

# Challenges and Coping Strategies by Unwed Mothers Pursuing Academic Program: A Qualitative Study

Ailyn A. Padawan, Elma Fe E. Gupit

Master of Science in Criminal Justice, Misamis University, Ozamiz City, Philippines

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.905000223>

Received: 02 May 2025; Accepted: 13 May 2025; Published: 07 June 2025

## ABSTRACT

Unwed mothers pursuing academic programs embody strength and determination, proving that with resilience and adaptability, they can rise above challenges and succeed in their academic journey. The study was conducted at a higher education institution in Lanao del Norte using purposive sampling, involving nine unwed mother participants. Data triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of their classmates and instructors, bringing the total number of participants to 20, and data collection continued until saturation was reached. It explored the challenges and coping strategies of unwed mothers through an interview guide and Yin's six-stage case study analysis. The findings revealed that unwed mothers in higher education face the heavy burden of balancing academic demands with parenting, often while struggling with financial and resource limitations. However, despite these challenges, they rely on strong support system from family, friends, faculty, peer groups, and institutional resources and view education as a vital path to empowerment and a better future for their families. The findings highlight the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive academic environment for these students. Additionally, this study recommends providing financial aid, flexible schedules, counseling, and on-campus childcare to support unwed mothers in completing their education and improving their lives.

**Keywords:** Academic, case study, empowerment, financial, motherhood, responsibility

## INTRODUCTION

Unwed motherhood is a growing global phenomenon, with the number of single-parent households increasing across different regions. Recent statistics reveal that approximately 13% of women, whether married or unmarried, have children under 15 years old worldwide (Crabtree, 2020). However, the rate of single mothers varies significantly by region, with Sub-Saharan Africa at 32%, Latin America at 24%, and the global average at 18% (Bhatt, 2020). Notably, the total number of single mothers worldwide exceeds 101.3 million, indicating a broad societal impact. The challenges faced by these women are often compounded by economic instability and societal stigma, which further limit their opportunities for personal and professional growth (Andre, 2021). These barriers become particularly acute in higher education, where unwed mothers often find themselves balancing the demands of parenthood with academic responsibilities.

In the Philippines, the rate of unwed mothers is notably higher than in other parts of Asia, with approximately 57% of births recorded to unwed mothers in 2020 (Mair, 2025). The region of Northern Mindanao has the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country, further contributing to the rising number of unwed mothers (Omega, 2025; Sicam et al., 2021; Aves, 2020). This trend is not isolated to the Philippines alone but reflects broader societal challenges, especially in regions where cultural expectations and economic constraints make it harder for single mothers to thrive (Lim, 2023). Rising teenage pregnancies, coupled with limited access to support systems, exacerbate the difficulties faced by unwed mothers, making the need for societal and institutional support more urgent than ever (Thompson, & Smith, 2023; Watt, 2021; Webber & Dismore, 2020).

Despite these challenges, many unwed mothers persist in their pursuit of higher education. Studies show that unwed mothers are often less likely to attend university compared to their peers, with only 28% graduating

within six years (Vyskocil, 2024). Financial instability and the demands of parenting are major factors contributing to this low graduation rate. Many of these women struggle to afford educational expenses, with 81% reporting an expected family contribution of \$0, signaling a lack of financial support for their educational pursuits (Vyskocil, 2024; Rasco, 2021). However, despite these barriers, unwed mothers are increasingly choosing to continue their education, particularly in specialized fields like criminology, where they face unique academic and personal challenges.

Criminology programs, in particular, present distinct academic and personal hurdles for unwed mothers (Stephens, 2021; Dasig 2020; Corresponding, 2024). Balancing coursework with childcare responsibilities creates immense stress, as many students are forced to prioritize one responsibility over the other. This is exacerbated by the lack of institutional support, such as on-campus childcare, which makes it difficult for unwed mothers to fully engage in their studies (Wekullo & Nuzulul Isna, 2020). As a result, unwed mothers often face role strain, which negatively impacts both their academic performance and overall well-being. These students frequently experience feelings of isolation and struggle to find a sense of belonging in their academic communities, which can further hinder their success (Vyskocil, 2024).

The challenges faced by unwed mothers pursuing criminology degrees underscore the need for targeted institutional support. To help these students succeed, it is essential for academic institutions to provide flexible schedules, on-campus childcare facilities, and mental health services. These support structures are not only crucial for academic success but also for the well-being of unwed mothers. Research has shown that when institutions offer such resources, students are better able to manage their dual roles as parents and scholars, leading to improved academic outcomes and a greater sense of community (Johnson, 2022). By creating a more inclusive environment, institutions can empower unwed mothers to excel in their studies and improve their quality of life.

Moreover, the stressors associated with balancing academic responsibilities and parenting duties are profound, often leading to mental health challenges. Unwed mothers report higher levels of anxiety and depression as a result of these competing demands (Johnson, 2022; Gibson et al., 2020). As these students manage the complexities of their dual roles, their academic performance and mental health are deeply intertwined. The study emphasized the importance of institutional support in addressing these stressors and providing unwed mothers with the resources they need to succeed academically and personally.

## METHODS

This study used a qualitative case study design to explore the academic challenges faced by unwed mothers enrolled in a criminology program. The Criminology program is the focus of this study because it presents unique challenges for unwed mothers, including physical training, strict discipline, and fieldwork. These demands, combined with social stigma and moral expectations tied to the profession make it especially difficult for them to balance academic and parental responsibilities.

The benefits of this approach for understanding the complex constraints facing these women, especially while simultaneously parenting, were that it was able to capture the nuances of the challenge. This provides a great chance to explicate the intricacies and many dimensions of the lives of unwed mothers in academia.

This study was conducted in one of the accredited institutions of Lanao del Norte, Philippines, wherein has been a force in the education landscape of the area. They were known for their commitment to top-notch instruction in many topics, which has the same effect on both the development and achievement of the students. Being located inside the municipality is advantageous and therefore allows it to engage with the local community and empower the students, which then presents as an opportunity for lifelong learning. This is an appropriate context for studying research because it represents the institution's willingness to nurture well-rounded people who can offer so much to society.

The participants of this study were unwed mothers, criminology instructors, and classmates of unwed mothers. It uses purposive sampling to identify the potential participants. The unwed mothers' participants were chosen based on the inclusion criteria: 1) Enrolled in a criminology program; 2) Unwed mother; 3) with 1 to 3

children ages 1 to 4; 4) with no support from the father of the child; 5) willingness to participate in the study. The Criminology instructors' participants were chosen based on the inclusion criteria: 1) Criminology instructors of unwed mothers; 2) must have 2 years of teaching experience in the Criminology Program; 3) willingness to participate in the study. The classmates' participants were chosen based on the inclusion criteria: 1) Classmates of the unwed mothers; 2) Must be enrolled in the same institution or program as the unwed mothers; 3) Must have been 2 years together with the unwed mothers; 2) willingness to participate in the study.

The researcher gathered data from participants using a triangulation interview guide, with questions translated into the participants' vernacular for better understanding. The interview included an introduction, opening, core, and closing questions, with open-ended prompts to encourage detailed responses. Throughout the process, the researcher prioritized participants' consent and voluntary involvement, ensuring they were aware of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized, assuring participants that their identities would remain protected.

The researcher created a quiet, distraction-free environment for the interviews, reading each question aloud to ensure clarity. Participants were made fully aware of their right to decline participation if they felt uncomfortable or threatened. To address any uncertainties, the researcher encouraged participants to ask questions and provided clear explanations about the study's nature.

In compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, the researcher ensured the confidentiality and security of all personal data, safeguarding participants' privacy throughout the research process. Participants' anonymity was maintained, and all data collected was kept strictly confidential.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Twenty participants were purposively selected: unwed mothers enrolled in the Criminology program, with no support from the father, coded as P1, P2, and P3. Their classmates, also enrolled in the program, were coded as C1, C2, and C3, while their instructors with two years of teaching experience were coded as I1, I2, and I3. A researcher-made interview guide was used for in-depth interviews to explore the struggles and coping strategies of the unwed mothers.

### Balancing Motherhood and Academic Responsibilities

Balancing Motherhood and Academic Responsibilities is the dynamic process by which student-mothers strategically navigate the dual demands of parenting and academic obligations, employing time-management tactics, role prioritization, and external resources to mitigate stress and sustain academic engagement (Olson, 2020; Gault et al., 2020; Fiorella, 2020)

*Participant 2 shared that balancing academics and motherhood is challenging, but she is motivated to create a better future for her child. This highlights the struggle of managing both school and parenting while also reflecting the drive to pursue education. Participant 3 echoed this, saying that being an unwed mother was difficult, especially when pregnancy forced her to pause her studies. She later realized that finishing her education wasn't about money. These responses illustrate both the initial struggles and the resilience of student-mothers to continue their education.*

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"One of the most significant hurdles is balancing my time between caring for my child and attending classes. Often, I have to leave my child with my mother before heading to school, which sometimes results in tardiness." (P2)*

*"Being an unwed mother has been a significant challenge—when I became pregnant, I had to stop studying for a while. But I realized that this should not be a barrier to finishing my education." (P3)*

The participants revealed that balancing academics and parenting often led to delayed submissions and burnout. Flexible academic policies—such as adjusted deadlines, exam schedules, and remote learning—can

help ease this pressure (Hodge & O'Reilly, 2021). These accommodations enable unwed mothers to meet academic demands while caring for their children.

Time management was another major challenge. Participants used strategies like time-blocking to allocate hours for both study and childcare. Participant 1 shared that this approach helped her stay productive without neglecting either role, though parenting still left little time for extra academic tasks. This is the shared statement of the participants:

*"I use time-blocking to dedicate specific time slots for studying and childcare, ensuring a productive day without neglecting either role." (P1)*

This statement was also corroborated by the instructor of the unwed mother. Instructor 2 mentioned that she completes homework at school, just to meet deadlines, as she has too little time to do it at home. While these strategies were undertaken, sometimes time constraints had to be sacrificed.

This is the shared statement of the participants:

*"Sometimes, she completes homework at school just to meet deadlines, as she has no time to do it at home." (I2)*

To ease the burden on student-mothers, access to affordable and convenient childcare near or on campus is essential. Studies show that such services boost student-parent retention and graduation rates (Williams & Gritz, 2023).

Participants also described the emotional and physical toll of managing both roles. Participant 1 expressed feeling stressed and burned out while caring for her one-year-old and meeting academic demands. Participant 2 shared that childcare often took priority, leaving little time for exam preparation.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"Balancing these academic demands with the needs of my one-year-old child can be overwhelming, leading to stress, anxiety, and burnout." (P1)*

*"Often, I have to leave my child with my mother before heading to school, which sometimes results in tardiness. I struggle to thoroughly review my studies before exams because I prioritize my child's needs above all else." (P2)*

This statement was supported by her classmate, that the lack of sleep and physical exhaustion were recurring, as shared by classmate 2, who frequently feels exhausted due to a lack of sleep, especially when her child is ill.

This is the shared statement of the participants:

*"Managing her time between school and childcare is a constant challenge. She frequently feels exhausted due to lack of sleep, especially when her child is ill." (C2)*

Meeting deadlines was another difficulty, as shared by classmates. One noted that unwed mothers often study late at night while their children sleep, sacrificing rest to fulfill academic duties. The pressure to submit work on time added to their daily stress.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"They often struggle to submit activities and assignments on time." (C2)*

*"She often studies late at night when her child is asleep." (C2)*

This study implies the urgent need for higher education institutions to develop targeted support systems for unwed mothers pursuing academic degrees, particularly in demanding fields like criminology. The findings

suggest that without flexible academic arrangements, accessible childcare, mental health services, and peer support networks, these students are at risk of academic failure or dropping out. Therefore, institutions must adopt inclusive and empathetic policies that recognize the dual responsibilities these students carry. Doing so not only fosters academic success but also promotes equity and empowerment for marginalized student populations.

### Facing Financial and Resource Constraints

Financial and resource constraints, such as limited income, high childcare costs, and inadequate institutional support, pose significant barriers to the academic success and well-being of student-mothers, particularly those in criminology programs (Kalil & Ryan, 2024; Glenn et al., 2021; Andrei, 2021).

Financial hardship emerged as a consistent theme among participants, many of whom relied on part-time jobs to survive. Participant 2 shared that she sold seafood and other goods to support herself and her child.

*“Financially, the situation is even more daunting. Without a steady income, attending school becomes a luxury I can barely afford. To make ends meet, I juggle part-time jobs like selling seafood and other items.” (P2)*

Classmate 3 affirmed this, noting similar income-generating efforts:

*“One of the most significant challenges my friend faces is her financial struggles. Due to limited finances, she must find a job during her free time or sell items like crabs or fish to support herself.” (C3)*

Unwed mothers in higher education face intense financial stress, making access to scholarships, emergency funds, and parent-specific financial aid critical for their academic success (Hodge & O'Reilly, 2021; Johnson & Martin, 2021).

Financial problems for unwed mothers often go beyond basic needs, limiting access to essential academic resources. Participant 2 shared:

*“I sometimes have to walk to school due to lack of funds. I also collect shells from the beach and do shoe repairs to earn extra money” (P2).*

This statement was corroborated by her instructor 3, who stated that sometimes she goes to school using charity:

*“Sometimes, she asks car owners if she can ride for free to go to school, allowing her to conserve funds for the next day” (I3).*

Targeted financial education and coaching under the Financial Success Program (FSP) reduced financial strain and improved health, highlighting the need for tailored support to help students focus on academics and well-being (White et al., 2022). Financial instability also causes irregular attendance among student-mothers due to limited resources. Instructor 2 shared that a student-mother is sometimes late because of childcare challenges:

*“Sometimes, they are late to class due to financial constraints and the need to find childcare” (I2).*

Classmate 2 of the unwed mother added that affording program-related tasks like printing or editing assignments is another major obstacle.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*“I assist her with assignments, especially those requiring printing or computer editing, since she lacks the resources to complete these tasks” (C2)*

This type of burden on unwed mothers seeking to study can be both beyond the initial issue of earning money and psychologically stressful, including emotional stress, anxiety, and burnout (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023;



Gibson et al., 2020). When asked how she manages to do this, the classmate 2 shared that her classmate, who was the unwed mother, works long hours just to make ends meet, and therefore, she cannot dedicate this much time either to her child or her studies.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*“Financial struggles force her to work, reducing the time she can spend with her child and on schoolwork” (C2)*

This was echoed by Instructor 3, who reported that this leads to burnout as you weigh the emotional side to keep everything with.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*“I sometimes help her by paying for her tricycle fare and offering advice during times of stress, anxiety, and burnout” (I3).*

The study suggests that institutions should provide targeted financial assistance, such as scholarships, grants, and emergency funds, to alleviate the financial strain on unwed mothers in criminology programs. Additionally, partnerships with local businesses for flexible job opportunities and the availability of on-campus childcare services would support their academic success. Furthermore, strong social support networks, including emotional and practical assistance, are essential to reducing stress and burnout, helping these students balance their academic and personal responsibilities.

### **Managing Time and Academic Responsibilities**

Managing Time and Academic Responsibilities is the deliberate allocation of limited time and energy between competing academic and familial tasks, requiring structured planning, adaptive scheduling, and institutional flexibility to ensure academic success without compromising caregiving duties (Gault et al., 2020; Johnson & Martin, 2021; Webber & Dismore, 2020).

Time management is a significant challenge for unwed mothers in criminology programs. Participants highlighted the importance of balancing school and childcare. Participant 1 uses time blocking, daily schedules, and prioritization to manage both roles, setting realistic goals to stay on track. Participant 3 studies during school hours and spends time with her child at night and on weekends. Despite the demands, they remain committed to succeeding as both students and parents by developing strong time management skills.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*“To manage both my academic responsibilities and parenting duties effectively, I prioritize tasks, create a structured daily schedule, and set realistic goals.” (P1)*

*“I use my weekdays to focus on school, while my nights and weekends are dedicated to bonding with my child.” (P3)*

*“I use time-blocking to dedicate specific time slots for studying and childcare.” (P1)*

These statements were supported by her classmate 2, who noticed that unwed mothers take practical approaches such as careful planning and task prioritization.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*“Unwed mothers adopt effective time management strategies. This involves setting a schedule, prioritizing tasks, and planning everything meticulously.” (C2)*

This implies that unwed mothers pursuing a Criminology degree face significant challenges in balancing academic responsibilities with parenting duties. To alleviate these challenges, higher education institutions

must implement flexible academic structures, such as online courses, extended deadlines, and workshops on time management. Additionally, training faculty to recognize the unique struggles of student-mothers can create a more supportive and compassionate learning environment. These measures can reduce stress, improve retention, and help student-mothers succeed academically, ultimately enhancing their long-term empowerment and social mobility.

### **Relying on Support Systems**

Relying on Support Systems is the critical dependence on formal (institutional programs, faculty support) and informal (family, peers) networks to provide emotional resilience, practical assistance, and academic guidance, enabling student-mothers to thrive in higher education despite systemic challenges (Kalil & Ryan, 2020; Jackson et al., 2023).

Participant 2 mentioned that her parents assist with childcare, friends offer academic help, and instructors are understanding when she's late. This support helps her balance academic responsibilities. Participant 1 emphasized how her classmates, emotional support from counseling services, and guidance from her school's counselor helped her develop key skills for success.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"My parents are always available to help with childcare, my friends offer academic support, and my instructors are understanding when I'm late occasionally" (P2)*

*"With the support of my classmates, emotional support from counseling services, and guidance from my school's counselor, I have developed essential skills" (P1)*

Additionally, classmates play a vital role in both emotional and academic support. Participant 3 shared how her classmates help her catch up when she misses class and provide guidance during stressful times. Participant 2 highlighted the importance of support from her family, classmates, and institution throughout her educational journey. These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"My classmates help me catch up when I miss class or arrive late, and they offer advice when I feel stressed, anxious, or burned out" (P3)*

*"The support from my family, classmates, and institution is indispensable" (P2)*

Support still comes from family. Participant 3 stated that her family attends to her child when she attends classes and that she is Grateful to her parents' support in her studies. These statements show that family support bridges the gap between parents' responsibilities and students' ability to meet academic requirements to succeed.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*"My family takes care of my child while I attend classes" (P3)*

*"Thankfully, my parents now support me so I can continue my studies" (P3)*

Unwed mothers are enabled to achieve balance in both parenting and education through family involvement. As remarked by Lopez and Garcia (2020), family support can serve as a safety net against the emotional and financial challenges commonly associated with parenthood and obtaining a degree. The feature enables student-mothers to juggle both roles without disrupting the successful pursuit of their education.

Institutional support played a crucial role in Participant 2's educational journey. She expressed gratitude for the institution's free tuition, which relieved her from financial stress and enabled her to continue her studies.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*"I am thankful for institutions offering free tuition, which has enabled me to pursue my education" (P2).*

This statement was corroborated by Instructor 1, who shared that the institutional support is complemented by the emotional encouragement that the unwed mother receives from her classmates, family, and broader community, reinforcing her motivation and resilience.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*"For emotional support, she relies on us and her family, who encourage her to keep going" (I1)*

This implies that institutional support, such as free tuition, is essential for unwed mothers to continue their education without financial strain. Policies like scholarships and workplace flexibility, along with strong support networks, are key to their academic success. Emotional, academic, and financial support systems help them stay motivated, overcome challenges, and persist in their studies, ultimately improving their futures and well-being.

### **Being Empowered for a Better Future**

Being Empowered for a Better Future is the transformative process through which student-mothers leverage education to cultivate agency, economic stability, and intergenerational mobility, positioning academic achievement as a catalyst for personal and familial advancement (Jackson et al., 2023; Clark & Francis, 2022 ).

Education, particularly criminology, has empowered Participant 2 to become a strong and independent woman. Participant 3 also shared that academic engagement fuels her determination to keep going and not give up.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"Studying criminology has empowered me to become a strong, independent woman" (P2)*

*"Criminology has given me the inspiration to keep moving forward and never give up" (P3)*

*"Criminology has taught me to be strong, disciplined, resilient, and wise in decision-making." (P3).*

These statements have been supported by the classmate 3, who echoed the same by saying that criminology makes her strong and independent by keeping her going.

This is the shared statement of the participant:

*"Studying criminology empowers them through perseverance, helping them become strong, independent women with critical thinking and decision-making skills". (C3).*

The participants connected their academic goals to their responsibilities as mothers. Participant 3 hopes to give her child a better future, while Participant 2 reminds her child that her efforts are for their future. Participant 1 echoed this, saying her dedication is for her son. Education serves as a means to break cycles of hardship and provide a better future for their children.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"I chose to pursue criminology despite the challenges because it has always been my dream to become a police officer." (P2)*

*"I want to secure a better future for my child." (P3)*

*"I continually remind my child that I am doing this for their future." (P2)*

*"My son motivates me to stay dedicated and work towards a better future." (P1)*



The desire to challenge stigma and prove societal perceptions wrong was a common theme. Participant 3 expressed that criminology has always been her dream and wants to show that being an unwed mother isn't a barrier. Another participant emphasized her goal to prove to her family and community that unwed motherhood doesn't limit achieving dreams. Participant 2 echoed that motherhood should never hinder education, highlighting the belief that both can coexist. Their statements reflect a strong sense of purpose for themselves and a message to society.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

*"Criminology has always been my dream, and I want to prove that being an unwed mother is not a hindrance." (P3)*

*"I want to prove to my family and community that being an unwed mother is not a hindrance to achieving dreams." (P3)*

*"Being a mother should never be a barrier to completing your education." (P2)*

This implies that education empowers unwed mothers by offering them the chance to overcome stigma, gain agency, and secure a better future for themselves and their children. Pursuing criminology helps them challenge societal stereotypes and enhances their personal growth. Institutions that foster inclusive, supportive environments promote academic success and personal empowerment for marginalized groups. By providing opportunities for education, these institutions contribute to systemic change, creating a positive ripple effect that benefits individuals, families, and society as a whole.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was conducted to explore the challenges faced by unwed mothers pursuing a criminology program. It involved nine unwed mothers, and data were triangulated through insights from their classmates and instructors, following a case study approach. Through the statements extracted from the interview, five themes have emerged balancing motherhood and academic responsibilities, facing financial and resource constraints, managing time and academic responsibilities, relying on support systems, and being empowered for a better future.

The study revealed that unwed mothers pursuing a criminology program encounter a range of interrelated challenges that significantly impact their academic journey. Foremost among these are financial constraints, limited access to childcare, and the difficulty of balancing parenting with academic responsibilities. These pressures often lead to emotional stress and time conflicts that threaten their academic performance. Despite this, participants manage through strong time management and by relying on support systems like family, peers, and institutional resources. Their persistence is driven by a strong sense of empowerment—the desire to build better futures for themselves and their children while overcoming stigma and hardship. These findings highlight the need for institutional support, such as financial aid, flexible schedules, and counseling, to help unwed mothers succeed academically and personally.

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that unwed mothers pursuing a criminology program face financial and caregiving challenges that demand urgent institutional support. Limited resources and economic hardship often hinder their ability to stay in school, making financial aid and academic resources essential. Balancing motherhood and studies also requires flexible schedules and compassionate support services. With proper guidance, these women can overcome barriers, achieve academic success, and positively impact their families and communities.

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendation is hereby forwarded: To better support unwed mothers in higher education, school administrators can create targeted financial aid programs, such as scholarships and childcare subsidies, to alleviate financial barriers and provide access to necessary academic resources. The Vice President for Academic Affairs may introduce flexible academic options, including online courses, evening or weekend classes, and adaptable deadlines, to help unwed mothers balance their academic

and parenting responsibilities. Instructors can establish mentorship programs and empowerment initiatives, offering leadership training, career development workshops, and peer support networks to foster confidence and personal growth. Additionally, future researchers can examine the challenges faced by unwed mothers in higher education, focusing on mental health, institutional support, and cross-regional comparisons to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences.

## REFERENCES

1. Agnieszka, Z.-M., Mark, J., & Garrison. (2020). Can Self-determination Theory be Used to Increase College Can Self-determination Theory be Used to Increase College Student Retention? Student Retention? <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1367215.pdf>
2. Andre, L. (2021, March 25). Since the 1960s, there has been an increase in the share of American households led by single parents. The rise. [Financesonline.com https://financesonline.com/single-parent-statistics/](https://financesonline.com/single-parent-statistics/).
3. Aves, J. C. (2020). Registered live births in Northern Mindanao: 2017. Philippine Statistics Authority, Regional Statistical Services Office 10. <https://rso10.psa.gov.ph/article/registered-live-births-northern-mindanao-2017>
4. Baskarada, S. (2014). Research methodology: A guide for researchers in management and social sciences. Research Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1008>.
5. Berkman, L. F., Glass, T., Brissette, I., & Seeman, T. E. (2020). From social integration to health: Durkheim in the new millennium. *Social Science & Medicine*, 51(6), 843–857. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536\(00\)00065-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(00)00065-4).
6. Bhatt, A. (2020). Experts' take: By undercounting single mothers, we underserve families. UN Women – Headquarters. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/2/experts-take-antra-bhatt-on-single-parent-households>.
7. Birkenmaier, J., Maynard, B., & Kim, Y. (2022). Interventions designed to improve financial capability: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18(1).
8. Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2021). Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications. <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/completing-your-qualitative-dissertation>.
9. Braund, A., Patulny, R., & Saltmarsh, S. (2020). Survival narratives from single mothers in an enabling program: “Just hope you don’t get sick and live off caffeine.” *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 62(2), 259–278. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1347868.pdf>.
10. Brown, V., & Nichols, T. (2021). Strengths and resilience of single mothers pursuing higher education. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 28(3), 290–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109913495720>
11. Callahan, C. M., & McCollum, A. D. (2022). Navigating motherhood and academia: The challenges of single mothers in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education and Development*, 37(4), 421-438.
12. Chavda, K., & Nisarga, V. (2023). Single Parenting: Impact on Child’s Development. *Journal of Indian Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 19(1), 14–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09731342231179017>
13. Chiu, T. K. F. (2021). Applying the self-determination theory (SDT) to explain student engagement in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 54(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2021.1891998>
14. Clark, R., & Francis, K. (2022). Empowering marginalized student populations through higher education: Narratives of resilience and resistance. *Journal of Social Issues in Education*, 18(2), 101–118.
15. Corresponding, C. (2024). Teenage Pregnancy Among Bachelor Of Science In Criminology Students. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 8(1), 106–115. <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/18200>
16. Crabtree, S. (2020). How Many Women Worldwide are Single Moms. [Gallup.com; Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/286433/women-worldwide-single-moms.aspx](https://news.gallup.com/poll/286433/women-worldwide-single-moms.aspx).
17. Cruse, L.R., Milli, J., Mendez, S.C., Holtzman, T., & Gault, B. (2020). Investing in Single Mothers’ Higher Education. Lumina Foundation.
18. Dasig, J. P. (2020). Challenges of Student-mothers in the Tertiary Education of the University of

- Perpetual Help System-DALTA. *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices*, 2(6), 29–33. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jweep.2020.2.6.4>
19. Davis, P., Garcia, S., & Johnson, H. (2024). The role of peer support in helping student-mothers succeed in college. *College Success Journal*, 19(1), 98–110.
  20. De La Torre, A., & Dowie, E. (2023). Student Success Evaluation Framework: Determining causality in activities to improve attendance and attainment. <https://doi.org/10.35542/osf.io/9v35b>
  21. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum. [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/1985\\_DeciRyan\\_IMSD.pdf](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/1985_DeciRyan_IMSD.pdf).
  22. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227–268. [http://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000\\_DeciRyan\\_PIWhatWhy.pdf](http://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_DeciRyan_PIWhatWhy.pdf).
  23. Dizon, M. L., & Lopez, K. A. (2021). Peer and institutional support among student-mothers in Philippine higher education. *Philippine Journal of Social Development*, 23(1), 58–74.
  24. Elliott, P. J., & Holmes, A. R. (2022). The role of peer support in the educational outcomes of student-parents. *Journal of Education and Family Support*, 15(1), 50–67.
  25. Ephraim, N. (2024, July 15). The Contribution of Student Support Services to Academic Success and Graduation Rates. *Adiutor Resources*. <https://adiutor.co/blog/the-contribution-of-student-support-services-to-academic-success-and-graduation-rates/>
  26. Fatima, H., Masood, S., Ishaque, B., & Paul, I. A. (2025). Navigating Dual Roles: Challenges and Strategies of Student Mothers in Higher Education. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(02), 123–143.
  27. Fiorella Montero-Diaz. (2020). Swimming upstream: balancing motherhood, academia, and well-intentioned policies. *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 29(3), 292–295.
  28. Gault, B., Milli, J., & Reichlin Cruse, L. (2020). *Time Demands of Single Mothers in College: Balancing Work, School, and Parenting*. Institute for Women’s Policy Research.
  29. Geiger, B. (2023). Resilient self-efficacy and transformative growth of poor single mothers and their children: Higher education. *Family Relations*, 72(5), 2410–2428.
  30. Gibson, M., Thomson, H., Bamba, C., Sowden, A. J., & Whitehead, M. (2020). Welfare-to-work interventions and their effects on the mental and physical health of lone parents and their children. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2020(2), CD009820. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.cd009820.pub3>
  31. Glenn, N. M., Scott, L. A., Hokanson, T., Gustafson, K., Stoops, M. A., Day, B., & Candace. (2021). Community intervention strategies to reduce the impact of financial strain and promote financial well-being: a comprehensive rapid review. *Global Health Promotion*, 28(1), 42–50.
  32. Goldrick-Rab, S., & Sorenson, L. (2020). Unfinished business: Further evidence on the gap between college aspirations and attendance. *Wisconsin HOPE Lab*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED572233.pdf>.
  33. Hodge, A., & O’Reilly, M. (2021). The impact of motherhood on academic achievement: Exploring the experiences of student-mothers in postsecondary education. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 88, 102457.
  34. House, J. S. (1987). Social support and social structure. *Sociological Forum*, 2(1), 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01110298>.
  35. Jackson, A., Smith, B., & Lee, C. (2023). Single mothers in higher education: Institutional supports and barriers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 44(2), 123–145.
  36. Jenkins, A. T., & Gray, R. M. (2021). Support systems for student-parents in higher education: A critical review of financial and emotional aids. *Journal of Higher Education Policy*, 33(4), 221–238.
  37. Johnson, A. (2021). *Barriers that exist to the academic persistence of single mothers in higher education: A qualitative case study* (Doctoral dissertation). <https://www.proquest.com/openview/.com>
  38. Johnson, A. (2023). Academic challenges of single mothers in higher education: A qualitative study. *Journal of Educational Research*, 45(2), 123–145. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jer.2023.4567>.
  39. Johnson, A. M., & Martin, R. L. (2021). Financial barriers to higher education: A case study of single mothers in university. *Journal of Higher Education Finance*, 45(2), 123–137.
  40. Johnson, C., Rizwan Gitay, Abdel-Salam, A.-S. G., BenSaid, A., Ismail, R., Adil, R., Romanowski, M. H., Fakih, A., & Khalifa Al Hazaa. (2022). Student support in higher education: campus service utilization, impact, and challenges. *Heliyon*, 8(12), e12559–e12559. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon>

.2022.e12559

41. Johnson, J., & Martin, S. (2020). Resilience and time management strategies among student-mothers in higher education. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(3), 556-569.
42. Johnson, M., & Clark, D. (2023). Providing support for student-parents: A review of flexible academic environments. *Journal of Higher Education Support*, 45(3), 200-215.
43. Jones, H., & Roberts, M. (2021). Supporting student-parents in higher education: Best practices for academic success. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 58(4), 389-402.
44. Kalil, A., & Ryan, R. (2024). Mothers' Economic Conditions and Sources of Support in Fragile Families Mothers' Economic Conditions and Sources of Support in Fragile Families. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ901822.pdf>
45. Kogovšek, T., Ule, M., & Renner, T. (2020). The role of social networks in the educational achievement of single mothers in Slovenia: A case study approach. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37(7), 635-646. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355\(03\)00024-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-0355(03)00024-9).
46. Kroese, M., Stanfors, M., & Bernardi, L. (2022). Understanding single motherhood: Trends and implications. *Journal of Family Studies*. Advance online publication.
47. Kruvelis, M., Reichlin, L., & Gault, B. (2021). Single mothers in college: Growing enrollment, financial challenges, and the benefits of attainment. Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). <https://iwpr.org/single-mothers-in-college-growing-enrollment-financial-challenges-and-the-benefits-of-attainment/>.
48. Lee, R., Tan, S., & Morales, J. (2022). Supporting Parenting Students: Academic Flexibility and Institutional Responsibility. *Educational Equity Review*, 10(1), 88-104. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12142>
49. Lim, C. A. (2023). More than half of babies in PH born to unwed mothers. SunStar Publishing Inc. <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/cebu/local-news/more-than-half-of-babies-in-ph-born-to-unwed-mothers>.
50. Livingston, G. (2021). The Changing Profile of Unmarried Parents. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/04/25/the-changing-profile-of-unmarried-parents/>.
51. Logronio, S.E (2022). Lived Experience of Single Mothers in Cosca, Dumaguete City. <https://www.studocu.com/ph/document/negros-oriental-state-university/bachelor-of-science-in-criminology/chap1-chapter/55637049>.
52. Long, M. C., Mangan, A., & Martin, K. (2020). Supporting single mothers in higher education: Strategies for institutional change. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 41(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2019.1571234>.
53. Lopez, M. L., & Garcia, R. J. (2020). The impact of family support on the academic persistence of student-mothers in higher education. *Journal of Family and Education*, 28(2), 114-129.
54. Mair, C. A. (2025). "Successfully" Aging "Alone?": Unequal Global Opportunities and Rising Risks in Family-Based Models of Care Cross-Nationally. *The Gerontologist*, 65(1), gnae104.
55. Martinez, G., Frick, M., & Crosby, S. (2021). Student mothers and their academic success in higher education: A qualitative study. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 41(5), 503-516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2015.1079391>
56. McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2022). The causal effects of father involvement on children's well-being: A review of the evidence. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 14(1), 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12409>.
57. Miller, K. E., & Riley, J. (2021). Changed Landscape, Unchanged Norms: Work-Family Conflict and the Persistence of the Academic Mother Ideal. *Innovative Higher Education*, 47(3), 471-492.
58. Miller, K., & Schlegel, R. (2020). Social support and student resilience: Lessons from single-parent learners. *Journal of Family Studies*, 26(2), 312-329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2020.1718196>
59. Navarro, J. M., & Delos Reyes, A. C. (2023). Student-mothers in higher education: Navigating dual roles through support systems. *Journal of Philippine Educational Research*, 18(2), 112-130.
60. Newman, K., & Smith, D. (2020). The burden of reciprocity: Social support challenges for single mothers. *Journal of Family Studies*, 25(1), 142-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2019.1613641>
61. Olson, B. (2020). Balancing reciprocity in social support networks: A case study of single mothers. *Social Support Research Quarterly*, 18(3), 285-301. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-013-0324-2>
62. Omega, N. A. (2025). Commission on Population and Development - Region X. (2025, February 17). Cpd.gov.ph. <https://region10.cpd.gov.ph/2025/02/>



63. Pardillo, R.S. Phd. (2023). A Phenomenological Examination of the Challenges Single Student Mothers Experience to Manage Their Dual Roles. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*. 06. 10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i5-57. from <https://ijsshr.in/v6i5/Doc/57.pdf>.
64. Park, S. (2022). Relationship of self-determined motivation with time-related academic behavior in Korean primary school students: A person-centered approach. *Heliyon*, 8(10), e11191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e11191>
65. Perrin, K. M. (2020). The need to support single mothers in college: A qualitative study. *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*. [https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1248&context=all\\_doctoral](https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1248&context=all_doctoral)
66. Raley, S. K., Hagiwara, M., Burke, K. M., Kiblen, J. C., & Shogren, K. A. (2022). Supporting All Students to Be Self-Determined: Using the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction Within Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports. *Inclusive Practices*, 2(1), 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27324745221132478>
67. Rasco, M.G. (2021). Experiential Journey Of Female College Students As Single Parents. *EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review -Peer Reviewed Journal*. <https://www.eprawisdom.com>
68. Ravhuhali F, Nendauni L, D, S. T., P, L. N., G, D. N., Matodzi T, & Manyage T. (2022). A self-determination theoretical approach into survival strategies of on-campus and off-campus students from low-income families. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 36(3), 231–248. <https://doi.org/10.20853/36-3-4658>
69. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78. [https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000\\_RyanDeci\\_SDT.pdf](https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_RyanDeci_SDT.pdf)
70. Sameer. (2023). 5 Great Strategies To Simplify Academic Writing. Tycoonstory Media | Online Network for Entrepreneurs & Startups.
71. Sarmiento, R. F., & Tolentino, J. L. (2022). Support systems and academic persistence among student-parents in higher education institutions. *Philippine Journal of Social Development*, 17(1), 45–60.
72. Sicam, V., Reyes, M. E. S., & Dela Cruz, M. R. M. (2021). Exploring the experiences of single mothers in higher education: A qualitative study of resilience and support systems. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 108, 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.24036/kolokium-pls.v9i2.483>
73. Smith, A., & Rosen, H. (2020). Social networks and employment resilience among single mothers. *Social Service Review*, 90(4), 513–540. <https://doi.org/10.1086/688554>
74. Smith, J., Brown, L., & Taylor, A. (2021). The impact of financial strain on student-mothers in higher education. *Journal of Educational Equity*, 30(2), 150-170.
75. Stephens, C. A. (2021). Women and Work-Life Balance: A Narrative Inquiry of Working Single Mothers Balancing Family and Work. In ProQuest LLC. ProQuest LLC. 789 East Eisenhower Parkway, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Tel: 800-521-0600; <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED578002&utm.com>
76. Thompson, L., & Smith, K. J. (2023). Unwed mothers and higher education: A closer look at financial struggles and institutional support. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 60(3), 87-103.
77. Valerie. (2023). Leave no single mother Behind: solutions from across the world - MMM. MMM. <https://makemothersmatter.org/leave-no-single-mother-behind-solutions-from-across-the-world/>
78. Vyskocil, G. (2024). Challenges Needs and Experiences of Single Parent Student Mothers in Higher Education Mothers in Higher Education. CSUSB Scholar Works Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations Office of Graduate. <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1686&context=etd>.
79. Wekullo, C., & Nuzulul Isna. (2020). Experiences Of Students Who Are Single Mothers On University Campuses: A Systematic Review From 1997- 2019. <https://doi.org/10.7755/ijher170720.01>.
80. Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <https://journals.nipissingu.ca/index.php/cjar/article/view/73>.