.

At some point, I know that it is the mother's right to take custody. I am afraid that one day she will get the child.

3.4 Receiving Relief from Empathic Hands

Obtaining Support. Parents feel the burden of their sons with single parenting. Grandparents help them by providing whatever kind of support they could extend with their grandchildren.

My parents were helping me when I didn't have the resources to provide for my child.

I am grateful for my ever-supportive parents. If I don't have money, they're the ones who purchase milk, pampers, and the child's essential needs while I am unemployed.

They loved their granddaughter so much. Sometimes when my father receives his salary, he would buy milk for her granddaughter. I borrow from my father and pay them when I have money. I am very grateful that I have parents like them.

It doesn't feel good when you can't support your child and will depend everything from parents.

My mother and I help each other with the child's finances and his milk and diaper.

I have to repay all the sacrifices my parents endured for helping me all the way. When they knew that I had a child, they were mad at me. In return, I have to give them back the favor, especially for giving me the chance to go to school and support the child.

Substitute for Mother's Love. Grandmother's love for their grandchildren is spectacular. Their presence, support, and understanding make the lives of single fathers easier, from financial to babysitting practices.

The presence of my mother is significant for my child's upbringing. I am thinking if how I can help them simultaneously in taking care of my child and doing the household chores.

My mother takes care of my daughter at home since she does not have a full-time job. I go to school at 7:30 in the morning and back around 12:30 in the afternoon. Then I'll be the one to take care of my child.

My nephews, nieces, and siblings would take care of my child. When I have work, I need to go home and check on him. But sometimes, my mother would take charge. If my mother cannot assume, then I'll be the one to take care. Then, my mother would rest and I attend to my child's needs. We take turns in child-care and babysitting.

I need to train myself from my mother because I have no idea about child care. But I don't need to depend on them all the time, and I have to learn independently. It is easy to learn with continuous practice.

At the moment, it is not difficult for me because my son sleeps with my mother and my younger sister.

3.5 Appreciating Blissful Moments of Solo Parenting

The Joy of "Doing It Alone." The emotions experienced by the participants were inspiring by nature, which motivated them to continue raising a child alone. Despite the setbacks, the participants felt the bliss of solo parenting.

It feels good when you raise your child alone. Our attention is focused on each other. It's a nice feeling. It signifies that you are a good father.

I am happy because I see my child happy. I am proud of myself because I raise my child alone without the help of his biological mother. I have to endure everything for my son.

I wouldn't be so proud if my child were on the mother; that I assumed the custody of my daughter. I'm also proud of other single mothers who raised and supported their child alone. I know and understand their struggles because I also experienced it.

I feel relieved every time I see her. For example, when my arms are tired, I smile at her. I feel light. It brings fulfillment. I have to bear, no matter how difficult and stressful it is for my daughter.

I am so happy my daughter was spared from her mother, who was not a good role model because she drinks alcoholic beverages. I am grateful that we broke up for the sake of our child.

Fatherhood as a Turning Point. Two participants recognized fatherhood as a turning point in their lives. The presence of their children served as an inspiration to change despite its struggles and burdens. These two emerging adult single fathers decided to re-enter the educational system to increase employment opportunities and to provide for their children's needs.

I can't explain it, but somehow, I've changed because I was very naughty before. I used to find more women. Now I'm scared because of karma. I don't do it anymore. When I look at my daughter, I don't have to do bad things because she is my conscience. Unlike before, I can just do whatever I want. When I am lazy about doing school activities, I wonder how I can compensate her in the future? That's why I need to do it.

My life changed because of my daughter. Maybe I am still the same person today if I don't have a child now. When I am tempted to initiate conflict with others, I always think of my daughter as someone who is waiting for me at home.

Intimate Bonding Time. Little children are naturally selfish and have the full attention of their caregivers. Establishing a father-child intimate moment is a good side of parenting, as emerging adult single fathers spared their precious time with their children.

I allot time for his daily activities. When he wants to play, I have to play with him. When he wants to sleep, I will let him sleep. When he is awake in the afternoon, I will give him milk and take him a bath.

I have time for my work and our bonding together. Sometimes, we go to the beach and windmill. Just the two of us. I am the one who is taking care of my son to feel how much I love him.

I remember when we play close - open. I do sunshine every morning and roam around together.

My son would do anything to me. Sometimes he would let me carry him around until I became tired. He invites me to go somewhere.

My Dream for their Future. Participants had great value for education, as their only wish for their children is to finish schooling. For emerging adult single fathers, education is vital for their child's success and would prove their quality of life.

I wanted her to focus on her studies. But if she decides not to finish her education, she will just give me a valid reason.

Even though I only attain college level, my dream is to finish his education and still treat me the same way. I hope he will finish his education someday and live a good life.

My greatest dream for my daughter is she will not experience what I have gone through. She will also try to finish her education and find work to have a good life.

*My only dream is to finish his education and find a job to help himself.
He will finish his education and not follow me, who did not complete my education.*

He will finish her education to get everything she wants. I will send her to school the same way my parents did, who tried their best to give us everything.

The essence of the participants' lived experiences which surfaced from the five themes, is described as mixed emotions of bitterness and happiness. The emerging adult single fathers experienced a feeling of bitterness after the marital separation of their partners. As a result, they had to endure all the struggles for the sake of their children by doing motherly roles, child care, and finding the means of their living. After all the sacrifices made, they might wake up one day having their children taken away from them.

On the other hand, the sweetness of single fatherhood denoted the fourth and fifth themes. The participants achieved a certain feeling of relief when the empathic hands of their parents supported them. After enduring the pain and struggles of doing it alone, the single fathers experienced happiness. It became so sweet when they established an intimate bonding time with their children and underwent a transformation from their previous teenage life.

Furthermore, their experience illustrates a metamorphosis or a gradual shift from becoming a partially involved father to a more responsible and fully-involved father. Being left alone with the primary responsibility of their children, they needed to transform themselves since they were put in a situation they never anticipated. They learned day by day to meet appropriate nurturing activities for their children. These activities changed them into more empowered and responsible emerging adult single fathers. Significantly, their children were the primary source of this transformation, who motivated them to keep going despite the hardships and trials. More notably, their situation became meaningful when they unconsciously realized that they were simultaneously molding themselves to change for the better while taking good care of their children.

4. Discussions

Providing Care and Nurture. The direct experiences of participants described them as receptive and loving fathers. Nowadays, new fatherhood entails involvement with child care. Fathers perceived themselves as someone in charge of changing diapers, feeding, and engaging in stimulating activities (Cabrera & Hennigar, 2018). Moreover, the participants have children under two years of age, a physically and psychologically demanding stage of a child's development. To address the needs of their toddlers, participants observed appropriate child-care practices, such as food preparation and feeding, psychosocial stimulation, hygiene practices (Black et al., 2017), to prevent undernutrition and impaired development (Rakotomanana, 2021).

Rearing One's Child Properly. The participants employed various disciplinary styles to foster discipline. Emerging adult single fathers reprimand and explain gently when their children become unruly. This type of parenting described by single fathers parallels the authoritative style by Baumrind (1991), which characterizes warmth and nurturing towards the child. The participants explained clear standards for their children's conduct, and their disciplinary methods were supportive rather than punitive.

In addition to authoritative parenting, one participant utilized religious images to impose fear and guilt on his child. This disciplinary strategy is significant to develop child's

conscience, which helps them behave properly. Children may engage in actions that conform to their conscience and feel good about their accomplishments. Moreso, culturally speaking, most Filipinos are predominantly Catholics which may influence their discipline in one way or another.

Aside from attachment and authoritative parenting, three participants also employed permissive parenting. The participants displayed indulgent parenting and utilized gifts and material things to compensate for the absence of their mothers or may even use this to control their children. Similar to the present study, Coles (2015) confirmed that single custodial fathers employed permissive parenting with their children, which considers an overarching challenge for single fathers. Evidence shows that permissive parenting correlates with increased deviant behaviors during adolescence (Coles, 2015), children's susceptibility to delinquency, and substance use (Berge et al., 2016).

Dealing with Drawbacks in Single Fatherhood. Five participants struggled financially in parenting due to employment instability. The emerging adult single fathers were college undergraduates and, at the same time, encountered limited occupational opportunities. They described their experience as "difficult" without a stable source of income. According to the Center for Social Justice (2013), men who became fathers at an early age (23) are twice likely to be unemployed. In addition, since the biological mothers of the participants do not give them financial support, parenting for single fathers is profoundly challenging. Moreso, parenting in a rural community imposes a financial challenge due to limited job opportunities (World Employment and Social Outlook, 2016).

Aside from financial difficulties, five participants reported sleep disturbance due to attending child's needs since most of them have children under three. Most children experience difficulty regulating and consolidating sleep-wake patterns (El-Sheikh et al., 2015). Thus, navigating sleep for the participants may be the steepest challenge in their nurturing activities.

The insufficient and limited support from the government is another struggle experienced by the participants. The participants' lack of awareness and knowledge of government services may not receive this support. Coles (2009, as cited in Esbensen, 2014) supported the claim that single fathers lack awareness as barriers to accessing these services. Likewise, fathers' pride and the struggle for financial independence may suggest failing to use these privileges (Maupin et al., 2010). Stereotypically, single fathers tend to fare better than single mothers in terms of income (Grall, 2020). Furthermore, single fathers may feel that these government services are not relevant to their needs or satisfying (McArthur & Winkworth, 2017), and social workers may have negative views about the financial incompetence of single fathers, which manifests in a literature review conducted by Haworth (2019).

Another setback of single fatherhood is participants' experience of role strain and role conflict. The participants admitted difficulties embracing motherly roles since they might perceive themselves as feminine by incorporating motherly characteristics. Similar findings by Cable (2017) suggest that single fathers have to integrate male and female attributes into child care.

Lastly, three participants were apprehensive about the Family Code of the Philippines regarding child custody issues. The participants needed to surrender child custody to their mothers based on their statements. In this study, though without due process, the participants who took informal child custody are college-level, supported by Goldscheider et al. (2015) that fathers who have higher education assume child custody.

Receiving Relief from Empathic Hands. The participants were supported by their parents physically, financially, and psychologically. When the participants cannot provide

overall support to their children, grandparents are often the primary providers who act as surrogate parents to their grandchildren in practical, emotional, and financial aspects (Neale and Clayton, 2014). From a cultural perspective, Filipinos have solid and close family ties in which siblings and parents help them in parenting. According to Cross et al. (2018), when extended families have high levels of closeness, they provide a significant level of help and support in parenting.

Appreciating Blissful Moments of Solitary Parenting. Five participants felt bliss in solo parenting despite its difficulties and challenges. They described the experience as "a good feeling" when involved with child care. These positive emotions result from the physiological processes in their brain, as scientific evidence shows increased oxytocin and activation in empathy-related neural pathways when childrearing and caring (Abraham & Feldman, 2018). Besides oxytocin, testosterone levels decline notably when fathers actively provide child care (Grebe et al., 2019).

One single father experienced happiness as a model to her daughter. As a father, he desired to become a good model to ensure his daughter would demonstrate appropriate behavior despite his imperfections. This experience of becoming a role model may lead single fathers to experience greater happiness, subjective well-being, and psychological need satisfaction (Nelson-Coffey, 2019).

Two participants considered fatherhood a transformative process, a turning point from their "teenager life." The participants frequently possess delinquent behaviors such as smoking, skipping school for gang wars, and even engaging in multiple affairs with women. The entry into fatherhood gave them a new identity, making them change and recognize their priorities (Baldwin et al., 2018). Further, it encourages them to provide for their children's needs, build social capital, and even desist from crime (Florsheim and Ngu, 2006).

Fathers seemingly believed that spending sufficient time with their children is vital for developing an intimate bond (Brady et al., 2016). With this, participants allocated time with their children as this father-child bonding fosters an emotional tie between them, affecting the overall development of their children and positively impacting the mental health of single fathers.

In summary, the essence of the collective experience of the participants has portrayed a journey of a bittersweet metamorphosis. Before separation, these emerging adult single fathers raised their toddlers happily with their partners. They were so happy, contented, and dependent on their partners. Due to an unexpected life event, they were separated from their partners and assumed child custody of their children. After which, they carried the sorrow of their separation and the burden of sole responsibility for their children. Thus, they encountered various trials and challenges as single fathers, which depicted the themes and findings of this study. As a result, the emerging adult single fathers became actively involved with their children, faced various difficulties and struggled bravely, received social support from their parents, and experienced bliss with single fatherhood. From their bittersweet experiences, they transformed themselves into a new fatherhood identity: more empowered, loving, independent, caring, and embraced the burden and bliss of single parenting.

5. Conclusion

The experiences of the emerging adult single fathers provided insights that a transformation is possible to adjust to their current situation and, most significantly, to change for the sake of their children. To conclude, single fathers can truly nurture and raise their children with tenderness, warmth, care, and affection like single mothers and dual-household

families. Quantitative research may be conducted to support the qualitative findings that may serve as a basis for creating comprehensive intervention programs with the collaborative efforts of mental health professionals, policymakers, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development for promoting the quality of life of single fathers.

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