



Empowerment: Republic Act 11861 Through the Lens of Solo Parents in Higher Education Institution

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Abstract— This study looked into the lived experience of solo parents at Laguna State Polytechnic University as to the knowledge and lens of Republic Act 11861. The research design used was qualitative with phenomenology as an approach. The study explored the experiences of solo parents at Laguna State Polytechnic University. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the study generated ten (10) superordinate themes which were Ambivalent Knowledge on RA 11861, Beneficial Implementation from the HEI, Effective Implementation of Benefits from HEI, Information Dissemination, Parental Support for the Child, Work-Life Balance, Strength of Solo Parents, Solo Parent Empowerment, and Positive Feedback from the Program. Ambivalent Knowledge of RA 11861 was one of the major themes of findings that was significant in the study due to some solo parents exhibiting some awareness and understanding of the specific provisions and benefits offered by the legislation. They were well-informed about their rights and entitlements, and they actively sought out information and resources to support themselves and their children. But they might not be fully informed about the rights and assistance available to them, and they might not actively seek out information or resources. This lack of awareness could stem from various reasons, such as limited access to information, financial constraints, or simply not knowing where to look for help. As an output, a set of action plans or activities was proposed to address the issue present from the findings of the study.

Keywords— solo parents, phenomenology, empowerment, higher education institution.

INTRODUCTION

The Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2000 (Republic Act 8972) was amended by Republic Act 11861, known as the "Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act," signed into law on June 4, 2022. This new law significantly broadened the scope and benefits for solo or single parents and their families. It introduced penal provisions for violations, created a registration system for solo parents, and established a dedicated local government office to administer and regulate the identification and availment of privileges. The definition of "children" and "spouse" was expanded to include dependents and partners in common-law relationships. Under the expanded Act, solo parents are entitled to a monthly cash subsidy, coverage under the National Health Insurance Program, paid parental leave, educational scholarships, and prioritization in social programs. However, the implementation and awareness of these benefits among single parents raise important questions. To address this, a study titled "Republic Act No. 11861 through the Lens of Solo Parents in Higher Education Institutions" was conducted. The researcher, being a solo parent herself, aimed to raise awareness among solo parents in higher education institutions about the Expanded Solo Parents Welfare Act, ensuring proper availment of its benefits. This study led to the organization of programs specifically tailored to solo parents in higher education institutions, promoting their rights and privileges under the law.



METHODS

The present study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological study using an experiential approach. This approach involved examining the lived experiences of individuals to gain insight into their subjective perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. The research employed interviews, field notes, and direct observation to explore and interpret the lived experiences of the participants, aiming to provide a holistic understanding of their world.

The research was conducted at a Higher Education Institution in Laguna that implemented Republic Act 11861. Purposeful sampling was employed to select five solo parents as participants who could provide rich and relevant information for the study. The interview guide was used as the primary instrument for data collection, which underwent validation by field experts and pilot testing to ensure accuracy, clarity, and completeness. The interviews were conducted in an open-ended manner to allow participants to share their perspectives and experiences.

Ethical considerations were also emphasized, with the researchers respecting the participants' right to privacy and confidentiality. Participants were fully informed about the research purpose and process, given the opportunity to withdraw at any time, and treated with respect for their opinions and beliefs. The qualitative data collected were analyzed using thematic procedures, following the phases of familiarization, code generation, theme search, theme review, theme definition, and report production.

Overall, the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of solo parents in a higher education institution, examining their challenges and professional identity. The findings were supported by relevant literature related to the experiences and challenges faced by solo parents in their professional lives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research is guided by the following central question:

What is the essence of lived experience of solo parents as to the availment of benefits of Republic Act 11861?

Meanwhile, the corollary questions were answered in the tables provided.

Corollary Question Number 1. How do the solo parents describe their experience as to implementation of benefits of Republic Act 11861?

Interview Question 1: What do you know about the Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act?

When the participants were asked about their knowledge about the Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act, Participant 2 mentioned that her knowledge about the said benefits were quite limited although she also added she is now experiencing the benefits. In relation, Participant 1 uttered that she is not at all fully aware of the full implementation of the benefits of the RA 11861. The participants realistically showed that the knowledge they had to fully access their benefits is quite limited and scarce.

Table 1. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Knowledge about the Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 2	<i>"As of now po maam, ang alam ko lang poo doon yung mga benefit na makukuha natin."</i>	Participant 2 seemed to be confused while answering the question.
Participant 1	<i>"Ako'y hindi masyado dun aware pero ang ano ko lamang ay yung mga pwedeng maano ng isang solo parent."</i>	Participant 1 was quite convinced with her statement.

Interview Question 2: Describe the implementation of Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act in your HEI.

Table 2. Annotated Exemplars of Solo Parents' Description on Implementing of Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act in their HEI

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 3	<i>"Okay yung kagaya nung 7 days na leave na pwede kong ma avail, na a-apply ko 'yan dito sa atin sa office."</i>	Participant 3 was aware of the provision and quite confident about her statement.
Participant 2	<i>Yung seven (7) days, kapag kunwari ay gusto mong umattend nung mga affairs nung mga bata, yun po nag f-file po ako sa HR ng-ginagamit ko po si solo parent, at the good thing maam, ay yung seven (7) days ay busog na busog ako kahit sabihin mong isang (1) taon lang sya.</i>	Participant 2 was quite happy of being appreciative of the extended period with her benefit

Interview Question 3: What support do you get from the implementation of Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act in your HEI?

When the participants were asked about the support they get from the implementation of Republic Act 11861, Participant 1 mentioned that she receives prompt support when they need to take leave for their child, especially during times of illness. While Participant 2's responses echo similar sentiments, highlighting the support they receive when they need to take leave for their child. They specifically mention the rapid response and urgency of the assistance, particularly when their child is sick. These responses show that the participants view the environment around parental leave as responses show that the participants view the environment around parental leave as favorable and encouraging. By allowing them to focus on their child's wellbeing and cater to their

needs without the extra burden of work commitments, the provision of such support can considerably benefit single parents.

Table 3. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Received Assistance from Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 1	<i>"Pag kailangan kong mag leave para dun sa anak ko nga po. Agad-agad naman po lalo na't pag may sakit."</i>	While answering, Participant 1 seemed to be really concerned about her son.
Participant 2	<i>"Masasabi kong support na lang pag kailangan kong mag leave para dun sa anak ko nga po. Agad-agad naman po lalo na't pag may sakit. Yung mga ganun lang po."</i>	Participant 2 manifested a good impression while answering.

Interview Question 4: What awareness activities, programs, or orientations have you attended that your school has conducted as to the implementation of RA 11861?

When the participants were questioned regarding the awareness activities, programs, or orientations they have attended that their school has conducted as to the implementation of RA 11861, Participant 1 mentioned that her knowledge of the provisions of the Republic Act 11861 is primarily acquired through individual inquiries rather than structured awareness activities or programs conducted by their school. With regard to this, Participant 3 had the opportunity to attend sessions that cover various topics, potentially including information about the Republic Act 11861. The differences in the participants' exposure to information and awareness activities regarding the act highlight the need for consistent and inclusive efforts to educate solo parents about their rights and the available support. Implementing regular awareness programs, orientations, and

Table 4. Annotated Examples of Solo Parents' Engagement in Awareness Activities, Programs, or Orientations regarding the Implementation of Republic Act 11861

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 1	<i>"So kung baga nalalaman ko lang na ganun sa atin nung yun nga meron nag inquire lang po"</i>	Participant 1 seemed to be limited on her words while answering the question
Participant 3	<i>"Ah, sa GAD po maam. May mga certain topics po doon maam lalo na po yung sa mga immigrants nung mga batang nauulila tapos nasa ibang bansa at solo parent pala ang naray at tatay na nauwan dito."</i>	Participant 3 was quite enthusiastic when stating her answer on integrating GAD related topics to solo parent.

Interview Question 5: What are the benefits of Republic Act 11861 to your child/children?

When the participants were asked concerning the benefits of Republic Act 11861 to their children, Participant 2 mentioned that she has not yet availed herself of any specific benefits for their child/children under the Republic Act 11861. Participant 3, on the other hand, is personally benefiting from the Republic Act 11861, but they do not perceive any direct benefits for their child/children as of now. The experiences shared by Participant 2 and Participant 3 highlight the importance of not only providing benefits for solo parents but also ensuring that the well-being and needs of their children are adequately addressed. It is crucial to assess and improve the effectiveness of the Republic Act 11861 in providing comprehensive support to both solo parents and their children.

Table 5. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Testimonies on the Benefits their Child/Children Received from Republic Act 11861

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 2	<i>"Wala, wala pa... Kasi, as of now, wala pa. Wala akong nakukuha."</i>	Disappointments and frustrations were observed to Participant 2 while stating her answer.
Participant 3	<i>"Ah, maam, sa mga bata, parang wala pa maam. Pero ako po ang nakakagamit."</i>	Participant 3 was quite confused because she thought that this was limited only for single parents themselves.

Interview Question 6: What are the benefits of Republic Act 11861 in your workplace?

When questioned about the benefits of Republic Act 11861 in their workplace, Participant 4 mentioned that she has flexibility in their workplace regarding their work schedule. While Participant 3 expresses uncertainty about the cash benefits in their workplace, suggesting a potential lack of knowledge or awareness regarding the implementation of such benefits. These responses highlight how important workplace policy and communication are for assisting single parents. The general well-being and work-life balance of single parents can be improved by allowing flexibility in work hours and ensuring clear communication about available benefits.

Table 6. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Testimonies on the Workplace Benefits they Experience from Republic Act 11861

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 4	<i>"Kasi dati 7am, pero kapag nalaman ni dean, sasabihin nalang na 'Oh sige, 8am ka nalang para at least you have time para sa mga batang inaasikaso mo'"</i>	Participant 4 showed gratitude feelings towards her superior.
Participant 3	<i>"pero yung sa cash—or baka naman meron po talaga na hindi lang natin alam na implement."</i>	Participant 3 was uncertain about the cash benefits in their workplace.

Interview Question 7: What are the challenges that you have encountered as a solo parent in your workplace?

When the participants were questioned regarding the faced challenges as Solo Parents in their Workplace, Participant 1's response sheds light on the significant challenge faced by solo parents in managing their time effectively. Juggling work responsibilities with parenting duties, including guidance and teaching, can be demanding. While Participant 2 mentioned that her status as a solo parent is respected, especially when it comes to flexibility in their work arrangements. These insights emphasize the importance of workplace regulations, support networks, and a culture of respect and understanding in creating a supportive atmosphere for solo parents. Organizations may contribute to the general well-being and job satisfaction of single parents by addressing their individual needs and problems, resulting in a more engaged and productive workforce.

Table 7. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Faced Challenges as Solo Parents in their Workplace

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 1	<i>"Dito sa atin, syempre, yung time management. Kasi para sa school, para sa ating anak, kahit na dalaga na kasi yun—ako pa rin yung lahat e. Yung mga pag gabay, yung tuturuan, kasi tuturuan mo pa rin, kaya talagang yung time management po talaga kailangan mong ibigay yun"</i>	Participant 1 communicated her earnest commitment towards her job in time management.
Participant 2	<i>"Parang wala naman, ang lahat naman ay nirerespeto yung status mo. Lalo na yung flexibility na kapag nalaman na solo parent ka."</i>	Participant 2 felt respected at their workplace.

Interview Question 8: How are these challenges resolved through the implementation of RA 11861?

When the participants were asked about the resolved challenges they have encountered as a solo parent, Participant 1 mentioned the support she receives from her grandparents and siblings. She expressed gratitude for their presence in helping support her child, particularly during the time when she was still a job order employee (JO). Participant 4, on the other hand, recognized the value of self-reflection and self-care as a means of managing their situation as a solo parent. The participants demonstrated clearly that having a strong support network, whether it's through extended family or seeking guidance from others, can provide invaluable assistance. Additionally, focusing on self-care, self-reflection, and personal application of advice can empower solo parents to effectively manage their circumstances and enhance their overall well-being.

Table 8. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Resolved Challenges They have Encountered as a Solo Parent

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 1	<i>"buti na lang anáyan ang lolo't lola ko. Pati yung kapatid ko po, sila yung noong time na JO pa ako, tumutulong ng support dun sa anak ko."</i>	Participant 1 was quite happy in expressing her gratitude for getting support.
Participant 4	<i>"yung naipapayo ko sa kanila kung ano yung ginagawa ko, ina-apply ko lang sa sarili ko na sana nakakatulong ako sa kanila, sa pag aadvice nung sa ginagawa ko sa sarili ko maam."</i>	Participant 4 was quite fulfilled when giving advice.



Interview Question 9: As a solo parent, how do you help other solo parents to be aware of the implementation of RA11861?

When the participants were asked concerning their ways to help other solo parents of having awareness on RA 11861, Participant 5 emphasizes the need for solo parents to take an active role in educating themselves about their rights and entitlements, ensuring they can fully leverage the support and benefits provided by relevant laws and programs. On the other hand, Participant 4 mentioned that by coming together as a collective and sharing knowledge and experiences, solo parents can raise awareness and support each other more effectively. Participants showed convincingly that by actively seeking knowledge, forming associations, and fostering a supportive network, solo parents can enhance their access to resources, increase their awareness of available support, and work collectively to address common challenges.

According to Smith et al. (2022), the findings of this study underscore the importance of both individual and collective approaches in supporting solo parents. While self-education empowers solo parents to take charge of their own well-being and rights, collective support networks create a platform for sharing experiences, knowledge, and resources. By combining these approaches, solo parents can strengthen their position, enhance their access to information and support, and collectively advocate for their rights and needs.

Table 9. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Ways to Help Other Solo Parents of having Awareness on RA 11861

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 5	<i>"Kailangan talaga alamin pa nila kung ano yung mga pribilehiyo na pwede nilang kunin, kasi kung hindi pa nila alam, masasayang yun"</i>	Participant 5 explicitly made a statement on her question and quite resolved after.
Participant 4	<i>"kailangan nating mga solo parent na alamin kung sino-sino yung mga ka member natin tapos magkaroon tayo ng isang association"</i>	Participant 4 enthusiastically suggested the importance of solo parents forming an association

Interview Question 10: How satisfied are you with the provisions in the implementation /support of RA 11861 in your institution?

The participants were asked how satisfied they are with the provisions in the implementation support of RA 11861 in their institution, Participant 5 indicated that she is 100% satisfied with the benefits provided by LSPU. She mentioned that she has personally practiced and fully availed herself of the benefits, indicating that she has experienced the tangible advantages of the support provided. In relation, Participant 4 mentioned that the additional leave is satisfactory to them and highlight that it prevents the reduction of her other leave entitlements.

Table 10. Annotated Exemplars of the Solo Parents' Satisfaction on Provisions in the Implementation and Support from their Institution

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSES	RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATION
Participant 5	<i>"Sa LSPU maam, 100% ako. Kasi na-papractice ko sya at talagang avail na avail naman po sya"</i>	Participant 5 satisfyingly answered the question with a smile.
Participant 4	<i>"Ahh syempre kung halimbawa't hindi pa natin na a-avail yung ibang kailangan natin matanggap, yung pagkakaroon lang ng additional leave, okay na sa'kin 'yun. Opo, satisfied ako don, ma'am, hindi na mababawasan yung ibang leave ko"</i>	Participant 4 seemed to express her satisfaction while smiling to the researcher.

Corollary Question Number 2: What themes emerged from the testimonies of the solo parents?

A figure of themes that emerged from the study is presented before the themes. As can be seen in Figure 1. The themes were as follows: Ambivalent Knowledge on RA 11861; Beneficial Implementation from HEI; Effective Implementation of Benefits from HEI; Information Dissemination; Parental Support for the Child; Beneficial Implementation from HEI; Work-Life Balance; Strengths of a Solo Parent; Solo Parent Empowerment; and Positive Feedback from the Program.



Figure 1. Emerging Themes

The analysis of themes in this study aimed to shed light on the lived experiences of solo parents regarding the implementation of benefits under Republic Act 11861. The researcher carefully examined and analyzed the identified themes, refining and defining them by reviewing the coded data. Themes were revised, renamed, or merged as needed to accurately represent the data and were explored in terms of content, context, patterns, relationships, and interpretations.

A thematic map was presented, with the central phenomenon being the lived experiences of solo parents in implementing the benefits of Republic Act 11861, surrounded by ten themes that emerged from the participant interviews.



The thematic map summarized the themes extracted from the data gathering process, serving the study's objective. These themes identified gaps and areas for further exploration among solo parents working in higher education institutions. They could reveal unexplored aspects and patterns, guiding future research and generating new research questions. The themes played a crucial role in organizing, reducing, and interpreting the data, facilitating a systematic approach to understanding the lived experiences of solo parents.

Interview Question 1: What do you know about the Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act?

Theme A. Ambivalent Knowledge on RA 11861

For the first theme, the participants had Ambivalent Knowledge on RA 11861 also known as the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act, solo parents exhibited varying levels of awareness and understanding of the specific provisions and benefits offered by the legislation. The subthemes that emerged within this theme include the Lack of Comprehensive Knowledge. As Participant 1 said, "Ako'y hindi masyado dun aware pero ang ano ko lamang ay yung mga pwedeng maano ng isang solo parent.". The solo parents displayed gaps in understanding the benefits available to them. Participant 4 even admitted, "Hindi ko pa po masyado naaaral mam e." On the other hand, at least one participant experienced Difficulties in the Qualification Process. This subtheme encompassed the challenges faced in qualifying for the benefits outlined in the law. Such hardship was found in one of the participants. Participant 3 said "Sabi ko, "ah tinawag mo pa akong solo parent, kung qualified ba akong solo parent" yun pala, may criteria din po pala na sinesend. Yun lang, medyo na-off lang din ako na kasi expected ko, qualified po ako. As in may solo parent card naman po ako. Pero yun lang, benefits ang unang pumasok sa isip ko."

Lastly, the subtheme Solo Parent Benefits and Entitlements highlighted the inconsistent availability and implementation of support mechanisms. As Participant 3 uttered "pwede kasi tayong kumuha nga po ng ID sa ano natin, then after that po yun pong sa—pwede na rin nating iapply doon sa company natin kung nasan tayo. Meron din tayong seven (7) days leave po."

Recognizing the ambivalent knowledge among solo parents is crucial for developing effective strategies to enhance awareness and simplify procedures to ensure that the intended support reaches those who need it. While some are well-informed and take full advantage of the available support systems, others may have limited awareness due to various factors. Efforts should be made to ensure that information is accessible and disseminated effectively, empowering all solo parents to understand and access the provisions and benefits designed to support them and their children.

Alday (2020) stated that a single parent belonging to a homogenous group tends to work hard for the benefit of their children. We live each day with a different scenario; one wakes up to prepare for him/her while a solo parent thinks and executes assurance of their children's safety and needs. The continuous communications with the faculty, students, and personnel, there is still an incidence of unawareness of the privileges given to solo parents.

Interview Question 2: Describe the implementation of Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act in your HEI.



Theme B. Beneficial Implementation from HEI

The study also revealed the theme of Beneficial Implementation from HEIs or Higher Education Institutions regarding Republic Act 11861, the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act. Solo parents expressed positive experiences and perceived a supportive environment within HEIs, indicating the successful implementation of the law. As evident by what Participant 2 said, "Yung seven (7) days, kapag kunwari ay gusto mong umattend nung mga affairs nung mga bata, yun po nag f-file po ako sa HR ng-ginagamit ko po si solo parent, at the good thing maam, ay yung seven (7) days ay busog na busog ako kahit sabihin mong isang (1) taon lang sya." The subtheme developed under beneficial implementation from HEI was the Workplace Support, highlighting the various forms of support provided by HEIs to solo parents, such as flexible working hours, understanding faculty and staff, childcare services, and access to resources. Participant 1 stated, "Naaavail ko yung flexitime schedule para di mabigat sa akin." while Participant 3 mentioned, "Okay yung kagaya nung 7 days na leave na pwede kong ma avail, na a-apply ko 'yan dito sa atin sa office."

The theme emphasized the crucial role of HEIs in creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment for solo parents, enabling them to pursue higher education while effectively managing their parenting responsibilities. Recognizing and promoting the beneficial implementation of the law in HEIs is essential for supporting the academic success of solo parents.

As explained by Kossek and Lautsch (2018), work/life flexibility arrangements is defined as "employment-scheduling practices that were designed to give employees greater work/life control over when, where, for how long, and how continuously work is done." This definition signaled various forms of support structures that organizational leaders and their managers can implement to increase flexible options for workers, including: flexitime programs and telework arrangements.

Interview Question 3. What support do you get from the implementation of Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act in your HEI?

Theme C. Effective Implementation of Benefits from HEI

The next theme that emerged from the research was the Effective Implementation of Benefits from HEI which covered the support solo parents get from the implementation of Republic Act 11861 or the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act.

Under the subtheme of Work-Life Balance, Participant 1 said "pag kailangan kong mag leave para dun sa anak ko nga po. Agad-agad naman po lalo na't pag may sakit." Employers can create a supportive and inclusive environment for solo parents, enabling them to thrive both personally and professionally. Such implementation not only enhances employee satisfaction and retention but also contributes to a positive company culture that values work-life balance and diversity.

Meanwhile, the subtheme Underused Assistance Benefits revealed that some participants have not yet utilized the benefits of the Act. Participant 2 and 3 stated respectively, "hindi ko pa sya na-exercise, yung sa seven (7) days na



or yung leave natin”, “may times nga di ko na din nagagamit”. This shows that the participants barely even used their benefits in where they were entitled for that service.

The research findings revealed that the implementation of Republic Act 11861 in HEIs has been characterized by an effective provision of support for solo parents. The study participants reported receiving various forms of assistance, including flexible scheduling options and access to childcare facilities. The theme highlights the positive outcomes resulting from the implementation of Republic Act 11861 in HEIs. It emphasizes the significance of recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by solo parents in higher education.

Johnson et al. (2022) mentioned that flexitime policies significantly contribute to improving work-life balance for employees, allowing greater control over working hours and better management of personal and family responsibilities. This leads to increased job satisfaction, reduced work-related stress, and enhanced overall well-being. Effective implementation of flexitime requires supportive management, clear communication, and adequate training. While flexitime offers numerous benefits, challenges such as maintaining productivity, addressing resource shortages, and ensuring comprehension of flexitime exist. This study provides valuable insights for businesses, highlighting the positive impact of flexitime and emphasizing the need to address challenges in order to optimize its implementation and reap its benefits.

Interview Question 4. What awareness activities, programs, or orientations have you attended that your school has conducted as to the implementation of RA 11861?

Theme D. Information Dissemination

This theme encompasses the dissemination of information regarding the law and other relevant programs and support available for solo parents. Within the theme of Information Dissemination, two sub themes emerged. The first sub theme is Insufficient Informative Activities highlighting the lack of comprehensive and effective information dissemination activities targeted towards solo parents in higher education institutions. Participant 3 said, “So far wala pa, parang wala pa. So kung baga nalalaman ko lang na ganun sa atin nung yun nga meron nag inquire lang po.” This insufficiency resulted in limited awareness and understanding of the rights, benefits, and entitlements provided by the law. The second subtheme is Other Programs Relevant to Solo Parents which focuses on the availability and awareness of additional programs and support services that benefit solo parents. As Participant 3 said, “Ah, sa GAD po maam. May mga certain topics po doon maam lalo na po yung sa mga immigrants nung mga batang naulila tapos nasa ibang bansa at solo parent pala ang nanay at tatay na naiwan dito.” Participants expressed the need for comprehensive information about various programs, such as financial assistance, scholarships, counseling services, and career development opportunities tailored to the challenges faced by solo parents.

The theme emphasizes the importance of improving information dissemination activities to empower solo parents with the knowledge and support they need. By addressing the subthemes of Insufficient Informative Activities and Other Programs Relevant to Solo Parents, efforts can be made to enhance awareness campaigns, improve outreach programs, and provide accessible resources. This will ensure that solo parents are well-informed about the rights,



benefits, and support available to them, ultimately enabling them to make informed decisions and access the assistance they are entitled to under the law.

Zutshi et al. (2023) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic response greatly accelerated the already ongoing technological advancements, leading to significant transformations in knowledge dissemination in training. This, in turn, has had an impact on education and competency development for the future. Through the use of NVivo, an analysis of workplace training and the future of careers revealed that the altered social cues in cloud-based training have resulted in changes in learner attention span, engagement, and peer-to-peer interaction. These changes have the potential to increase instances of contract cheating. As a result, it is recommended that stakeholders clearly define both theoretical and practical education outcomes. This will allow for the development of hybrid cloud-based and face-to-face approaches to knowledge dissemination. Emphasizing professional accreditation requirements, promoting engagement and proper etiquette in virtual spaces, and enhancing the understanding of work-home balance should be key objectives in these efforts.

Interview Question 5. What are the benefits of Republic Act 11861 to your child/children?

Theme E. Parental Support for the Child

The theme of Parental Support for the Child underscores the complex dynamics faced by solo parents in higher education institutions. Recognizing and addressing the Lack of Child Support services highlighted the difficulties solo parents face in accessing sufficient support systems for their children. Participant 3 responded, "Ah, maam, sa mga bata, parang wala pa." Therefore, the RA may not be applicable for the child but for the solo parent. Parental Support focused on the efforts and sacrifices made by solo parents to provide emotional, financial, and educational support to their children. As participant 1 said, "'nakaka-attend na ako sa kanila nung card viewing, diba ganun yun e, pwede mong gamitin 'yun. Tapos halimbawa kagaya ngayon mag re-review yung anak ko sa Manila para sa kaniyang board exam, pede ko siguro 'yun magamit yung leave.'" Despite the challenges, solo parents demonstrate resourcefulness in seeking financial assistance, establishing routines, and actively engaging in their children's educational development. Strengthening support networks for solo parents is crucial to alleviate their burdens and ensure the well-being of their children. Empowering solo parents to access resources and establish a conducive environment for their children's growth and development is essential in supporting their educational journey.

The findings are supported by the study of Smith et al. (2023). Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping children's career choices, aspirations, and overall vocational development. Actively engaged parents who participate in career discussions, offer guidance and support, and facilitate relevant experiences create a nurturing environment. This involvement yields long-term benefits, with adolescents displaying higher career self-efficacy, improved decision-making skills, and increased motivation. These findings highlight the importance of parents taking an active role early on, fostering open communication, exposing children to diverse career opportunities, and providing ongoing support. Professionals in educational and counseling settings should promote and facilitate parental involvement, collaborating with parents, educators, and career counselors to create a supportive environment that enhances children's career exploration and decision-making abilities.



Interview Question 6. What are the benefits of Republic Act 11861 in your workplace?

Theme F. Beneficial Implementation from HEI

This examined the experiences of solo parents in HEIs and the benefits they received from the implementation of Republic Act 11861, also known as the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act. The theme that emerged from the research was Beneficial Implementation from HEI. There are subthemes that have been revealed, one is Availing Flexible and Leave Work Arrangements. Participant 4 said, "Kasi dati 7am, pero kapag nalaman ni dean, sasabihin nalang na 'Oh sig, 8am ka nalang para at least you have time para sa mga batang inaasikaso mo.'" On the other hand, participants 1 and 2 only mentioned the leave work arrangements as one of the benefits they experienced in the workplace. Meanwhile, some participants revealed Underutilization of Benefits. Participant 3 stated, "pero yung sa cash—or baka naman meron po talaga na hindi lang natin alam na implement." The research findings revealed that the implementation of Republic Act 11861 in HEIs has resulted in significant benefits for solo parents in their workplace. Participants reported increased financial support, flexible work arrangements, access to counseling services, and recognition of their unique needs and challenges. These benefits have positively impacted solo parents' work-life balance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

According to Rahman (2019), in recent times, there was a growing recognition among researchers and practitioners about the significance of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) in enhancing employee performance. Given the aspiration to increase female participation in noble sectors like education, this study specifically examines the relationship between FWA, Employee Job Satisfaction, and Work-life Balance among female teachers in the higher education sector. The results of the study confirmed that FWA had a positive and significant impact on both Employee Job Satisfaction and Work-life Balance. Additionally, it was found that Work-life Balance also had a positive influence on Job Satisfaction. However, when conducting regression analysis, one component of FWA, known as Compressed Workweek, was found to have values below the significance level.

Interview Question 7. What are the challenges that you have encountered as a solo parent in your workplace?

Theme G. Work-Life Balance

The theme Work-Life Balance emphasized the importance of recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by solo parents in HEIs. It underscored the need for workplace policies and practices that promoted flexibility, provided childcare support, and created a supportive and understanding environment for solo parents. Under the Solo Parent Empowerment, Participant 3 said, "as solo parent kasi andyan naman yung family ko ih... buti na lang, andyan kasi yung nanay ko. Siya yung 'pag wala ako ang nag aasikaso, kaya hindi ako gaano namomroblema, kasi may sumasalo ng responsibility ko". Practical assistance can be invaluable for single parents. Friends and family members could offer help with childcare, transportation, household chores, or meal preparation.

The second subtheme Parental Time Management was drawn from the participants. Participant explained, "Dito sa atin, syempre, yung time management. Kasi para sa school, para sa ating anak, kahit na dalaga na kasi yun—ako pa rin yung lahat e. Yung mga pag gabay, yung tuturuan, kasi tuturuan mo pa rin, kaya talagang yung time management po talaga kailangan mong ibigay yun.". Having a strong support network of friends, family, or support



groups can provide a safe space for sharing experiences, offering empathy, and providing a listening ear. Emotional support helps alleviate feelings of isolation, stress, and overwhelm. The findings of the study revealed that achieving work-life balance is a significant challenge for solo parents in the workplace. Solo parents expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and struggling to balance their work responsibilities with their parental duties. These challenges can have negative impacts on their well-being, and job performance.

According to the study of Alonge and Osagiobare (2020), establishing a harmonious relationship between work and family entails regulating and allocating enough time to various aspects of life so that issues in one area did not affect others. Life had numerous aspects outside of work, and persons who successfully balanced these various areas were more likely to attain whole life balance, eradicating any imbalances that may occur.

Interview Question 8. How are these challenges resolved through the implementation of RA 11861?

Theme H. Strengths of a Solo Parent

This explored the strengths exhibited by solo parents who are working at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and how they resolve the challenges they face. The theme that emerged from the research was Strengths of a Solo Parent. It was aimed to understand how solo parents employed at HEIs overcome challenges and leverage their strengths. There were subthemes that were drawn for this theme, Family and Social Support were mentioned by some of the participants including Participant 1, "buti na lang andyan ang lolo't lola ko. Pati yung kapatid ko po, sila yung noong time na JO pa ako, tumutulong ng support dun sa anak ko" and Participant 2, "Andyan naman pati mga anak ko eh. Kasi hindi mawawala yung mga nagpaparamdam lalo't alam na nilang free na ako."

On the other hand, the Good Financial Management subtheme was also extracted from the responses. Participant 5 said, "Tipid. Tipid talaga... Tipid talaga, kung kailan lang merong 13th month [pay], medyo ipapasyal mo, ibibili mo ng bagong damit ganun." The findings revealed that solo parents possess unique qualities, such as resilience, determination, and resourcefulness, which enabled them to navigate their circumstances successfully. Participants highlighted various strategies employed to resolve challenges, including effective time management, seeking support from colleagues and supervisors, utilizing workplace policies and benefits, and establishing a support network within the HEI community. Solo parents demonstrated adaptability in balancing their work responsibilities and their role as a single parent, leveraging their strengths to find practical solutions.

The solo parents were motivated by their family because they found support, especially in performing their responsibilities. It was discovered that participants in their study spoke about the strength and support they draw from their families, emphasizing the crucial role of family support as a source of encouragement (Ebora, 2022). Family support played a significant role in providing emotional, practical, and financial assistance to solo parent-mothers, alleviating the burdens of single parenting and allowing them to focus on their responsibilities and pursue their educational or career goals.

Interview Question 9. As a solo parent, how do you help other solo parents to be aware of the implementation of RA11861?



Theme I. Solo Parent Empowerment

On the theme Solo Parent Empowerment, participants were asked on how do solo parents help each other to be aware of the implementation of RA11861. One participant, particularly Participant 2, said, “Kasi ako hindi masyado aware so aaralin ko muna” which exemplified the Knowledge Awareness subtheme. Meanwhile, for Solo Parent Support Network, Participant 4 said “kailangan nating mga solo parent na alamin kung sino-sino yung mga ka member natin tapos magkaroon tayo ng isang association.” Lastly, the subtheme Empowerment through Rights Awareness was mentioned by Participant 5, “Kailangan talaga alamin pa nila kung ano yung mga pribilehiyo na pwede nilang kunin, kasi kung hindi pa nila alam, masasayang yun.”

This theme highlighted the collaborative efforts of solo parents in raising awareness, providing support, and fostering a sense of empowerment among their peers. It emphasized the importance of solo parents helping each other navigate the challenges they faced and ensured that the benefits of Republic Act 11861 were fully utilized. The findings revealed that solo parents actively engage with their peers through personal conversations, support groups, online platforms, and community events. They shared their own experiences, knowledge, and resources related to the legislation to educate others about their rights and the benefits available to them.

According to Smith et al. (2022), solo parent empowerment referred to the process of supporting and empowering individuals who are single parents to improve their well-being and enhance their ability to fulfill their parental responsibilities. It involved providing resources, services, and programs that address the unique challenges faced by single parents and help them develop skills, resilience, and self-confidence. By combining these approaches, solo parents could strengthen their position, enhance their access to information and support, and collectively advocate for their rights and needs.

Interview Question 10. How satisfied are you with the provisions in the implementation /support of RA 11861 in your institution?

Theme J. Positive Feedback from the Program

It explored the theme Positive Feedback from the Program. The research focused on the satisfaction and positive experiences expressed by solo parents regarding the provisions and support offered in the implementation of Republic Act 11861 within their institutions. It was shown with the subtheme Positive Program Experience where Participant 3 said, “Opo, satisfied ako don, ma’am, hindi na mababawasan yung ibang leave ko.” There was also an Enhanced Support for Solo Parents as mentioned by Participant 1, “Super satisfied, kasi sa ini-implement nila parang inaano ng government na hindi lang lagi senior citizens, ganan, pati pala sa ating mga solo parent meron pala silang ini-implement para ma-enjoy natin yung mga, basta yun ma’am.”

Lastly, for the Optimal Benefit Utilization subtheme, Participant 5 stated, “Sa LSPU maam, 100% ako. Kasi napapractice ko sya at talagang avail na avail naman po sya.” The theme and subthemes aimed to understand how solo parents in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) perceive and evaluate the provisions and support provided by Republic Act 11861. The findings revealed that solo parents expressed overall satisfaction and positive feedback regarding the program's implementation within their institutions.



With the help of policy analysis and a literature review on the situations of Filipino single parents, the researchers argue that the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act of 2020, despite recent amendments, was insufficient to address the goals of the policy to raise living standards of Filipino solo parents (Farnacio & Reyes, 2021). The policy analysis involved an assessment of the provisions, objectives, and implementation of the act, while the literature review provided insights into the challenges faced by Filipino single parents. The researchers identified limitations in areas such as financial support, access to affordable childcare, employment opportunities, educational support, and social services, suggesting that the act fails to adequately meet the needs and concerns of solo parents in the Philippines.

Corollary Question Number 3. Based on the findings of the study, what program may be proposed?

Table B. The Proposed Program

Title of Programs	Objectives	Time Frame	Source of Fund	Target Participants	Success Indicators
Comprehensive Information and Awareness Campaign	Develop and implement an information dissemination program aimed at increasing the knowledge and understanding of solo parents regarding the provisions and benefits of Republic Act 11861. This can include orientations, workshops, seminars, and regular communication channels to ensure that all solo parents are well-informed about their rights and entitlements.	Every first quarter of the year	Refer to Accounting/Budget Officer for funds available	Solo parents' employees All employees	Well informed solo parents regarding the provisions and benefits of Republic Act 11861
Streamlined Qualification Process	Address the difficulties faced by solo parents in qualifying for the benefits outlined in the law. Simplify the qualification process by providing clear guidelines and support to solo parents in meeting the requirements. This can include assisting with documentation, providing guidance on the application process, and ensuring that the criteria are easily understandable.	Every first quarter of the year	Refer to Accounting/Budget Officer for funds available	Solo parents' employees All employees	Acknowledgement of the information of process by providing clear guidelines and support to solo parents in meeting the requirements
Workplace Support	Enhance workplace support for solo parents by implementing flexible working arrangements, such as flexible working hours or telework options. This will allow solo parents to manage their parental responsibilities while fulfilling their work obligations. Additionally, provide understanding and supportive faculty and staff who can accommodate the needs of solo parents.	Every quarter of the year	Refer to Accounting/Budget Officer for funds available	Solo parents' employees All employees	High productivity among solo parent worker.



Child Care Services	Establish on-campus child care services or partnerships with nearby child care facilities to support solo parents in balancing their work and parenting responsibilities. This can include providing affordable and reliable child care options, ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for the children of solo parents.	Everyday	Refer to Accounting/Budget Officer for funds available	Solo parents' employees All employees	Ensured the well-being of the solo parent in child rearing practices and routine.
Financial Assistance and Scholarships	Explore the availability of financial assistance programs and scholarships specifically designed for solo parents. Collaborate with government agencies, non-profit	Once a year	Refer to Accounting/Budget Officer for	Solo parents' employees All employees	Improvement in quality of life for the solo parent as well as their children.

CONCLUSIONS

This research paper explores the lived experiences of five solo parents working in higher education institutions (HEIs). The study identified nine superordinate themes: ambivalent knowledge on RA 11861, beneficial implementation from the HEI, effective implementation of benefits from HEI, information dissemination, parental support for the child, work-life balance, strength of solo parents, solo parent empowerment, and positive feedback from the program.

The themes highlight the importance of raising awareness and providing accurate information about the benefits of RA 11861 to solo parents. Implementing flexible work options, childcare assistance, and fostering a supportive work culture in HEIs can significantly benefit solo parents. Effective support requires open communication, understanding, and recognition of the unique needs and achievements of solo parents. It is crucial to empower solo parents with time management skills, access to resources, and self-care practices to achieve work-life balance. The emotional and practical support provided by family members plays a vital role in the overall well-being and success of solo parents. Solo parent empowerment, advocacy, and establishing support networks are key to navigating the challenges of solo parenting. The positive feedback from the program emphasizes the importance of a supportive workplace for solo parents.

Solo parents working in HEIs face challenges in balancing their professional responsibilities with single parenthood. However, their determination, multitasking abilities, empathy, and role modeling make them valuable assets to their institutions. Recognizing and supporting the unique needs of solo parents in the workplace contributes to a more inclusive and compassionate educational environment for employees and students alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study on the lived experiences of solo parents regarding the availment of benefits of Republic Act 11861, the Expanded Solo Parents' Welfare Act, the following recommendations can be made.

- It is crucial to enhance information dissemination activities targeted towards solo parents in higher education institutions. The researcher found out that there is a scarcity of support groups for single



parents in their HEI. This may be achieved through awareness campaigns, orientations, and informative activities that effectively communicate the rights, benefits, and entitlements provided by Republic Act 11861. The aim is to ensure that solo parents have comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the support systems available to them.

- Efforts may be made to simplify the qualification process for solo parent benefits outlined in the law. This includes addressing challenges such as the salary requirement, which may pose difficulties for some solo parents. Streamlining the qualification process will make it easier for solo parents to access the benefits they are entitled to.
- Higher education institutions (HEIs) may continue implementing and enhancing workplace support mechanisms for solo parents. This includes providing flexible working hours, understanding faculty and staff, child care services, and access to resources. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment in HEIs will enable solo parents to effectively manage their parenting responsibilities while pursuing higher education.
- Solo parents face challenges in accessing sufficient support systems for their children. Efforts may be made to strengthen child support services within HEIs and beyond. This can include providing financial assistance, establishing routines, and offering educational development programs for the children of solo parents.
- In addition to the benefits provided by Republic Act 11861, HEIs may explore and promote other relevant programs and support services that benefit solo parents. These can include financial assistance, scholarships, counseling services, and career development opportunities tailored to the unique challenges faced by solo parents. Comprehensive information about the use of programs should be made readily available to solo parents.
- For future researchers, to be able to explore holistically the live experiences of the solo parents, it may be suggested that exploring their backgrounds of being a solo parent is a must. Exploring their backgrounds is another factor for their wellbeing and how they manage their coping being a single parent. Exploring also not just HEI (higher educational institution) but also other nature of the workplace can be another thing for additional knowledge. Moreover, all of the participants were female in this study, it is further suggested to recruit male participant to further elaborate, compare and contrast the testimonies across participants.

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