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Research Article

Psychological Perspectives of Single Mothers in Higher Education Institutions: Implications for Women's Self-Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the psychological perspectives of single mothers employed in higher education institutions and their implications for women's self-empowerment. Guided by Carol Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being, the research focused on five dimensions—self-acceptance, relationships with others, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth. Using descriptive research design, data were gathered from purposively selected 49 single mothers in Cabanatuan City through a validated 25-item questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Findings revealed that respondents strongly agreed on self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth, while they agreed on their relationships with others. The results highlight that single mothers exhibit resilience, autonomy, and a strong sense of purpose, though they remain guarded in forming deeper interpersonal relationships. These findings imply the need for holistic empowerment initiatives that reinforce strengths in self-acceptance, independence, and growth while addressing vulnerabilities in relational support. The study concludes that empowering single mothers requires both personal development opportunities and institutional policies that recognize their dual roles as educators and sole caregivers, thereby fostering their well-being and capacity to thrive.

Keywords: *Psychological Perspectives, Single Mothers, Women Empowerment*

Background

Single parent family provides a wide variety of perspectives of its own, such as in terms of social, economic and psychological. From the psychological side there are few studies that

not only demonstrate psychological problems experienced but also experience positive psychology. Children from life-or-death divorce families has its own psychological burden. However, the demands of life must go along

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with the change of life experienced (Agustin et al., 2018). The sooner an individual is able to accept those changes, the better the psychological aspects that happen to them. Furthermore, many studies show that single mothers are especially vulnerable to financial stress due to their usually lower incomes and the absence of a second family earner (Van Lancker et al., 2015). However, empirical studies have not been able to clearly establish the underlying causes, despite significant evidence suggesting low levels of psychological well-being among single mothers. By contrast with two-parent households, much of our awareness of the well-being of single mothers has been learned.

A number of studies have investigated the implications of single motherhood by choice for children in view of stressors and have found no negative effects on their psychological adjustment or on the relationship between mother and child (Golombok et al., 2016). However, the potential for single mother was not explored in any previous study that in this research focused.

Due to the foregoing research gaps and the authority of the researcher, this research determined the psychological perspectives of single mothers as basis for self-empowerment of women. The researcher had several years of teaching psychology among college students before this research emerged. In addition, the researcher is a single mother with three kids for over ten years, who felt being dumped, insecure, worthless and suffered obsessive-compulsive disorder yet, she stood up and gain self-confidence for her family. The hopes and strengths of the researcher make the broken pieces of her to regain the significance of being a mother to her children and sharing her skills and journey to the people around her.

Literature Review

Motherhood

Becoming a mother, alongside physical and mental pressures, is an incredibly necessary change in life, arousing feelings of fulfillment and reward (Giallo et al., 2015). In the transition to motherhood, various factors can cause stress, such as fatigue, hormonal imbalance, or loss of previous autonomy (Winson, 2017). For single mothers, who go through the cycles of

pregnancy and birth without the assistance of a life partner, the obstacles are likely to be greater. Moreover, they bear the responsibility of their expectations on their own until the infant is born (Layne, 2015).

Moreover, Raymo (2016) mentioned that in Japan, single mothers describe their children having unhealthy condition and needs improvement when it comes to academic performance. In this study, the researcher utilized regression analysis to provide extent of differences in terms of single mother reflection as to economic shortcoming, unhealthy lifestyle, life's difficulty including traumatic events. As Putnam (2015) reiterated that poverty rates among single-mothers including its difference in poverty amid single-mother and coupled households had what we called a single-mother poverty breach. Harkonen (2017) also mentioned that the combination of low education and single parenthood provided the outcome of too high poverty risks thus, educational differences is highly significant to address poverty gaps. As such, educational differences and intergenerational inequalities often lie among single mothers (Bernardi & Boertien, 2016). Meanwhile, the single mothers in United Kingdom became most common as mentioned by Dermott and Pomati (2016).

Psychological Perspectives

Alwi and Lourdunathan (2020) mentioned the challenges and well-being of single mothers in Malaysia as they experienced the feelings of insecurity, own struggle with self-acceptance including judgmental attitude of the society towards them. In China, Zhao and Lim (2020) stated that unwed single mothers also grief because of social humiliation including downgrading because of poverty. Hence, these experiences let them cope through religious strengths and strong internal attributes.

Moreover, Mohamad et al. (2020) illustrate the experiences of single mothers as life without meaning and having emotional instabilities. In contrast, Kline (2017) proved that single mothers had strong motivation and high ability to conquer difficulties. Single mothers had economic power and monetary controlling techniques.

Synthesis of Literature Review

Single mothers had fulfillment in life beyond challenges and difficulties they were experiencing. Several factors and challenges may cause them unending stressful events, but they did everything to cope. Some single mothers had the journey of pregnancy to childbirth having no husband and help from the community, however, they could manage to survive.

Likewise, single mothers from Philippines to several countries abroad experienced unhealthy condition of children including low academic performance. High poverty of single mothers tends to lead their children into delinquency and traumatic events.

Moreover, single mothers tend to have low to higher self-acceptance and very good relationships with others in order for them to cope to the challenges of life. They also had higher autonomy or self-sufficiency to let them attain their purpose in life with their children and achieve their personal growth.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on Carol Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being (1989), which emphasizes that genuine well-being is not only the absence of distress but also the presence of positive functioning and growth. According to Ryff, individuals experience well-being through six core dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. These dimensions provide a holistic view of how people adapt, thrive, and find meaning in the face of life's demand.

In this research, five of Ryff's dimensions were used as indicators of the single mothers' psychological perspectives: self-acceptance, relationship with others, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth. Each of these dimensions reflects important aspects of their lived experience. For instance, self-acceptance shows how single mothers come to terms with their personal histories and current situations, while relationships with others capture the value they place on building and maintain supportive connections in both personal and professional contexts. Autonomy highlights their ability to make decisions independently, particularly in navigating work responsibilities and

parenting without a partner. Purpose in life reveals how they define goals and direction despite challenges, and personal growth illustrates their resilience and openness to change as they pursue continuous development.

This study did not include environmental mastery on purpose. Environmental mastery denotes a person's capacity to control and mold their environment to fulfill personal requirements. This variable was omitted since the current study emphasizes internal psychological processes—such as acceptance, meaning, autonomy, and personal growth—rather than external situational control. Additionally, the previously validated survey instrument by experts included just the five specified aspects; incorporating environmental mastery would necessitate a redesign and revalidation of the tool. So, using five dimensions keeps the ideas clear while making sure the measurements are correct.

Conceptual Framework

The respondents' profile characteristics, including age, job position, monthly income, years of service, number of children, length of single parenthood, and educational attainment, are considered significant factors that may influence their psychological well-being. Consistent with Ryff's framework, these circumstances can shape the way individuals view and experience life. Ryff also emphasizes the different aspects of psychological well-being. Examining the connections among these indicators provides a more comprehensive understanding of how single mothers navigate their roles and responsibilities.

Grounded in this perspective, the present study regards single mothers not only as individuals confronted with challenges, but also as women who possess resilience, adaptability, and the capacity for empowerment. This framework serves as the basis for examining their profiles in relation to their psychological perspectives, and for proposing initiatives that support their self-empowerment.

Research Questions

This research determined the psychological perspectives of single mothers as basis for implications for women's self-empowerment.

Specifically, this research aimed to answer the following problems:

1. How may the psychological perspectives of the respondents be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 self-acceptance;
 - 1.2 relationship with others;
 - 1.3 autonomy;
 - 1.4 purpose in life; and
 - 1.5 personal growth?
2. What are the implications for women's self-empowerment based on the findings of the study?

Methods

The study employed descriptive research design. Descriptive study designs are useful for simply describing the desired characteristics of the sample that is being studied (Omair, 2016). A descriptive design is appropriate because the primary goal of the research is to describe the existing conditions of the respondents, specifically their psychological well-being.

Research Locale and Sampling Procedure

The study included all accessible single mothers employed in colleges and universities in Cabanatuan City who were willing to participate. Purposive convenience sampling was employed because the respondents had to fit a specific criterion (single mothers employed in HEIs), and convenience because they were chosen based on availability and willingness. A total of 49 single mothers willingly participated in this study.

Research Instruments

A 25-item instrument assessed self-acceptance, relationship with others, autonomy, purpose in life and personal growth of the respondents. The survey was content validated by three language experts. Their insights helped improve the questions. Additionally, pilot testing was done to confirm instrument reliability. This step involved calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients from a specified set of questionnaire respondents. The result of the pilot testing was acceptable, which was 0.92. Hence, the researcher proceeded with the data gathering.

Data Gathering Procedures

Permit to conduct the study was requested to the respondents and upon approval of the proposal it was submitted to the ethics review committee for approval of data gathering. Upon ethics review approval, the researcher asked the free time and consent of the respondents for the schedule of data gathering. The researcher gathered data using Google Forms.

Data Management and Analysis

Weighted mean and verbal interpretation were used to interpret the responses of the respondents as to their psychological perspectives.

The following verbal interpretation scale was applied:

Weighted Mean Range	Verbal Interpretation
3.50 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
2.50 – 3.49	Agree
1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

Results and Discussion

Psychological Perspectives of the Respondents

Table 1 According to Self-Acceptance

Self-Acceptance	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I like myself the way it is especially on succeeded on a task even though I am afraid that I would do well before.	3.64	Strongly agree
I am confident in doing things especially when giving my impression and expression.	3.58	Strongly agree

Self-Acceptance	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I take good care of my appearance to be able to live up to the expectation of others.	3.34	Strongly agree
I am capable of doing anything and gain my success because I am in the right place at the right time.	3.50	Strongly agree
I recognize my good qualities and capability of doing anything.	3.46	Strongly agree
I am optimistic when it comes to my personal being and doing things the best I can.	3.56	Strongly agree
I recognize my mistakes and improve it to the best I can.	3.68	Strongly agree
I distinguish my imperfections and make interventions especially in doing various projects.	3.54	Strongly agree
I diagnose my specific limitations and improve it especially on the event that I have not done my best anymore.	3.44	Strongly agree
I do not care about all the negative things about me as long as I am doing all the best I can do.	3.40	Strongly agree
Total weighted mean	3.51	Strongly agree

Findings denote that the total weighted mean of 3.51 with a verbal description of “Strongly Agree” among respondents provided with a better self-acceptance as to their psychological perspectives. As seen on the table, the response “I recognize my mistakes and improve it to the best I can” got the highest weighted mean of 3.68 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree”.

This result is followed by the response “I like myself the way it is especially when succeeded on a task even though I am afraid that I would not do well before” and verbally described as “Strongly Agree”. However, the lowest weighted mean was 3.34 still with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree” for the response “I take good care of my appearance to be able to live up to the expectation of others.”.

These findings verified that the respondents had better psychological perspectives in terms of self-acceptance. The respondents positively accepted their condition of being single mothers who started from themselves. They had the capacity to recognize their mistakes and use them to a more improved and positive way. They liked themselves most especially when they accomplish things.

In view of the foregoing results, Novita and Nafeesa (2019) stated that self-acceptance of a person portrays that he/she was always open to new experiences and can tolerate criti-

cism from others. In this study the single mothers had willingness to embrace new experiences and utilized their capabilities and became optimistic. In connection, Plexico et al. (2019) mentioned that individuals had self-acceptance if they recognize their abilities and embrace their own specific qualities and employ in a positive way. In this research, single mothers showed survival ability because they had acceptance of their condition in life. They accepted their situation in the sense of their state of mind that reflects their self-satisfaction, attributes and self-esteem. The findings were also related to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, who’s the single mothers claimed self-acceptance which foretell a positive trait and ability to deal with all of the nuances. There was also willingness to accept and comprehend themselves which was pointed out in the study of Daryani et al. (2016).

In relation to this study Bland and De-Robertis (2018) stated that as the results of healthy development, humanistic psychology emphasizes individualized qualities of optimal well-being and utilization of creative potential to benefit others, as well as the relational settings that promote those qualities. It provides a different option based on solitary, mechanistic and/or reductionistic psychological explanations aspects of visible behavior or mental processes that are static.

Moreover, Whitehead (2017) also stated that This worldview places a high importance on the full person in their environment, and its methods help to reconcile the

dualities of objective and subjective, individual and species, dispositional and situational, nature and nurture, art and s Science, science and spirituality, mind and body.

Table 3 According to Relationship with Others

Relationship with Others	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I usually discuss my problems and concerns to others to make me feel relaxed and happy.	2.90	Agree
I find it easy to depend on other people, especially during hard times.	2.66	Agree
I prefer to show others how I feel to make them understand the real me.	3.10	Agree
I am comfortable sharing my private details with another person.	2.26	Disagree
I do not worry that person related to me may abandon me as long as I am happy and contented with my life.	2.94	Agree
I am happy mingling with my friends because I feel secure.	3.22	Agree
I am happy when I am with my co-workers because I feel protected.	3.06	Agree
I enjoy the company of my friends because it makes me forget all the difficulties I am experiencing.	3.32	Strongly agree
I always depend to others, especially during difficult moments and problems.	2.38	Agree
Total weighted mean	2.87	Agree

Findings denote that the respondents approved the context of psychological perspectives as to the Relationship with Others with a total weighted mean of 2.87 and verbal interpretation of "Agree". Moreover, the respondents correspond to the statement "I enjoy the company of my friends because it makes me forget all the difficulties I am experiencing" with the highest weighted mean of 3.32 and verbally described as "Strongly Agree".

Likewise, the statement "I am happy mingling with my friends because I feel secure" as the second highest weighted mean of 3.22 "Agreed" by the respondents. Hence, the lowest weighted mean of 2.26 in which the respondents "Disagree" to the statement "I am comfortable sharing my private details with other person".

This was a crucial conclusion. This means that people who answered the survey are likely to be careful and guarded about sharing personal information. They like having friends and being among other people, yet they would rather keep their feelings to themselves. This guardedness is a major weakness that may

come from being injured in the past, being afraid of being judged, or the stress of being a single mother. This research offers the most compelling justification for advocating psychological help, including counseling, peer support groups, and community-building programs that foster trust and emotional transparency in secure settings.

In relation to the findings of this research Supratman (2018) verified on the Theory of Social Change which regards interpersonal relationships as trade transactions who's the single mothers evidently connected to others of wanting for something that was more in-depth relationships to fulfill their requirements of being in the said condition. According to Layne (2015), friendships were vital amid the ascendance of compassionate marriage. In addition, personality socializing with others predicts a psychological outcome of being warm and friendly being. The dynamics of the outcome proved that the respondents had better relationships with others.

In a study of Hymowitz and Kay (2014), single mothers attached with their friends and

tried to show to society that they were strong and that they can survive by themselves. Thus, this showed how kids could be affected because of their mother status. Moreover, Tus and Ramos (2020) pointed out that single mothers had further involvement in social activities and

had satisfaction with their friends. They need supporters, networks and male character representations for their children to play as father. Meanwhile, Craig and Kuykendall (2019) said that supportive friendships augment self-esteem including self-acceptance.

Table 4. According to Autonomy

Autonomy	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I allow others to influence my ideas about what is right or wrong to make me chose the best decision.	2.84	Agree
I learn to disagree with others and still like them because it makes me feel complete.	3.12	Agree
I have a definite plan for my life that is to be successful for my children.	3.82	Strongly Agree
I accept responsibility for my own mistakes to make others know that I am accountable of my action.	3.70	Strongly Agree
I believe that marriage should be for life so it is sacred to be nurtured.	3.46	Strongly Agree
I do things for my family alone because they are my responsibility and not the other people.	3.66	Strongly Agree
I decide for my families' concern alone because they are my responsibility and not the other people.	3.58	Strongly Agree
I make plans for my family for their future is assured to be successful.	3.72	Strongly Agree
I make decisions for myself alone because I am responsible for myself alone.	3.36	Strongly Agree
I do everything for my family because they are my responsibility.	3.64	Strongly Agree
Total weighted mean	3.49	Strongly Agree

Findings denote that the psychological perspectives according to autonomy among respondents had a total weighted mean of 3.49 with a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree". The statement "I have a definite plan for my life that is to be successful for my children" and "I make plans for my family for their future is assured to be successful" with a weighted mean of 3.82 and 3.72 and a verbal interpretation of "Strongly Agree" respectively.

The respondents wanted to have autonomy in their life. They provide plans for their life and children. The plans they provided ensured their success not only for themselves but surely for their children. Planning for the future of herself with her family predicts a better achievement not only among them but still the

chance of sharing the goodness with other people surely attainable.

Furthermore, providing definite plans for the family may create rapport among her family, friends and other people transcending this into the community. Harmonious relationships with people also produce opportunities for single mothers to have a happy family-community.

In a study of Burrow (2016), it pointed out that perception of gaining success predicts autonomy. In this regard, the respondents of this study evidently showed maternal autonomy for the success of themselves and their children, which was specified in relation to their children's success. In these results also proved the freedom, ability of the respondents to think, express and decide independently.

Alvarez (2017) mentioned that despite being one of the most conservative countries in the world, the Philippines is powerless to change the social construct that single mothers must adapt to. These viewpoints diminished the value of single mothers and altered their household's feeling of purpose and duty. The difficulties they faced were less well known, and they appear to be undervalued.

Furthermore, Srivastava (2017) stated in her study that raising a family on your own was too difficult. Single mothers were struggling to make ends meet that made their life much more complicated. Thus, they need more opportunities, however, there were several predicaments that single mothers may meet at the same time as raising their child on their own.

Table 5 According to Relationship with Others

Purpose in Life	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I believe in participating to religious activities to uplift my spiritual life.	3.74	Strongly Agree
I believe in giving affection to loved ones to make them feel happy.	3.66	Strongly Agree
I know that my life is useful in caring my family and friends.	3.74	Strongly Agree
I always find purpose in supporting others.	3.54	Strongly Agree
I set daily and short-term goals.	3.48	Strongly Agree
I always find time with my family.	3.72	Strongly Agree
I always share time with my friends.	3.04	Agree
I dedicate my life to my children.	3.92	Strongly Agree
I dedicate my life to my family.	3.94	Strongly Agree
I dedicate my life to my friends.	3.02	Agree
Total weighted mean	3.58	Strongly Agree

The findings reveal that the respondents "Strongly Agree" on the psychological perspectives of relationship in life statements with a total weighted mean of 3.58. The respondents "Strongly Agree" that "They dedicate their life to their children and family" with a weighted mean of 3.94 and 3.92 respectively.

The results imply that the respondents dedicate their lives to their family and children. These gestures evidently show the mother's love and affection to their immediate loved ones. These findings proved that mothers could do all things for their family, especially their children. The affection given by single mothers was greatly enormous to the highest level, which provided them with the courage to continue their journey even without their husband. Life must go on with their family and children.

According to Stephens (2017), professional and personal relationships with others who shared their same interests were a type of coping strategy which determined their derivation of life's meaning with their children and family.

Furthermore, the findings of this study were related to the findings of Elliott et al. (2015) who reiterated that mothers underlined the significance of sacrifice, self-reliance and protection among their children. Although single-parent families were not a new phenomenon, hence, several children today grew up having single-mother households than they did 5 decades ago as stated in the study of Williams (2016).

Without a partner and being the sole provider for their child provides a number of financial issues. As a single mother, she must prepare to deal with any financial situation. It was also vital to stick to a budget and save money in order to deal with the unexpected emergencies.

Children who witnessed their parents struggle were more likely than their nuclear family peers to experience mental health issues. Their lives could be shambles as a result of their emotional problems. In order to cope with these challenges, they may turn to drink,

drugs, or a life of crime. All three options help them divert their attention away from their issues at home, providing them with a false sense of security.

Table 6 According to Personal Growth

Personal Growth	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
I set realistic goals for what I want to change about myself.	3.64	Strongly Agree
I ask for help when I try to change myself.	2.76	Agree
I actively work to improve myself.	3.70	Strongly Agree
I figure out what I need to change about myself.	3.44	Strongly Agree
I look for opportunities to grow as a person.	3.82	Strongly Agree
I study a higher degree for my family.	3.08	Agree
I attend seminar for my personal growth.	3.16	Agree
I attend skills training for my personal growth.	3.26	Strongly Agree
I attend spiritual devotion for my personal growth.	3.44	Strongly Agree
I attend liturgical mass every Sunday.	3.18	Agree
Total weighted mean	3.35	Strongly Agree

The findings denote the psychological perspectives in personal growth with a total weighted mean of 3.35 and a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree” among respondents. The statement “I look for opportunities to grow as a person” and “I actively work to improve myself” with a weighted mean of 3.83 and 3.70 with a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree”.

These findings suggest that the respondents looked for prospects to develop themselves. They usually looked for prospects to grow as and improved themselves for their family. The notion of improving themselves proved that no one could take away from them the opportunities for progress and advancement in their own way. The chance of being alone with their children also proved that their lives could take them to a greater height of camaraderie and richness of positive emotions and reflections.

This positive motion of personal growth expects a single mother having the best future. In connection to these findings, Valiquette-Tessier et al. (2015) cited that personal growth was related to conceptualization of emancipation which defined improved skills and efficacy including expanded consciousness on the community. In this regard, the respondents of this research proved that they were open to change in their life that include trajectory to opportunities and growth as single mothers.

Providing the respondents, the opportunity to reflect on their own lives and construct their own life’s narratives and perspectives facilitated the advent of progressive outcomes (Plunkett, et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Fergusson et al. (2017) support and services were the keys in mediating the prevalence of difficulties encountered by single mothers. Alleviating barriers to success could improve the quality of life of single mothers. Maintaining and developing a system of support from the family and friends could provide cushions against stress of being single mother that could also brought them to a greater success in life. The deterrence of single parenthood was the key to helping the population of single-parent families to improve its lifestyle conditions. It was based on the belief that exposure to the single-parent dynamic was the cause of negative outcomes for parents and children from these homes and supports the idea that developing and implementing programs and services that aid in decreasing the number of single-parent families was the best method of reducing the challenges encountered by single mothers.

Implications for women’s self-empowerment based on the findings of the study

The findings of this study underscore the multidimensional psychological strengths and vulnerabilities of single mothers employed in

higher education institutions. Their high levels of self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, and personal growth reveal not only resilience but also an active striving toward empowerment, despite the social, economic, and emotional challenges inherent in single motherhood. This affirms Carol Ryff's Theory of Psychological Well-Being, where the presence of positive functioning—rather than the absence of distress—defines genuine well-being.

The implication of these findings is twofold. First, they emphasize that single mothers must not be viewed solely through a deficit lens, as women burdened by hardship, but rather as capable individuals demonstrating adaptability, self-determination, and the capacity to thrive. Their strong self-acceptance reflects a reorientation toward self-worth and optimism, serving as a foundation for empowerment interventions. Autonomy and purpose in life, meanwhile, highlight their ability to make decisions independently and set meaningful goals—traits that can be harnessed to design leadership development, financial literacy, and career advancement programs that further reinforce their independence and self-sufficiency.

Second, the findings reveal areas of vulnerability that must not be overlooked. Their relatively lower scores in "relationships with others" point to guardedness and difficulty in building deeper social connections. This suggests that while single mothers rely heavily on self-determination, they may lack robust support networks that could cushion them against stress and provide shared resources. Hence, empowerment programs must incorporate community-building and psychosocial support components to complement their individual strengths with collective resilience.

The broader implication for higher education institutions and society at large is the urgent need to create environments that not only acknowledge but actively support the dual roles of single mothers as educators and sole caregivers. Programs aimed at enhancing professional growth, providing emotional and social support, and advocating gender-sensitive policies must be holistic, addressing both psychological and structural needs. Such initiatives can transform resilience into empowerment, ensuring that single mothers are not merely

coping with circumstances but are flourishing in ways that positively influence their children, students, and communities.

In essence, the study emphasizes that the empowerment of single mothers is not only a personal achievement but also a social investment. By fostering their psychological well-being—through self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose, and personal growth—while addressing their relational vulnerabilities, institutions can contribute to building stronger families, more inclusive workplaces, and ultimately, more resilient societies.

Conclusions

Single mothers employed in higher education institutions generally exhibit positive psychological well-being, with strong capacities for self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose, and growth, showing resilience against life's challenges. Their commitment to family and children serves as both a motivational anchor and a protective factor against stress, but it also highlights the need for institutional and community support to reduce the burdens they face as sole providers. While their autonomy and self-acceptance are notable strengths, their relative limitations in forming deeper relationships with others suggest an area where psychological and social support systems can make a meaningful difference. From a psychological perspective, the findings affirm Carol Ryff's framework: single mothers thrive when they embrace self-acceptance, find meaning in purpose, cultivate autonomy, and pursue continuous growth. These elements are interdependent and essential to empowerment. The implications for women's self-empowerment are clear: programs must recognize single mothers as resilient individuals capable of growth and leadership, while addressing areas of vulnerability through counseling, mentoring, training, and policy support.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that higher education institutions and community stakeholders develop holistic empowerment programs that strengthen single mothers' psychological perspectives, particularly their self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, and

personal growth, through counseling, mentorship, and professional development opportunities while also addressing their relational vulnerabilities by fostering peer networks and psychosocial support systems. To translate these perspectives into practical empowerment, policies such as flexible work arrangements, scholarships, and family-centered interventions should be implemented, alongside training in leadership, financial literacy, and stress management, ensuring that single mothers are provided with both the personal and institutional support necessary to balance their roles as educators and sole caregivers while achieving self-empowerment.

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