



# Single Parents as Co-Facilitators: Navigating Blended Learning's New Normal

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## Abstract:

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, education systems worldwide have swiftly adopted blended learning models, combining in-person and online instruction. This paradigm shift poses unique challenges for single parents who must balance their parental responsibilities with facilitating their children's education in this new situation. This study explores the perseverance of single parents as co-facilitators in blended learning settings, focusing on their roles, challenges, coping strategies, and the impact on parent-child relationships and student outcomes. A narrative approach was employed, utilizing a validated researcher-made interview protocol. Data were collected using video and audio recorders and analyzed qualitatively through Colaizzi's descriptive method procedures. Three major themes emerged: Single Parents' Struggles During Blended Learning, Single Parent's Roles During Blended Learning, and Single Parents' Fulfilling Experiences as Co-facilitators. Subthemes within these themes highlighted challenges such as financial strain, lack of resources, and the preference for face-to-face learning, as well as the roles of single parents in supporting their children's education and the positive experiences they found in the co-facilitator role. The findings underscore the significant challenges single parents face in supporting blended learning and the vital role they play in their children's education. The study also highlights the resilience and adaptability of single parents amidst the pandemic. Single parents face unique challenges in the blended learning environment but demonstrate remarkable resilience. Understanding their perseverance is crucial for developing effective support systems and policies to assist them in facilitating their children's education during these challenging times.

**Keywords:** Single Parents, co-facilitator, blended learning, New normal, Negros Occidental, Philippines.

## Introduction:

### Nature of the Problem

The education landscape has undergone a profound transformation with the emergence of blended learning models, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among those profoundly impacted are single parents who find themselves navigating their own professional and personal responsibilities and assuming the role of co-facilitators in their children's education. This study delves into the perseverance exhibited by single parents as they navigate the complexities of blended learning, which has become the new normal in education.

Blended learning, a hybrid approach that combines traditional classroom instruction with online learning platforms, presents unique challenges for single parents. These parents face formidable difficulties when juggling work commitments, household responsibilities, and the demands of their children's education. Yet, amid these challenges, many single parents demonstrate remarkable perseverance in fulfilling their roles as co-facilitators in their children's learning journey.

This research explores the strategies single parents employ to navigate blended learning successfully, the barriers they encounter, and the impact of their perseverance on their children's academic performance and overall well-being. By shedding light on the experiences of single parents in the context of blended learning, this study seeks to inform educational policymakers, administrators, and practitioners about the support mechanisms needed to alleviate the burdens faced by single-parent households and promote equitable access to quality education for all children.

### Current State of Knowledge

This section discusses three main themes illustrating single parents' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic blended learning. Firstly, it addresses the challenges of single parents in co-facilitating blended learning. The



pandemic has greatly impacted everyone's lives, leading to diverse attitudes towards remote learning. While some parents feel more connected to their child's schoolwork, others see it as an additional burden. However, schools and educators need more clear guidance on involving parents effectively, especially in utilizing technology. Secondly, it examines the effects of socio-economic factors. Studies show that the lockdown has increased subjective time pressure and frustration with balancing paid and unpaid work, particularly for women. Children from higher-income households may continue learning smoothly, while those from lower-income families may struggle due to housing issues.

Thirdly, it explores the fulfillment found in co-facilitating blended learning. Parents generally view blended learning positively and have recognized their significant role in their children's education, especially during the pandemic. Single parents have shown remarkable strength in supporting their children's needs and welfare despite facing challenges. The data is further clarified by grouping respondents based on age, gender, hands-on involvement, educational background, and their child's grade level. These groupings help to paint a clearer picture of the current knowledge.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This study draws upon two key theories. Firstly, Functionalism, proposed by Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, views society as a complex system where various parts work together to maintain stability and solidarity. Social institutions like family, politics, education, and the economy are essential for societal functioning, emphasizing interdependence among different elements for long-term survival.

Secondly, the Role Theory, developed by George Herbert Mead and Ralph Linton, explores how social expectations and scripts shape individuals' roles within society. It examines how people learn and adopt new roles through social interaction, influenced by cultural norms and societal ideologies. Single parents acting as co-facilitators in blended learning may struggle to balance their parental and educational roles, impacting their experiences. Hunter (2015) notes the challenge of juggling these responsibilities, suggesting that combining parental and educational duties could significantly affect single parents' experiences in co-facilitating blended learning.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this narrative study was to understand the perseverance of five single parents acting as co-facilitators of learning within a blended learning framework at an elementary school in Himamaylan City, Negros Occidental, during the School Year 2020-2021. As used in this paper, perseverance means persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.

### **Research Methodology:**

#### **Research Design**

This paper outlines the research methodology, including design, participants, instruments, data collection, and ethical considerations. The researcher utilized narrative inquiry and personal experience stories to explore single parents' experiences as co-facilitators in their children's learning. Narrative inquiry involves analyzing spoken or written accounts of events, focusing on individuals' lived experiences. This approach aims to understand the causes and effects of events through detailed stories and personal reflections. Personal experience stories are narratives exploring single or multiple episodes, private situations, or communal folklore. The study used narrative inquiry with the individual experience story approach to uncover the meaning of five single parents attributed to their role as co-facilitators in their child's learning.

#### **Participants**

The participants of the study were five (5) single parents from the identified school who had passed the criteria set. The participants were chosen through a purposive sampling method.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

Participants qualified to take part in this narrative study are male or female single parents with a child enrolled in an elementary school and residing in Himamaylan City during the COVID-19 pandemic. They must be fluent in the first language (L1) and must be willing to participate in the data collection.

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

Parents with significant cognitive impairments, those currently undergoing intensive psychological therapy, and those unable to commit to regular participation due to scheduling conflicts are left out of this study.



## Instrument

The researcher employed a semi-structured interview format, incorporating a central question and sub-questions. Acting as the primary data-gathering instrument, the researcher collected information from participants using video and audio recording devices. Both the participants and the researcher referred to a sample questions document during the interview, which included the study's title, the guiding research question, and follow-up questions, as suggested by Creswell (2007).

## Data Collection Procedure

The researcher instituted the validity of the research instrument by asking for the help of validators who are also seasoned researchers in qualitative research. Permission to conduct the study was secured at the location where it was conducted. Statements that were relevant to the topic were identified and reorganized into clusters of meaning to have a general description of the phenomenon both texturally and structurally. The themes were culled based on the stories shared by the participants. Statements were placed into clusters representing the important areas of the participants' experiences. Themes were associated with the transcription to determine the reflectiveness of the participants' experiences. Thus, those not reflective of the participants' experience were disregarded.

## Data Explication Procedure

To explore the struggles, ways of helping their child, and fulfilling experiences of single parents as co-learning facilitators in the implementation of blended learning modality. Colaizzi's (1978, in Creswell, 2018) descriptive method of data analysis was used. Colaizzi's descriptive method is a qualitative data analysis approach that involves seven steps in extracting meaningful themes and insights from raw data.

## Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that the general ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were observed to ensure the study's ethical soundness. The researcher secured the informed consent signed by the participants before the study. This means the participants were free to decide whether to participate in the study. The researcher also assures the participants of confidentiality by using aliases or pseudonyms for their names in adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2021. Since this study relates to participants' personal experiences, they cannot answer questions that would make them feel distressed in any way. During this health crisis, the researcher and participants strictly followed health and safety protocols during the face-to-face interview.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the narratives of single parents, highlighting their journey as home facilitators to their children. This also includes the metaphor, major and minor epiphanies, and the resonant narrative threads that emerge from the field texts. Only utterances in the first language (L1) that have been correspondingly translated to the second language (L2) are illustrated in the reflective and thematic insights section. For cross-referencing purposes, the utterances in L1 are available in the Appendix Section.

### Reflective Insights

#### ***Mommy Apple: A Strong Independent Woman***

Mommy Apple is 28 years old, a high school graduate, and a single and hard-working mother of a Grade 5 pupil enrolled in Himamaylan Central School.

*"I am now working on the ricefield that our father gave us..." - Mommy Apple*

During the pandemic, her father suffered a stroke. She decided to stay at their home to support her son's education while helping her mother by taking care of her father.

#### ***Mama Mae: A Fearless Woman***

Mama Mae, 34, a college graduate, single mom of Grade 5, and vaccination encoder at their town in Himamaylan Central School, sees herself as a fearless and strong woman for her son.

*"I need to be strong, Maam, for my child". -Mama Mae*

She's a fearless woman enduring life's trials. Blended learning brought challenges and bonding moments, strengthening her bond with her son.

#### ***Tatay Stephen: A Responsible Dad***



Despite having only a high school education, Tatay Stephen works as a farmer and construction worker to provide for his children's needs.

*"My experience as a parent is difficult since I am only a high school graduate. The only work you can do is constructions, farming...and the salary is small, inadequate for school expenses." - Tatay Stephen.*  
Life has not been a bed of roses for him and his family, considering he is raising his children alone.

### **Nanay Elsie: The Fighter Nanay**

Nanay Elsie is a 30-year-old single parent currently working as a house helper in a nearby area to support her children.

*"I am working as a housemaid to send my child to school." - Nanay Elsie:*  
*"... instead of crying, you pray and just do your best as a parent."- Nanay Elsie:*

### **Nanay Freza: The Loving Nanay**

At 45, Nanay Freza, a nurse and single mother of a sixth grader, finds single parenthood challenging but feels grateful for supportive people.

*"...it is not easy, but I am thankful because my parents and family are supportive." - Nanay Freza.*  
She ensures her presence to guide her child through blended learning.

### **Major Epiphany**

Complete families are optimal for children's well-being, yet the rise in single-parent households, as noted by Mugove (2017), poses challenges. The transition to blended learning during the pandemic exacerbated difficulties affecting instruction, finances, and mental health, as Agaton and Cueto (2021) and Stack and Meredith (2018) highlighted. Interviews with five single parents exposed struggles such as food insecurity and bill payment, impacting children's learning. Unaddressed, these challenges can affect parenting, especially during remote learning. Juggling childcare and work is demanding, with single parents facing extra hardships.

### **Minor Epiphany**

Single parents' engagement in their child's blended learning journey led to significant realizations, empathizing with teachers' challenges. Research uncovered recurring themes, reflecting key insights, with three main themes and supporting subthemes identified through analysis.

### **Thematic Insights**

#### **Theme 1: Single Parents' Struggles During Blended Learning**

**They are making Ends Meet Alone.** Children optimally flourish in households with both parents involved, but the increase in single-parent families, as observed by Mugove (2017), presents hurdles. The pandemic's transition to blended learning exacerbated difficulties, particularly for single parents, affecting instruction, finances, and mental well-being, as Agaton and Cueto (2021) and Stack and Meredith (2018) emphasized. Interviews with five single parents revealed challenges like food insecurity and bill payment, influencing children's learning. These unresolved issues can impact parenting, especially during remote learning. Single parents encounter additional challenges in managing childcare and work responsibilities.

*"It is a struggle because I am alone. I need to work to sustain her needs". - Mommy Apple*

*"...it is quite challenging to raise a child alone." - Mama Jherna*

*"I am working as a maid just to send my child to school and to provide her needs." - Nanay Elsie*

*"My experience as a parent is difficult since I am only a high school graduate. The only work you can do is construction and farming...and the salary is small, inadequate for school expenses. That is why their mother went abroad to sustain our daily needs and their school expenses" - Tatay Stephen*

Single parents not only cope with single parenthood but also tackle a low-paying job typically held by women. The pandemic exacerbated the financial strains faced by single mothers, according to Lopez and San Juan (2019). They handle various roles, combat loneliness, and grapple with increased expenses during school closures (Wakai et al., 2023).

Research indicates that single-parent households are often financially strained, earning lower incomes and balancing multiple jobs alongside family duties (Clery et al., 2021; Lu, Walker, Richard, & Younis, 2019; Burden, 1986; Wilson, 2015). The pandemic exacerbated these challenges, leaving single parents mentally and physically exhausted. Even before the pandemic, they struggled financially, yet little attention has been paid to their plight (Clery et al., 2021).



**Recognizing the Role of Teachers in Child's Development during Blended Learning.** Single parents in the study now value teachers' crucial role in their children's education, especially during blended learning. They admire teachers' patience, love, and commitment. As noted by Edutopia (2022), teachers not only impart knowledge but also nurture independent thinking and problem-solving. Three parents recognized teachers' significance even pre-pandemic, while others acknowledged teachers' better-equipped skills in explaining concepts, given parents' lack of necessary competencies.

*"It is necessary to have a teacher to discuss with them. That is why it is good if it is done in school and the teacher is the one to explain it." – Mommy Apple.*

*"It is where I experienced it, and I find it difficult, and I have proven that it is quite difficult to teach to children. That is why I salute all their teachers...their patience towards children". – Mama Jherna*

*"Sometimes, I ask her what her problems in such situations on online classes are, ...and only teacher had been studied and mastered that, and they are only ones who can explain that thoroughly...well explain those formulas." – Nanay Freza.*

*"It is quite difficult to experience this for the first time. It is really the new normal now." – Mommy Apple.*

Single parents' experiences emphasize teachers' importance in their children's education. They recognized teachers' challenges and valued professional teaching but felt unprepared for blended learning, echoing Hertz, Mattes, and Shook (2020).

The shift to blended learning posed challenges for students and single parents. Parents assumed the role of co-facilitators without proper preparation, as highlighted by Rousoulioti et al. (2022) and Simbre (2021). Single parents value teachers' dedication and guidance in their children's education.

**Lack of Devices and Poor Internet Connection.** In online education, unequal access to digital resources is a challenge, as noted by Raes et al. (2019). Factors like inadequate equipment, study environment, or digital literacy contribute to this gap, according to Silva et al. (2018). Single parents encountered these issues during blended learning. Three participants faced power outages or unstable internet during online classes, requiring them to seek better connections each time.

*"I have faced challenges like power outages causing loss of internet during my child's online class."*

*"Sometimes, ma'am, I am wondering where we can connect if there are some troubles in piso-wifi vendo because my child is crying." – Nanay Elsie.*

*"... internet interruptions and you need to go on other houses just to have connections since we do not have wifi." – Tatay Stephen*

Abel's (2020, as cited in Agaton and Cueto, 2021) study highlighted the challenges of poor internet access for Filipino learners, a concern shared by single-parent families. Insufficient devices and internet issues hinder online learning, complicating home teaching and impeding teacher communication, disrupting access to educational resources.

**Face to Face Learning is Way Better.** The study findings showed that parents favored face-to-face instruction for its conducive learning environment compared to blended learning. Safira (2022) echoed similar sentiments, highlighting the superior learning atmosphere in schools. This reflects parents' concerns about distance learning's negative impact on academic progress and learning loss, as many studies have observed.

*"I realized that face-to-face classes are much better because the teachers can discuss it thoroughly."- Nanay Freza.*

*"Ahmmm, it is difficult, but it is for my child. However, it is good if it is face to face." – Mommy Apple.*

Single parents adjusted to the challenges of COVID-19, initially favoring traditional teaching. However, they later recognized the importance of collaboration in meeting students' needs during the pandemic.

Safira's (2022) study, where parents expressed contentment with face-to-face learning despite dissatisfaction with its implementation. They anticipated a return to pre-pandemic learning arrangements.

## **Theme 2: Single Parents Roles During Blended Learning**

**Unceasing Guidance during Blended Learning.** In the Philippines, parents have assumed a crucial role in education during the COVID-19 pandemic, actively supporting their children in adapting to new learning setups despite facing significant challenges (Valoroso et al., 2022).

*"It is necessary that I am always there to guide her because we should not be the ones who will answer it. It should be the child."*

*"I was there beside her so that if the teacher has some questions, I can help her. Then after class, I reviewed what they discussed again so that she would really learn it." – Mama Jherna.*

*"... I was there to guide. – Nanay Freza*

*"Gina tuparan ko gid sila ma'am kag gina pa-inchindi ko gid sa ila ang mga lesson nga gina tudlo..."*

*"I sat beside her, ma'am, and I let them understand the lesson well" – Nanay Elsie.*

*"...during their online class, I sat beside him. I asked his teachers ...if there were problems...or if he missed some assignments or homework. – Mama Jherna*

*"I helped them even in small and little knowledge I have." –Tatay Stephen*



Bhamani (2020) suggests that parental involvement in learning boosts bonding. Online programs with parents support foster family well-being. This involvement offers vital emotional support amidst the challenges discussed by Valoroso, Acompañado, and Baslan (2022).

"...yes, at first module, she cried coz I told her that even though the teachers are not around, they should know that you are the one answering your modules." – Mommy Apple.

"...while she is growing, it is advantageous for me because she is a big help already with house errands. She already knows her daily routine, hehe hehe." – Mommy Apple.

"I let her sleep early so that they can also wake up early." – Mama Jherna

"She needs to prepare and be well-groomed for her to be presentable in their online class." – Nanay Freza

Single parents adapt to blended learning with extra academic help, educator communication, structured home learning, schedules, and emotional support for children's adjustment.

**I am getting my Child's Needs Ready for Online Classes.** In traditional schooling, parental involvement influences academic success, transitioning to online learning (Borup et al., 2014; Feng & Cavanaugh, 2011; Lee & Figueroa, 2012; Makrooni, 2019; Woofter, 2019). Despite challenges, single parents in the study exhibited strong support, providing resources for effective online participation.

"I have not lost load because I prepared for it. It is needed as preparation." -Mommy Apple.

"... Ah, for her online, I bought a cellphone, and then I prepared for every day, and we set up wifi so that it will be easier for her and her online."

"Una una ma'am, dapat may cellphone gid ko na maam kay kung wala ko cellphone maam indi gid na siya maka-attend online class. So, masupot gid ko maam para may inugbakal ko nami nga cellphone..." – Nanay Elsie

"Firstly, ma'am, she should have a cellphone, or she cannot attend her online class. So, I must save to buy one ..." – Nanay Elsie.

"I put a load to the cellphone, and if there is no signal, I go out earlier to another side to connect... the signal will not be interrupted for their continuous lessons."-Tatay Stephen.

It was evident in the responses shared by single parents that there was strong support for their children's blended learning by providing essential tools like smartphones and internet access. They ensured uninterrupted learning by purchasing devices and data, ensuring their children could participate effectively in online classes.

**Prioritizing my Child's Education.** The rapid transition to blended learning elevated single parents as learning co-facilitators. Despite COVID-19 challenges, they prioritized children's education over personal obstacles.

"... even though there is a lot of work, I still give time to the child because you cannot set aside her studies. I do not want my child to skip." -Mommy Apple.

"...in spite of it being hard for me while on duty, I need to go home to take care of her needs in her online class."- Mama Jherna.

Participants' feedback indicated that despite the challenges of single parenthood, they prioritized their children's needs. They valued education highly, prioritizing it over the difficulties of juggling work and blended learning facilitation. This suggests that single parenthood does not affect their commitment to their children's education.

**I am giving my Child Time for Rest and Recreation.** The family environment significantly shapes children's leisure, offering positive experiences and self-care opportunities (Strazdienė et al., 2017). Single parents in the study acknowledge the importance of leisure for their children's well-being, promoting a healthy balance between work and play.

"ok, it's ok to play, but after that, you should do your modules without any alibi..."Mommy Apple

"If my child asks Maam that she will play or she will not yet answer modules, I allowed her just to have some rest Ma'am e." -Mama Jherna

"If I saw him having hard times, I gave him some break." -Nanay Elsie

In this research, single parents ensured their children had time for learning and play at home, understanding the significance of play for development and well-being, particularly during the pandemic. Duran and Ömeroğlu (2022) stressed parental support for children's play and socialization to help them cope with pandemic-related challenges. Allocating playtime and leisure activities offers crucial support, aiding children in navigating these challenging times.

**They were reaching Out to the Teachers for Clarification.** Kraft & Dogherty (2013, cited in Rousoulioti, Tsagari, Giannikas, 2022) highlight the vital role of parental involvement in education. Herliandry et al. (2020) noted challenges for parents in facilitating online learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Single parents in this research recognized the importance of understanding their children's learning materials and maintained regular communication with teachers for clarification.

"What I also did, Ma'am, was chat with her teacher to see if there were some topics I could not understand in her module." -Mommy Apple.

"If I cannot answer my child's questions, Ma'am, I call or text her teacher so that I can ask what my child is asking. Because it's different if from the teacher coz, they know it well."- Mama Jherna



Single parents communicate with subject teachers for academic support, especially with complex issues. Despite their sole responsibility, they exemplify the family's crucial role as educational partners, enhancing learners' success (Ciriado et al., 2017, cited in Martinez et al., 2021).

### **Theme 3: Single Parents' Fulfilling Experiences as Co-facilitators of Blended Learning**

**Lesser Expenses while Facilitating Learning at Home.** Adopting a blended learning model reduced costs for two single parents regarding their children's education. They noted financial ease as their children no longer need to travel or bring snacks for recess at school.

*"When the pandemic started, blended learning modalities became easier for me because there is no need for my child to travel, and the expenses will be lessened."* – Nanany Freza.

*"What is easier because you need not bring them to school."* – Tatay Stephen

Online learning is praised for its accessibility and cost-effectiveness, particularly in remote areas, with reduced transportation and institutional expenses (Dhawan, 2020). Single parents noted unexpected cost savings with blended learning during COVID-19, avoiding daily transportation and allowances, and ensuring safety at home.

**Appreciating their Role as Co-facilitators of Learning.** Participants found fulfillment in acting as teachers at home, recognizing the crucial role of teachers in ensuring learning success. Co-facilitating blended learning highlighted the importance of guiding their children's development.

*"There I have experienced and proven that it is hard to teach in children."* - Mama Jherna.

*"When this pandemic happened, I realized that it is hard to teach a child. How many more teachers do they have more students to teach? So, I realized, ma'am, that it's hard to teach"* Nanay Elsie.

Both Mama Jherna and Nanay Elsie acknowledged their crucial roles as school partners, ensuring their children's educational success during COVID-19. Li and Qiu (2018) highlight parental involvement's impact on academic progress. Hapsari et al. (2020) note parents' dual roles as teachers and supervisors in distance learning. This underscores parents' active role in home education during the pandemic. According to Gloria (2020, cited in Bonilla et al., 2022), parental belief in education's value fosters involvement, enhancing teacher-parent partnerships, as seen in Nanay Elsie's interview responses.

**Being Resilient Amidst the Pandemic.** Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals, especially children and parents, face immense psychological pressure and disruptions. Jones et al. (2022) highlight resilience through adaptive coping and positive parenting. Masten and Motti-Stefanidi (2020) stress the importance of social support, positive parenting, and effective coping in fostering family resilience during significant disruptions.

*"Just be patient with our children because they are young. We need to teach them and guide them in meeting their needs... Let us just think that it is just bonding with them while in a pandemic."*Nanay Freza

*"... let us not be hesitant in teaching our children. We should not lose hope. Let us also pray for our work."* – Mama Jherna.

*"I know that this is just trials from God yet, we can surpass this!"*-Nanay Elsie

*"Don't give up. We can do this; we can make it and just leave everything with God..."*-Nanay Elsie.

Amidst the ongoing pandemic, people turn to coping strategies. Walsh (2020) suggests religion and spirituality can boost resilience, improving mental health. Single parents, despite added difficulties, show resilience anchored in faith. Despite financial and educational challenges, they prioritize well-being, driven by optimism, hope, faith, and dedication to parenting, surpassing COVID-19 hurdles.

### **Conclusion**

The pandemic compounded challenges for single parents, who already balance work, parenting, and household responsibilities. Co-facilitating blended learning added strain, emphasizing the need for technology access and digital literacy. Emotional well-being is crucial, as stress impacts effectiveness. Collaboration and support networks offer necessary assistance. Flexibility is key in adapting to changing conditions. Despite obstacles, single parents' involvement positively influences children's education. Their narratives reveal struggles and resilience, emphasizing the importance of education and parental roles. Despite difficulties, they embrace their roles as co-facilitators, finding value and personal growth in the journey. These experiences highlight the need for support and recognition of single parents' efforts to ensure their children's education, especially in the face of a pandemic.

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