

## Parenting Strategies of Widows and Single-Mothers of Ilocos Sur

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### Abstract

*This is a preliminary study to determine the level of parenting strategies of widows and single-mothers in Ilocos Sur.*

*Frequency count and means were used to describe the profile of respondents. ANOVA determined the differences; and Pearson Product Moment Correlation determined significant relationships among variables. A survey questionnaire was employed to gather data involving 218 respondents from nine (9) municipalities*

*Respondents were generally above middle-age widows who did not finish college, had less than four children, were plain housewives with monthly income of not more than p5,000, and owned their houses and lots. They had high level of parenting strategies, with widows performing their parental roles better than single-mothers. The personal variables of the respondents except for monthly income and ownership of land/lot were significantly related to the level of parenting strategies.*

*The following recommendations are advanced: offering of non-formal classes and/or distance learning programs for widows and single-mothers; offering of livelihood and technology-based projects by the UNP, through its extension program and the ILARRDEC; extension of welfare services by government and concerned private agencies; organization of small private sessions on responsible parenthood and family life as venues for self-expression and learning; support services for children of widows and single-mothers in educational institutions; more studies about widows, single-mothers and solo-parents including the masculine gender; and, studies on the effect of parenting strategies on children.*

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

In a letter to families all around the world, Pope John Paul II (1994) stressed,

*"... a person owes to the family every fact of his existence as an individual. When he has no family, the person coming into the world develops an anguished sense of pain and loss, one which will subsequently burden his whole life."*

This statement affirms the significance of the family as the basic unit of society. It implies the role of parents to provide a firm foundation of a child's personhood. The parents must be creative enough to set opportunities and situations for interaction so that the child knows how to live and survive in the real world.

Traditionally in Filipino homes, the burden of raising and disciplining the children falls almost exclusively on the mother. The father comes in only when the mother can no longer control the situation. It is the mother who cares for the children and looks after their problems on a day-to-day basis (Andres and Andres, 1992).

The above situation is typical of a two-parent family where both parents share the responsibilities of child rearing. Parenting becomes doubly difficult in the case of widows and single-mothers. The absence of the father requires the single-mother to be the sole provider of not only the basic needs of the children like food, shelter, clothing, education, recreation, etc. but also love, concern, self-confidence, trust and other values which are needed in the holistic development of the children.

The number of single-parent families has risen through the years. In the past, one-parent families were usually caused by the death of a spouse. Now, however, most one-parent families are the result of divorce, although some are created when unmarried mothers bear children. In 1991 more than one out of four children lived with only one parent, usually the mother (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

This work is a preliminary study on parenting strategies of widows and single-mothers of the province of Ilocos Sur. It unveiled information as to how these mothers provided the material, moral and spiritual needs of the children despite the absence of a father in the family.

Results of this study could be the basis of the government and other concerned agencies in the design and implementation of social welfare programs for

women. Furthermore, the University of Northern Philippines and other educational institutions in the province could make use of the data in their extension programs to teach out to such marginalized sector of society.

## Objectives

This study was conducted to determine the parenting strategies of widows and single-mothers in Ilocos Sur.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- I. What is the profile of the widows and single-mothers in the province in terms of the following demographic factors:
  - a. Age;
  - b. Number of children;
  - c. Educational attainment;
  - d. Occupation/employment;
  - e. Salary/income per month;
  - f. Residential ownership; and
  - g. Land/lot ownership?
2. What is the level of parenting strategies employed by widows and single-mothers in rearing their children in terms of:
  - a. Developing values in the children;
  - b. Directing children toward positive values;
  - c. Raising morally upright children;
  - d. Communicating with the children;
  - e. Developing independence in the children;
  - f. Giving family life education to children;
  - g. Developing leadership in the children; and
  - h. Developing responsibility in the children?
3. Are there significant differences in the level of parenting strategies between and among the widows and single-mothers?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of parenting strategies and the personal factors of widows and single mothers?

## Theoretical Framework

The following are relevant theories and concepts which may aid the reader in understanding further the intents of this work.

The family is a basic social group united through bonds of kinship or marriage. Its structure varies from society to society. The nuclear family which is traditional and the most common in the Philippines is composed of two adults and their children. Extended families include the nuclear family and some other close relatives. A third family unit is the single-parent family, in which children live with an unmarried, divorced, or widowed mother or father.

Anthropologists and social scientists have developed several theories on how family structures and functions evolved. In prehistoric hunting and gathering societies, two or three nuclear families, usually linked through bonds of kinship, banded together for part of the year but dispersed into separate nuclear units in those seasons when food was scarce. The family was an economic unit; men hunted, while women gathered and prepared food and tended children. Infanticide and expulsion of the infirm who could not work were common. The modern family differs from earlier traditional forms. However, its functions, composition, life cycle as well as the roles of husbands and wives remain.

Around the world, families take many forms and serve different functions. Common functions of the family are to provide emotional support for the members and to nurture children to adulthood. Due to pressure of industrialization and modernization, some functions were altered causing a paradigm shift in parental roles. **However**, the only function of the family that continues to survive change is the provision of affection and emotional support by and to all its members, particularly infants and young children.

By the 1970s, the prototypical nuclear family had yielded modified structures including the one-parent family, the stepfamily, and the childless family. One-parent families in the past were usually the result of the death of a spouse. Today, most one-parent families are the result of divorce, although some are created when unmarried women bear children. In 1991 more than one out of four children lived with only one parent, usually the mother. Since the 1960s, more unmarried couples are living together, before or instead of marrying (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

Widows and single-mothers are left by their men to carry out solely the burdens as well as the joys of parenthood. As they say, parents can teach their children in two ways: formally through meetings, counseling and coaching; informally through exchange of views after working hours, in relaxed conversations, making themselves accessible to their children (Andres and Andres.

1992). In the case of single-mothers and widows, their duty to teach the children rests in their hands alone.

The attitudes, values, and behaviors of parents toward their children clearly influence patterns of development. Likewise, children's characteristics influence parental attitudes and behaviors. Handicapped children, for example, require more attention and cause more parental anxiety than do normal children. It appears that one of the ways children acquire patterns of behavior is by imitating their parents. If this is so, then the single-mother would do all measures to compensate for the absence of the father.

Furthermore, extensive studies have established that parental behaviors toward children vary widely, ranging from restrictiveness to permissiveness, warmth to hostility, and anxious involvement to calm detachment. These variations in attitudes produce different patterns in family relationships. Parental hostility and permissiveness, for example, are associated with highly aggressive, noncompliant children. Warm, restrictive behavior by parents is associated with dependent, polite, and obedient children. Punishment techniques also influence behavior. For example, parents who often use physical punishment tend to have children who rank above average in their use of physical aggression. It appears, then, that one of the ways children acquire patterns of behavior is by imitating their parents. Therefore, if the father is out, who is there to imitate? This results to the dominance of the single-mother that would eventually foster long-term dependence of the children.

Family-service agencies, guidance clinics, and agencies that furnish protection to children are considered support services. These services attempt to sustain a child within a family that is undergoing stress because of illness, unemployment, divorce, or the presence of only one parent. The family services and child-guidance clinics work on parent-child relationship problems through individual and group counseling. The guidance clinics also give help to parents with emotionally disturbed children.

In other countries, there are social-civic programs and laws that provide distressed families with time-limited financial aid, as well as job training, job-seeking assistance, and work subsidies. It also provides long-term medical care and other social services to children who are in need because of a family crisis—such as divorce or the death, disability, or desertion of a parent—and includes a variety of programs aimed at deterring paternity and enforcing child-support payments by absent fathers.

In the last decades of the 20th century, adults reported high levels of satisfaction with their family relationships, but children sometimes received too little attention and too little of a wealthy nation's resources. There is evidence of anxiety, depression, and anger as some children are shuffled from place to place and from relationship to relationship, fought over in custody battles, and left on their

own while their parents work. The problems that some children experience at home are brought to school and affect the quality of education. Social work and psychological counseling are now necessary adjuncts to schools from the preschool level through college. Violence is a problem in the schools as well as on the streets, and this level of violence is peculiar to the United States among industrialized countries (Microsoft Encarta, 2003).

The families were similarly unstable, because of high death rates rather than divorce, and children were raised in as wide a variety of situations then as now. Marriages are more fragile, but some family relationships have strengthened over time. Mothers have assumed more responsibility for the economic as well as domestic care of their children. Some fathers are rearing their children. Grown men and women can often count on parental support, and grandparents step up to raise their grandchildren. Surveys show that the majority of adults are happy with the choices they have made and do not regret single-parenthood or nonmarital unions. Many children reared by single parents, grandparents, foster parents, or adoptive parents thrive; others suffer from a lack of adult attention and supervision, from the instability of their home lives, and from feelings of rejection.

Although there is concern about these social changes, few would want to return to the days when women were expected to stay in abusive marriages or fathers were routinely denied custody of their children. The majority of Americans accept new attitudes on sexual expression, birth control, abortion, divorce, and child custody, although many personally view homosexuality as immoral. have mixed feelings about abortion, and want to make divorce more difficult to obtain. Both liberals and conservatives agree there are hopeful and troubling aspects of the family at the end of the 20th century. The family is not dead, but it exhibits the plurality of interests, hopes, and troubles that the people face.

## **Methodology**

Research Design the descriptive research design was employed in the study with the use of a survey questionnaire in gathering the needed data for the investigation. This study focused on the level of parenting strategies which refer to the varied measures done by a parent to provide not only the material needs of the children but also their emotional, psychological, moral and spiritual needs. These strategies are also concerned with the promotion and protection of the values that will shape the character of the children.

Population and Sample there were 218 respondents from nine municipalities. Due to the sensitivity of the study, purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of sample respondents. Only those who were willing to give their testimony and opinion were interviewed. Widows refer to women whose husbands died and have not remarried. In this particular study, the widows have children and have been in this status for more than five years. Single-mothers refer to women who raised their children without a husband. The single-mothers in this study may have been separated from their husbands or may have not married the father of the child/children. The distribution of respondents is shown in Table I,

**Table 1. Distribution of respondents.**

<b>MUNICIPALITY</b>	<b>WIDOWS</b>	<b>SINGLE-MOTHERS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Cabugao	4	5	9
Magsingal	10	14	24
Vigan	18	2	20
Santa Maria	24	5	29
Candon	32	3	25
Tagudin	27	7	34
Burgos	22	4	26
Salcedo	18	4	22
San Emilio	17	2	19
Total	172	46	218

Data Gathering Instrument a survey questionnaire which consisted of two parts was used in gathering the needed data. Part one recorded the personal profile of the respondents, while the second part assessed the level of parenting strategies. The questionnaire was pre-tested for reliability to all widows and single-mothers in Barangay Suso, Santa Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Scoring on the degree of implementation was done in a 5-point scale as follows:

<b>Numerical Value</b>	<b>Descriptive Rating</b>
5	Very Much
4	Much
3	Moderate
2	Little
1	Very Little

Likewise, the ranges of scores used as **norms** for interpretation are as follows:

<b>Range of Scores</b>	<b>Descriptive Rating</b>
4.21– 5.00	Very Much
3.41– 4.20	Much
2.61– 3.40	Moderate
1.81– 2.60	Little
1.01– 1.80	Very Little

Gathering of data collectors (preferably COMFLA workers) were hired to gather data from each municipality. The researchers distributed the questionnaires and briefed the data collectors on the mechanics of gathering data prior to the survey and interview. All questionnaires were returned to the researchers within a month from the date of distribution.

Statistical Analysis the data gathered were statistically treated using the following techniques:

- a. Frequency Count and Percentages were used in describing the respondents' personal factors.
- b. Weighted Mean was utilized to determine the perceived level of parenting strategies.
- c. Analysis of Variance (**ANOVA**) was used to determine the difference in the level of parenting strategies among the two groups of respondents.
- d. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (**r**) was used to determine the significance of the relationship between the level of parenting strategies and the respondents' personal factors.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of the study are presented according to the order of the statement of the problem.

### **Personal Profile of Respondents**

The personal profile of the 218 respondents is presented in Table 2.

**Status.** Out of the 218 respondents, 172 (78.90%) are widows; while 46 (21.10%) are single-mothers. This implies that most of the one-parent families in the province were caused by the death of a spouse.



**Table 2. Personal profile of respondents,**

PERSONAL PROFILE	FREQUENCY (N = 218)	PERCENTAGE %
<b>Civil Status</b>		
Widow	172	78.90
Single-mother	46	21.10
<b>Age</b>		
21-30	14	6.42
31-40	18	<b>8.26</b>
41-50	36	16.51
51-60	54	34.77
61-70	58	26.61
71-80	30	13.76
81 & above	8	3.67
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Educational Attainment:</b>		
Elementary	103	47.25
High School	58	26.61
College	51	23.39
Beyond College	6	2.75
<b>Occupation/employment</b>		
farmer	8	3.67
laborer	9	4.13
babysitter	10	4.59
domestic helper	7	3.21
teacher	13	5.96
businesswoman	11	5.05
others( pensionnaire, clerk, hueteng collector,etc)	24	11.01
housekeeper	136	62.38
<b>No. of Children</b>		
1-2	61	27.98
3-4	68	31.19
5-6	50	22.94
7-8	27	12.38
9-10	8	3.67
11-12	2	0.92
13+	2	0.92

**Table 2 continued**

PERSONAL PROFILE	FREQUENCY (N = 218)	PERCENTAGE (%)
<b>Salary/Income/month</b>		
P 1000-5000	157	72.02
5001-10000	28	12.84
10001-15000	17	7.80
15001-20000	16	7.34
<b>Residential Ownership</b>		
Owned	189	86.70
Not	29	13.30
<b>Land/Lot Ownership</b>		
Owned	184	84.40
Not	34	15.60

**Age.** Fifty eight (58 or 26.61%) respondents were between the age range of 61-70; 54 (34.77%) respondents were 51-60 years old; 36 (16.51%) belonged to 41-50 years old; and 30 (13.76%) were 71-80 years old. Most of the respondents are above middle-age. This implies that the younger respondents were the single-mothers, who constitute only 21.10 percent of the total number of respondents.

**Educational attainment.** Most respondents were elementary graduates (103 or 47.25%). Fifty eight (58 or 26.61%) were high school graduates and 51 (23.39%) were college graduates. This reveals that only few finished a degree course and that the high-paying job opportunities for widows and single-mothers are limited.

**Number of children.** There were 68 (31.19%) who had 3-4 children; followed by 61 (27.98%) with 1-2 children and 50 (22.94%) with 5-6 children. This means that most one-parent families in the province are relatively small in composition.

**Occupation/employment.** Majority (136 or 62.38%) of the respondents were plain housekeepers; 13 (5.96%) were teachers; and 10 (4.59%) were babysitters. Only a few were farmers and laborers 24 (11.01%) were engaged in varied jobs which include clerks and "jueteng" collectors.

**Income per month.** Majority (157 or 72.02%) of the respondents earn 1,000-5,000 per month and only 16 (7.34%) earn more than 5,000 per month. Since most of them were elementary graduates, it is expected that they get low-paying jobs.

**Residential ownership.** In terms of whether they own their residence or not, 189 (86.70%) claimed to own their house; while 29 (13.30%) were staying with their relatives/ friends and/or renting their houses. This implies that the widows were able to inherit/retain the houses which they put up with their husbands.

**Lot/Land ownership.** Regarding land/lot ownership, 184 (84.40%) owned their lots and 34 (15.60%) respondents did not own their land. This implies that those who do not own their land are renting and/or staying with their relatives.

**Parenting Strategies**

The level parenting strategies employed by widows and single-mothers in rearing their children is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Summary on the levels of parenting strategies of widows and single-mothers.**

PARENTING STRATEGIES	NO. OF ITEMS	SINGLE-MOTHER		WIDOW		OVERALL	
		X	DR	X	DR	X	DR
Developing values	8	2.89	M	4.63	VH	3.76	H
Raising Morally Upright Children	10	2.76	M	4.67	VH	3.72	H
Directing Positive Values	12	2.66	M	4.55	VH	3.60	H
Communicating with Children	10	2.68	M	4.63	VH	3.66	H
Developing Independence	8	2.71	M	4.56	VH	3.63	H
Giving Family Life Education	15	2.71	M	4.56	VH	3.63	H
Developing Responsibility	12	2.74	M	4.69	VH	3.72	H
Developing Leadership	14	2.75	M	4.65	VH	3.70	H
As a whole		2.74	M	4.62	VH	3.68	H

Note:

Range	Descriptive Rating
4.21-5.0	Very High
3.41-4.20	High
2.61-3.40	Moderate
1.81-2.60	Low
1.0-1.8	Very Low

On the whole, among all aspects of parenting, the single-mothers gave the highest rating to values development ( $M = 2.89$ ) and the lowest ( $X = 2.66$ ) to directing toward positive values. The single-mothers are at **moderate** level ( $X = 2.74$ ) as regards parenting strategies. On the part of widows, a mean of 4.62 at **very high** level was obtained taking into consideration the different aspects of parenting. The ratings given are almost the same, the highest of which is 4.69 (**Very High**) for developing responsibility in the kids. Combining the ratings given by the two groups yields an overall mean Of 3.68 which is at high level. This implies that the respondents exert all their efforts in raising their children to be good, responsible and productive individuals. They have high expectations for their children to develop the necessary values so that they will live a better life.

### Parenting Strategies Between and Among the Widows and Single-Mothers

**Table 4. Differences in the level parenting strategies between and among the widows and single-mothers**

PARENTING STRATEGIES	WIDOWS		SINGLE-MOTHERS		VALUE OF t	TABULAR VALUE	ITER. PRETATION
	5	SD	5	SD			
A. Developing values in the children	4.64	.23	2.89	.11	19.33	1.761	Significant
B. Directing children towards values	4.67	.1	2.76	.09	51.76	1.717	Significant
C. Raising morally upright children	4.55	.15	2.66	.13	30.00	1.734	Significant
D. Communicating with the children	4.63	.08	2.68	.17	18.84	1.734	Significant
E. Developing independence in the children	4.56	.2	2.71	.09	23.87	1.761	Significant
F. Giving family life education to children	4.56	.19	2.71	.11	32.46	1.701	Significant
G. Developing leadership in the children	4.69	.1	2.74	.14	69.64	1.717	Significant
H. Developing responsibility in the children	4.65	.08	2.75	.1	55.56	1.706	Significant

Table 4 shows the differences in the level of parenting strategies between and among widows and single-mothers. All computed *t*-values reached significance at 0.05 probability level. This means that there is a significant difference in the levels of parenting strategies between the two groups of respondents. As revealed in the table, the computed means (*X*) of the parenting strategies of the widows are much higher than that of the single-mothers. This implies that widows are more involved in the rearing of the children since most of them stay with their children. The single-mothers usually pass the responsibility of caring for the children to the grandparents and other relatives. Thus, it is very difficult for them to monitor the value formation and development of their children.

The relationship between the level of parenting strategies and the demographic factors of the respondents is presented in Table 5.

The age of the respondents is significantly related to their ability to develop values, to raise morally upright children and to develop responsibility in the children. The coefficients of correlation (6.34, 10.28, and 11.50, respectively) reached the 0.05 probability level. This implies that the older the respondents, the better they perform their parental roles.

The civil status of the respondents when correlated with parenting strategies yielded correlation coefficients 7.81 for raising morally upright children; 8.23 for communicating with children; 9.56 for developing independence in children; and 6.05 for giving family life education to children. All these values reached significance at 0.05 level. This implies that being a widow or single-parent influences the performance of the role as parent particularly in the aforementioned strategies.

Number of children when correlated with the parenting strategies yielded the values 12.8 for giving family life education to children; 13.05 for developing leadership and 14.15 for developing responsibility; all of which exceeded the required *r*. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between number of children and the said parenting strategies. This implies that the number of children influences the performance of parental roles.

Educational attainment is not significantly related with developing values and directing children toward positive values. The computed *r* of 4.12 and 5.05, respectively, failed to reach significance. The correlation coefficients between educational attainment and the other six parenting strategies reached significance at 0.05 level. This implies the higher the educational attainment, the better will be the level of parenting strategies.

Occupation of the respondents is significantly related to all the parental strategies. This means that the kind of employment a mother engages in influences the performance of her role as parent. If the mother is busy with her work, she usually neglects her children.

However, salary is not related to parenting strategies. None of the values reached significance. This means that parenting does not require a lot of money because the love, care, attention, time given to the children cannot be bought.

Residential ownership is significantly related with developing values, raising morally upright children, communicating with children, and the giving of family life education for the children with the computed coefficients exceeding the required  $r$ . Thus, owning a house uplifts the social and economic condition of the one-parent families and also boosts the morale of the single-parent.

Land/lot ownership is not related to any of the parenting strategies. This implies that owning a piece of land or lot does not influence parental roles.

**Table 5. Relationship between the level of parenting strategies and personal factors.**

PERSONAL FACTORS	DEVELOPING VALUES IN THE CHILDREN	DIRECTING VALUES IN THE CHILDREN	RAISING MORALLY UPRIGHT CHILDREN	COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN	ONLINE COMMUNICATION	GIVING FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION TO CHILDREN	DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP IN THE CHILDREN	DEVELOPING RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHILDREN
Age	6.34*	5.28	10.28*		0.68			
Civil Status	4.05	3.94	7.81*		0.97			
No. of children	5.82	6.78	4.39		1.08			
Educational Attainment	4.12	5.08		1.50*	8.00		1.85*	8.05*
Occupation /employment	8.09*	8.8	11.65		8.84*	7.0.8		
Salary/month	3.85	11.28	1.22			1.48	0.20	0.24
Residential ownership	5.64*	11.05		2.12				
Land/lot ownership	3.15	11.18	1.42			11.00	1.12	9.48

\* Significant at .05 level

## Conclusions

Solo parents are middle-age widows who did not finish a college degree, have less than four children, are plain housewives with a monthly income of not more than P5.000 and own their houses and lots.

Solo parents have high level of parenting strategies. This is due to the fact that they are the sole providers of all the children's needs and that they wish to fill the vacuum left by the father.

Widows perform their parental roles better than single-mothers because these widows tend to stay with their children while the single-mothers leave their children to the grandparents or relatives.

Personal variables except for monthly salary and land/lot ownership are significantly related to parenting strategies. The performance of parental roles depends much on the personal circumstances of the widow or single-mother.

## Recommendations

Non-formal classes and or distance learning programs should be offered to single-mothers and widows in order that they will be able to finish a degree or at least acquire some knowledge and skills necessary for employment. The University of Northern Philippines through its extension program and the Ilocos Region Agriculture Resources Research and Development Consortium provide seminars and training courses on livelihood programs and technology-based programs.

Welfare services of the government and concerned private agencies should also be extended to one-parent families. The absence of a breadwinner demands so much effort on the part of a mother.

Small private sessions on responsible parenthood and family life for widows and single-mothers should be organized. These will serve as venues for solo parent women to share their experiences and learn from each other to abate feelings of insecurity.

Educational institutions should come up with support services for children of single-parents. These programs will widen and/or open more opportunities for these children who may otherwise stop schooling due to the loss or absence of a father.



More studies should be conducted about widows and single-mothers who are members of a marginalized group within a marginalized sector of society and other future studies to include the masculine gender as solo-parent. Moreover, studies on the effect of the levels of parenting on children should be conducted..

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