

# LIFE EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE CAREER WOMEN: THEIR VIEWS, CHALLENGES, AND COPING

**MICHELLE N. FAJARDO**

Researcher

Master of Arts

Major in Guidance and Counselling

Angienette C. Evangelista, MA, RGC, RPh  
Adviser

## Abstract

*This qualitative study used the phenomenological approach through the indigenous technique of "pakikipagkwentuhan" (casual chat). The aim is to uncover the participants' views on their career status, perspectives on being single, and strategies of coping in handling life's challenges as single. The participants were ten (10) single career women from varied occupations. The inclusion criteria were aged 40 and above, did not have a romantic relationship for the past five (5) years, never been married and still childless. Data were gathered through individual interviews with the use of questionnaires validated by experts. Data, being qualitative, were content analyzed.*

*Findings showed that single career women claimed that they were satisfied and motivated to work and were financially secured and fulfilled in their professional growth and advancement. Furthermore, the primary sources of their happiness were their families and friends, who were very loving and supportive of them. They also enjoyed freedom and independence because they do not have marital obligations and parental responsibilities. However, although most of the participants shared that they were happy and satisfied being single, they also perceived some disadvantages and challenges in their status for the reason that they do not have partners and children with whom they can spend their lifetime.*

*Recommendations made by the researcher include that registered guidance counselors can create a counseling model for single career women using the socio-cognitive orientation with emphasis on the nurturance and development of self-efficacy. They may also create a support group for single career women that will allow them to increase their life satisfaction by reinforcing their act of caring for others, strengthen their belief and convictions, deepen their faith in God, and help them become creative. In this way, families and friends will no longer pressure them to get married. Lastly, the participants can identify the different dimensions of well-being as a good starting point in addressing their different needs and possible coping strategies.*

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**Keywords:** challenges, coping, life experience, single career women, views

## INTRODUCTION

“Old maid, spinster, and crazy cat lady”--- these are just a few among the monikers attributed to a single woman. Throughout the ages, single women, on different occasions, have always been asked the inevitable question: “Why did you not enter the married life?” They have been bombarded with many messages implying that a single lady is a freak of nature. Society always assumes that a young woman will date, fall in love and get married and that if she does not, she is destined to be depressed, sad, and miserable.

Entering married life or religious life is reasonably acceptable and deemed normal in society. On the other hand, when a person chooses singlehood, people always put them in stigma and disgrace that he or she should enter married life or else he or she will become unhappy and alone. It is tantamount to saying that being single is a curse and that the ultimate purpose of any person is to get married.

Many single ladies who are past the marrying age have been bullied and teased many times on different occasions by their families, friends, and colleagues. People surrounding them put pressure on them to get married.

The situation varies from country to country, as revealed in the paper of Cross et al. (2004). In the United States, the globalization of the American brand and the empowerment of women have raised the numbers of unmarried women. American women prefer to be single and pursue higher education to be on par with their male counterparts in terms of position and compensation.

Recent studies have shown that when women are more successful than their husbands, they are more likely to leave the latter unhappy. In addition, Buss (2003) found in his study that most men, worldwide, are more likely to fall in love with women who can provide less to the family income or budget. On the other hand, professional women prefer or look for men who earn more than they do. This pressure is not uni-directional. He also reported that while men may be attracted to women who are intellectuals, professionals, and earning more than them, they feel great pressure to measure up to their standards, if not exceed them.

Furthermore, most cultures support and reinforce men for choosing women who are dependent, nurturing, and willing to sacrifice for male-defined goals. When a woman has a sophisticated social status, is intellectual, and has a dominant personality who seems to be independent and strong-willed, a man has fewer tendencies to be attracted to her. This phenomenon is undeniable among single women and single men of today (Barkow, 2000).

Further, when a woman seems to be dependent on her husband, she is more likely to have lower self-esteem and feel less competent for her survival and security. Indeed, when a woman has lower self-esteem, she seems to have a higher dependency on her partner, more inclined to love him, and afraid to lose her loved-one. However, a woman with high self-esteem is more individualistic and stresses personal satisfaction from intimate relationships (Dion & Dion, 1985).

The mentioned phenomenon varies worldwide, although there is similarity in some situations. In 2001, 50% of Japanese women aged 30 were still unmarried compared to 37%

in the United States. In Japan, when two people marry, they should form a union called 'ies.' 'Les' is a Japanese term that includes a signature idea of how each family harmoniously and uniquely combines households and ways of living, as well as between two individuals. Japanese women are choosing to become "Wagamama" or single parasites. That is, when they complete their studies in school, they take a small, less stressful job and live a domesticated life. They are self-centered and wilful while enjoying a life of partying, shopping, and traveling. Some parasite singles vow never to get married. Some plan to continue their studies and become professionals. Others find themselves propelled into professional jobs due to their competencies. Marriage and or children are not the agenda of many of these young women (Cross et al., 2004).

However, in Germany, there is a deep ambivalence among single professional women. Single professional women are viewed as deeply lonely and unhappy, wishing they could figure out why they have been singled out for this peculiar fate. On the other hand, they are seen as deeply intimidating to men, taking over the positions that were once the exclusive territory of men. Both images are exploited by the media in order to reinforce the larger society's general unease regarding the striking increase in single households. This is perhaps the clearest signal that the post-modern global economy is anything but compatible with the conventional nuclear family that assumes a male breadwinner, a female housewife, and children cared by the wife (Cross et al., 2004).

On the other hand, in Poland, the single professional woman became a visible phenomenon after 1989. During the time of real socialism, the everyday struggle for economic survival made it more necessary for men and women to find a partner, especially since being wife and mother were the sole occupations open. Couples married young and were usually forced to stay with their parents for an extended period, often until their children have reached school age. Occupying an apartment was not an option during those difficult financial times. Moreover, a year after that, the job market in Poland was also challenged economically, and single professional women had played a vital part in their respective workplaces. Many of them had consciously noticed that they had forgotten to get married because of the spirited desire to get a better position in the job market (Cross et al., 2004).

Further, demographic data show that theoretically, there were more marriages in the 30-34 age bracket than in previous years. While in the 1980s and 1990s, men married mostly in the 20-24 age group, a significant change happened in 2001 when the largest group of men contracting marriages was between the age of 25-29. However, as one looks at the statistics for women, an overall trend is seen toward later marriage, which does not favor older women. Men tend to marry women younger than themselves. When a woman has finally reached the age of 25, she will experience difficulty in finding a partner who belongs to her age group (Cross et al., 2004).

Moving over Asia, particularly in India, Sunny Singh, the author of *Single in the City*, documented the rise of the single professional women in India. She discussed two broad

categories: those women who were single by circumstances and a new and growing sector of women who are single by choice. Single by circumstance describes a wide range of external barriers to marriage, such as the loss of a promised spouse during childhood, physical and mental limitations that make one non-competitive for a mate or inability to find a suitable boy. This category of women existed in India for many years. Also, many single women put their extended families before their fulfillment and decline proposals of marriage unless they find a supportive partner. However, India saw the rise of the new breed of single professional women who are less interested in marriage. They were no Bridget Jones and did not spend their lives in constant pursuit of a male partner. Very few were hardcore feminists. These were educated women who felt they did not have any need for a man. They relished the fact that they were freed from the accompanying social, cultural, and legal constraints of matrimony. In India today, women choose to remain single not because they could not find a suitable partner but because they feel that a relationship, within the bounds of marriage might imply the loss of personal freedom, or freedom to pursue their interests. Being unattached is a celebration of and a journey toward self-discovery.

It is no doubt that these women are more certain to live independently and happily without having a spouse because, for them, matrimony can either make their life happier or miserable. If the latter prevails, they will choose not to enter into the bonds of matrimony especially those in their 50s or older had already embraced living alone comfortably (Cross et al., 2004).

In the Philippine setting, there is also a steady increase in the number of single professional women. Despite this phenomenon, culture and society still construe that being single is not normal or socially acceptable. Families, friends, and colleagues of these single Filipino women equate being single to loneliness and misery, along with other negative connotations that go with a woman who has no husband or a child.

Furthermore, another similar study, which was done by Ramiro and Cruz (2009), revealed that 80.5 percent of middle-aged, never-married-women-respondents were seen to be happy or very happy with their present status. The family was the primary source of their happiness, followed by friends and relationship with God. The results agreed revealed that they have good quality of life, especially in their mental aspect. It was also found that there was a significant difference in the levels of happiness between those who personally chose to be single, and those who were compelled to the quality of life of the two groups remained at the same level. Therefore, one can conclude that contrary to existing perceptions, single, never-married women can enjoy good quality of life that includes physical, emotional, and social status, although the levels of happiness may differ between those who remain single by choice and by circumstance.

The present study looks forward to contributing to the current literature on single career women and the issues these women may present in the counseling setting in the Philippines. Specifically, this study seeks to describe the participants' views on their career

status and their perspectives on being single. It also aims to illustrate the coping strategies of the participants in handling life's challenges.

Data gathered from the participants are expected to provide meaningful inputs for career counselors, guidance counselors, psychologists, educators, human resources managers, families, friends, colleagues and the society in general, as well as the researchers in their respective attempts, to achieve greater awareness in understanding the life of single career women. In particular, it is expected that the findings will be highly beneficial for the practitioners in counseling and psychology as they address the personal needs and concerns of single women.

## METHOD

This study is a qualitative type of research that used the phenomenological approach. This approach is found applicable and useful in gathering the needed responses. It provides the opportunity to accurately describe the occurrence of experiences of the participants without following a given framework and remaining true to the facts (Gobo et al., 2004).

The method "pakikipagkuwentuhan" (casual chat) was utilized in obtaining pertinent data. As cited in Abrenica (2012), "*pakikipagkuwentuhan*" is a data-gathering method that depicts the art of story-telling. According to Enriquez in Pe-pua (1986), and as emphasized in Cunanan, Pabustan and Talon (1993), *pakikipagkuwentuhan*, a novel research method that illustrates data from a person or a group is a freewheeling sharing of one's opinion or beliefs and knowledge of experiences in an informal atmosphere. More abundant data is acquired from this method because each participant is free to air beliefs about specific issues. This is the most suitable among all alternative counseling research methods because it uses a very natural venue for socialization in the Philippine setting. Its non-threatening nature makes it most appropriate for highly sensitive topics."

The participants in this undertaking were qualified based on the following criteria: 1) single career women, 2) childless, 3) never been married, 4) aged 40 and up and, 5) had not been attached to love relationship for the past five years. These ten (10) single career women came from diverse fields: (1) guidance counselor, (1) professor, (1) bank employee, (1) medical technologist, (1) dentist, (1) businesswoman, (1) caregiver, (1) housemaid, (1) dressmaker and (1) government employee. All of them cooperated in revealing their personal stories and experiences as regards their views and challenges in being single, along with will illustration of their coping strategies.

Prior to data gathering, the assistance of experts (two registered guidance counselors and a doctor of education) was sought to validate the interview guide. The said instrument was improved based on the recommendations of these experts. This step was done to ensure that the interview questions are aligned with the objectives of the study. As soon as the interview guide was finalized, the selection of the participants and rapport building followed

suit. It took two months to complete the interview with the ten (10) participants who met all the qualifications. Further, it is noted that the establishment of rapport with the participants was relatively easy because some of them were referred by family and friends. Moreover, to ensure the feelings of trust and security of the participants toward the researcher, prior to the interview proper, participants were oriented well regarding the title, objectives, and the ethical standard of confidentiality. Then, the participants were asked to sign the informed consent.

The researcher and the participants agreed on the schedule of the interview. They were interviewed in their respective offices and homes privately and away from distractions. Subsequently, the transcription of the interview was made. This step was crucial in analyzing the responses during the interview (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Significant verbal and non-verbal cues were also noted to capture the participants' message further. After the data were gathered and collected, the researcher ensured that the actual responses were accurately transcribed without distorting the real thoughts behind the statements. Part of the process was to solicit the help of English and Filipino experts who translated the actual responses. The last stage entailed the verification of the data responses, where participants were asked to sign over their respective interview transcripts, signifying the correctness of their statements.

Participants' statements were subjected to phenomenological analysis. The first stage involved bracketing and phenomenological reduction, where the unique world of each participant was presented without expecting what she has to say (Keen in Hycner, 1985). It means suspending, as much as possible, the researcher's presuppositions and interpretations. The next step entailed listening to the full interview to make sense of the whole (Giorgi cited in Hycner) where the researcher listened attentively to the audio voice recording for several times in order to come up with a sound judgment. After that, the units of general meaning were delineated from the transcripts. This involves getting a sense of meaning out of the expressed responses which will eventually lead to the delineating units of meaning vis-a-vis the research questions. An essential dimension of this phase was to check whether the participants came up responses analogous to the research questions. Once this requirement had been met, the researcher began defining codes as the recurring themes or categories were generated from the responses. The predominant characteristics and features of the given units were evaluated to determine which categories of these units best represent the results. A trained non-registered guidance counselor and two registered guidance counselors served as judges in the grouping of data into themes and categories. A licensed guidance counselor and a doctor of education, on the other hand, were asked to verify the units of relevant meaning for the study. Afterward, the researcher collated their ratings and considered their suggestions. Then, the researcher counted the actual number of times a unit of relevant meaning was listed. Furthermore, the units of relevant meaning were clustered to identify significant themes— an important step in accomplishing the outcome which is to illustrate the emerging framework of the study.

## FINDINGS

### Participants' Views on their Career Status

Table 1 represents the participants' views of their respective professions. As mentioned earlier, the thrust of this study is to unravel the views of the single women-participants on how they are faring in terms of their careers. Given the fact that they have been devoid of familial responsibilities often associated with mothers and wives, it is imperative to determine how they see themselves in the work path they have chosen.

### Satisfied with Work

Participants unanimously expressed that they are satisfied with their respective present career status. Some of them shared that they are happy and contented with their present field of profession/ occupations because they can accomplish their tasks and are performing well at work. They viewed themselves as successful in their workplace.

### Motivated to Work

Six out of ten participants said that they are motivated to do their work because of several reasons, such as the desire to give back or help their family and other people as well. One of the participants expressed that despite the challenges she is experiencing at work, she is still motivated because that is what makes her work a more fulfilling one. They also find fulfillment in the trust and affirmation afforded to them by their superiors. Establishing good relationships and rapport among their superiors and colleagues keeps them feel eager and motivated to go to work.

### Financial Security

Most of the participants expressed that their families can get by because of their work. They have been able to help their families financially and uplift their socio-economic status. Moreover, findings show that they were able to buy properties such as houses and lots and cars on their own. Traveling abroad and getting life insurance are just some of the few things they can afford because of their ample salaries. Further, they can set aside a certain amount of money as their way of securing the future.

### Professional Growth/Advancement

Two out of the ten participants said that they had completed their post-graduate studies as part of the perks of their work. Armed with determination, they pursued higher education for career advancement, which ultimately led them to attain their desired rank at work.

**Table 1**  
**Views of participants on their career status**

Themes/Categories	No. of Responses
<b>Satisfied with Work</b>	
Doing or performing well at work	5
Contented	5
Able to accomplish tasks	4
Successful	9
<b>Motivated to Work</b>	
Desire to give back	6
Challenges at work	1
Trust and affirmation	3
Good relationships among superiors and colleagues	3
<b>Financial Security</b>	
Family is at hand.	8
Able to buy properties	2
Able to save money	5
Able to travel	1
Able to get life insurance	1
<b>Professional Growth/Advancement</b>	
Able to finish post-graduate studies	2
Able to finish desired rank	3
<b>N =</b>	<b>10</b>

Table 1 presents that the single professional women in this study seem to be happy, satisfied and secured in their respective fields of work. Most of them claimed that they have no regrets. Despite the long hours they spend at work, they still enjoy what they are doing. During the interview, some of them also said that they have no plans of changing their present career or venturing to other work because they are already at peace with their present work. They further said that the monetary stability and the priceless feeling or the joy they feel of being able to help other people through their profession is the ultimate reason why they feel fulfilled and blessed with their profession.



## Participants' Views on Their Being Single

Table 2 shows that the single women who participated in this study have a positive outlook about being single, save for few disadvantages, which they admitted in the middle of the *pakikipagkwentuhan* (casual chat). Along with this, they also disclosed some personal reasons why they chose to remain single for the rest of their lives.

### Happiness

Table 2 reveals that the primary source of happiness of most of the participants is obtained from their family and friends. The presence of these people makes their life more fruitful and meaningful. Further, they said that having positive people around makes them feel productive and develop a sound disposition in life despite being single. They also noted that their career plays a significant role in uplifting their morale and self-esteem as a person.

### Enjoyment of Freedom and Independence

Participants confirmed that they do enjoy their freedom and independence by being single. They said that having no husband and children makes them feel free, and they can do anything they want with no restrictions. Their social life is at its peak since they can go out anytime and anywhere with friends. In relation to their work, they find being single as an advantage working for them because they can devote more time to their jobs.

While most of the participants opined that they lead a life of contentment as single women, they acknowledge that living alone poses some drawbacks too. They enumerated the disadvantages of being single in the latter part of the interview. Along with this, they articulated their fears of growing old by themselves and the difficulties they encounter in their present state.

### Perceived Disadvantages of Being Single

If single career women enjoy freedom and independence, they have also noted perceived disadvantages. The common responses of the participants are first, that they do not have a child/children of their own who shall reciprocally love them. Second, they have no husband or partner with whom they can confide their problems and with whom they can grow old and finally, they do not have child/children who will take care of them when they are sick or when they get old.

### Fears

The participants also voiced-out their anxiety of leading a single life. They have confessed that they are beset by fear of having terrible sickness, fear of growing old alone,

and fear of losing their loved ones. Although they claimed that they are happy and satisfied with their life being single, they still worry about the uncertain future.

However, only two out of the 10 participants claimed that they fear to get old alone. Although they are confident that their family members would not abandon them, there are instances when they could not help but think of the grim possibility of facing their twilight years by themselves.

Aside from these disturbing thoughts, the fear of having a terrible sickness is what they fear most. However, all of them claimed that they are ready to die anytime and have come to terms with the reality of death.

### **Difficulties**

Along with their occasional fears, the participants were also vocal about the hardships that go with the "single's territory". One participant disclosed that she sometimes wallows in self-pity, wondering why no man ever attempted to court her. These thoughts often lead her to question her self-worth. Another participant disclosed that her struggle stems from the fact that she misses her parents abroad.

### **Reasons for Remaining Single**

The participants revealed the factors or reasons that contributed to their being single until the present of time. One of the personal reasons they have cited is their inability to choose among the suitors, stating that the suitors fell short of their qualifications; hence, they did not like to settle for anything less. One participant disclosed that she does not see herself being married to a man. Others attributed their single state to the fact that they had no prior experience of having a boyfriend, making them comfortable with their present status. Some cannot afford to lose all the perks they enjoy for being single. One participant divulged that she is afraid to experience pain again following the death of her boyfriend. She cannot bear to undergo the same tragedy of losing another special someone. In addition to these personal reasons, there are also financial considerations that led some of them to choose to remain single.

One participant said she is the breadwinner of the family; hence, she cannot simply abandon that huge responsibility. Another participant revealed that she wanted to uplift the lives of her family. Others claimed they decided to prioritize their career and studies, thus neglecting that romantic part of their life. Another participant disclosed that she could not compromise her religion and faith because his fiancé before wanted her to convert to his religion.

**Table 2**  
**Views of Participants on their Single Status**

<b>Themes/ Categories</b>	<b>No. of Responses</b>
<b>Happiness</b>	
Presence of loving family and friends	8
Have positive people around	1
Have good friends	6
Have a fulfilling career	5
<b>Enjoy Freedom and Independence</b>	
They have no obligation to husband	3
They have no obligation to child/children	2
They can go out anytime/anywhere with friends	3
They can devote more time to work	3
<b>Perceived Disadvantages Being Single</b>	
They do not have their own child/children	2
They have no husband to confide to	3
They do not have child/children to take care of them when they are sick and get old	5
<b>Fears</b>	
Fears of having terrible sickness	3
Fears of growing old alone	2
Fears of losing a loved one	4
<b>Difficulties</b>	
Dealing with sexual urges arise	1
Feelings of self-pity	1
Feelings of loneliness when they miss their loved ones	3
<b>Reasons for Remaining Single</b>	
<i>Personal</i>	
They do not like to settle for less	3
She does not see herself being married to a man	1
She is very comfortable being single and afraid to lose the things she presently enjoys	1
She is afraid to get hurt	1
She has no suitor	1
<i>Family</i>	
Breadwinner in the family	1
Wants to uplift the lives of the family members	2
<i>Spiritual</i>	
She cannot compromise her religion/faith	1
<i>Career</i>	
She prioritized her career	1
<b>N =</b>	<b>10</b>

In summary, Table 2 reveals the different perspectives and personalities of every single woman regarding their views on being single. Some of them have agreed that

happiness is just a matter of choice, and they choose to be happy. Having a positive attitude towards life and being able to serve the Lord through their own God's given talent, it is still possible for them to live meaningfully and peacefully as they embrace both the pains and joys of being single.

### **Coping Strategies**

Table 3 shows the coping mechanisms of the participants in handling life's challenges. All of them shared that being prayerful and having a strong bond with God are their antidotes in dealing with their struggles and challenges. As such, their spirituality is their best coping mechanism. Aside from having a faith rooted in God, they believe that enough supply of love, care, and concern from their family coupled with the presence of a dependable support group and having positive people around are the key factors that contribute to their positive attitude towards life. Furthermore, one participant said, she finds joy in taking care of pets like dogs at home. Pets provide comfort and entertainment to her. Another participant said that she finds peace and relief when she travels.

To summarize, most of the single career women are satisfied with work, motivated to work, and have achieved financial security and professional growth/advancement. The sources of happiness of these women are their families, friends, and fulfilling work. Further, findings also show that these single women enjoy freedom and independence because they do not have husbands and children to whom they must fulfill their obligation. They can go out anytime and anywhere with friends. On the other hand, they acknowledge that the disadvantage that goes with being single is the fact that they do not have husbands or children to confide with and who would take care of them when they get old. Findings also reveal that these women have remained single either because of fate or choice.

Moreover, they have also mentioned challenges such as their fears of growing old alone, fears of having terrible sickness, and fears of losing a loved one. In addition, these women experience difficulties when sexual urges, feelings of self-pity, and feelings of loneliness arise. As a way of combating these struggles, they resort to spirituality which is anchored in their faith in God. Having a strong family bond is another way of coping with the challenges of being single. Another key is to maintain a positive outlook on life. Leisure time with pets and the opportunity to travel to places are also productive activities for single professional women in attaining happiness despite being single.

**Table 3****Illustration of their coping strategies in handling life's challenges**

Themes/Categories	No. of Responses
<b><i>Strong Faith in God</i></b>	
- They attend bible study and sharing	4
- They attend mass every day	2
- They become prayerful	10
- They join religious organizations	6
<b><i>Strong Bond with Self and Family</i></b>	
- They have maintained a positive outlook on life	8
- They have earned high respect among family members	4
<b><i>Established Good Friendships</i></b>	
- They have maintained long and lasting friendships	7
<b><i>Leisure Time with Pets</i></b>	
- They find happiness in taking care of pets at home	2
<b><i>Opportunity to travel to different places</i></b>	
- She finds traveling to other places as a relief to her boredom	1
<b>N =</b>	<b>10</b>

## DISCUSSION

Most of the single women in this study claimed that they are comfortable, at peace with themselves and with others, happy and satisfied in their maidenhood. Innumerable reasons were given to illustrate their enjoyment of their present state. Sense of freedom and independence are just two of the many reasons why they believe they are privileged over their married counterparts. They can do whatever they want to do and decide for their own without seeking the approval or consent of a better half. They do not have to worry much about their looks, figure, and fashion sense for fear that their husbands or partners might look for a younger, sexier, and prettier woman. This is to say that single Filipino women are becoming more and more independent and strong-willed.

Most of the participants claim that they would rather stay unmarried than settle for someone who falls short of their set qualifications; hence, they are still single until the present time. Further, the participants conveyed that they are happy and contented being single because of the many perks that go with it. Most of them attribute their happiness from their

career satisfaction since they find their work enjoyable and fulfilling. Although dissatisfactions in work crop up occasionally, namely: difficulty in dealing with their superior, working with uncooperative colleagues and, pressure in meeting deadlines and quota in work, they reasoned that these were just normal and that they can bear them well.

Consistently, Roe as cited in Eala (2004), mentioned that career takes a special role for single women in midlife. Work is more than a way to make a living. It becomes a part of their identity. For single middle-aged women, work may be their key to their sense of having control over their lives and their sense of purpose. Work can also be a place where a woman is reinforced and valued. In the same manner, work is a place where she creates and produces. One of the best predictors of life satisfaction of these single women is their job satisfaction.

Moreover, most of the participants agreed that although their civil status is not a factor contributory to their success in fulfilling their goals in life, they still consider it an advantage because they can devote much of their time to performing their assigned tasks. They further realized that they have more time for themselves – a plus, which leads them to become reflective and adept in their intrapersonal skills. They added that their strong bond with their family and friends enables them to feel happy and satisfied. Additionally, they have more time to work because they do not have marital obligations and maternal responsibilities to do. Parallel to this, a recent study indicates that Chinese, Japanese, and American women who were older than 45 perceived marriage as costly to their freedom and overall happiness because they were comfortable living alone (Fergusson, 2000).

The interviewed participants disclosed that they consider themselves successful in their own right because their family can get by because of their work, adding that it plays a major role in their support system. Aside from this, financial independence plays an important role in their sense of security since they can set aside a fraction of their salary for their future needs. Most of all, they are happy and contented because they have been able to help their family in uplifting their lives because of their work. However, there is only one participant who confessed that although she is happy at work, she still has bouts of sadness intermittently because of financial difficulty.

Although the attitude of the person is the main key to be successful in one's career, still, participants in this study cannot deny that salary is one of the positive reinforcements to work hard. Participants in this study ascribe their contentment in work to good compensation, which affords them to help their family. They further expressed that they are after the happiness of their loved ones. Based on these responses, one can conclude that life satisfaction, for these women, is not determined by the presence of a partner or a spouse. Having a successful career could assuage the absence of romantic relationships.

The single women interviewed in this study gave varying reasons why they remained single until the present time. The participants have enumerated several factors that

contributed to their being single. Aside from the fact that they do not want to settle for anyone who does not meet their standards, some of them believe that they were fated to remain unmarried, while the others claim that their present status is a product of their choice. When probed further, however, they also disclosed serious reasons why they remained unattached. One participant said she could not compromise her religion, but given a chance to fall in love again without having to sacrifice her faith, she would enter the married life. Based on her answer, one can say that although some of them agreed that being single is not definitely a predictor of a happy life, still one can deduce that the happiness of having a partner or having a child of her own is still a gauge of success or fulfillment of some Filipino single women regardless of their profession.

Another participant said she does not want to get hurt again. Having the phobias of getting hurt and being left alone is another thing. Based on this statement, one can predict that some of the single women prefer to have a family of their own, but they have no ample courage to face the dilemma and challenges of being in love and committed again. Aside from these reasons, another participant said that she does not see herself being married to a man. Having this statement, one can say that this single woman is more likely to have experienced an identity crisis or had an experience of a traumatic event or encounter with a man. The researcher attempted to probe more during the interview for further explanation on the part of the participant, but she refused to discuss it further.

Meanwhile, one sadly expressed that no one attempted to court her until the present time. Sometimes she indulges in self-pity because she dreams of having a family of her own. This was before she finally accepted her fate as a single woman. Again, based on the observation of the researcher, one can conclude that although the participants claimed they had accepted their fate already, still a part of them is left searching for answers.

Other participants said that they are the breadwinners in the family and had neglected this part of looking for a prospective partner because they had prioritized their family. They had been too focused on their careers and ignored this part of their life. Lastly, one participant said that she has a comfortable life being single, and she is afraid to lose the freedom and independence she enjoys. It can be noted from her statement that single women are afraid to handle both marital and parental obligation and they cannot afford to change their lifestyle and other enjoyment associated with being single. However, despite everything, all of the participants claimed that they are now happy being single. They positively agreed that happiness is just a matter of choice. Here, one can safely say that acceptance of reality is the key to one's happiness.

Although they do not have a family of their own, they expressed that there are many reasons to celebrate life as single. Their joys or source of happiness emanates from the presence of their loving and supportive family and friends, along with their fulfilling careers. The presence of a reliable support group makes them whole as a person. Aside from the foregoing, the freedom and independence of being single seem to be the primary reason why

they enjoy their life being single. Most of the participants have unwittingly upheld "individualism" already. According to Berkovitch, Bradley, and Genow, as cited in Cross et al. (2004), individualism is a well-documented phenomenon that has raised the bar of the qualities needed in an acceptable mate. Individualism espouses the idea that one needs to be responsible, accountable, and focused on one's self rather than on a community of others.

Interviewed participants have also mentioned their difficulties in being single such as when they miss their loved ones who are far from home or those who passed away already. Based on this confession, it can be gleaned that single women are more likely to experience separation anxiety when someone in their family leaves or dies because of the emotional attachment they developed to their parents, siblings, and friends. An adult may experience wide-ranging separation anxiety symptoms, such as extreme anxiety and fear when separated from major attachment figures, avoidance of being alone, and fears that harm will befall those close to them (Manicavasagar, 2008). Aside from the separation anxiety, one participant conveyed that she is experiencing financial issues because of the instability of her work. Another participant mentioned that she pities herself whenever she recalls that no one attempted to court her. From this point of view, one can assume that the participants can descend into the emotional swamp of self-pity if they entertain negative thoughts. One participant also said that when sexual urges arise, she counteracts it by praying. Undeniably, from her brave confession, one can infer that the single woman experiences unsatisfied sexual drive/pleasure.

On the other hand, most of the participant-single career women have expressed that they do not fear growing old alone, nor do they fear death because they have God in their lives. Most of them shared that their best outlet or coping mechanism is praying. All of the participants are spiritually grounded, and that is what makes them complete and happy. They believe that God is their partner in life who will never leave or forsake them. Most of them are active members of the different religious organizations in their respective churches. They also believe that their angels are their family members and friends who are unwavering in their love for them. Although it is not equal to the love of a husband or child, they are humbled because they have wonderful people around them to guide, inspire, and love them no matter what.

In this study, it was also discovered that pets like dogs at home could also be a good diversion for single women. Since pets can entertain and also give them comfort, they find joy in taking care of them because of the therapeutic relief the pets provide. Studies have found that dog owners are less likely to suffer from depression than those without pets. "Dogs particularly can ease loneliness, reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, promote social interaction, encourage exercise and playfulness, and provide unconditional love and affection (Lawrence & Segal, 2007). One of the reasons for the therapeutic effects is that dogs and cats fulfill the basic human need to touch. Another effective coping mechanism single woman revealed is to travel to places new to them. Discovering scenic spots is a good way to achieve the tranquillity they need. They feel energized and refreshed whenever they visit a new place.



Visiting a foreign country opens their eyes to how the rest of the world lives, and they return home with a new appreciation of their country while gaining a broader worldview in the process. According to them, they only live once, so passing up a chance to travel is tantamount to passing up a life-altering experience.

There are also limitations in this study because this was focused only on the present underlying views of the participants toward their work and their status of being single. It is not within the coverage of the study to tackle their concerns about their retirement and plans for their career. Further, the research did not inquire about their concerns as they approach the menopausal stage and empty nest syndrome when they reach old age.

After synthesizing and analyzing the findings of the study, the following are the recommendations made by the researcher to help the Filipino single career women address their concerns or challenges in life. For the guidance counselors: (1) Registered guidance counselors can create a counseling model for single career women using the socio-cognitive orientation with emphasis on the nurturance and development of self-efficacy; (2) Create a support group for single career women that will allow them increase their life satisfaction by reinforcing their act of caring for others; strengthen their belief and convictions, deepen their faith in God, and help them become more creative. In this way, families and friends will no longer pressure them to get married; (3) More research on the aspects of well-being in counseling is needed since the new trends are more focused on prevention rather than cure. Finding out the different dimensions of well-being can be a good starting point in addressing their different needs and possible coping strategies; (4) a comparison and contrast study of single professional men and women to be able to determine whether they have the same concerns and difficulties; (5) a comparison of the midlife single career women and old age single career women to determine how they deal with life's major transition.

### **THE EMERGING FRAMEWORK**

After a thorough analysis of the findings, a framework emerged. Figure 1 shows this emerging framework, which summarizes the participants' views on career status, views on being single, and illustration of their coping strategies in handling life's challenges. In this framework, a picture of a woman who wears eyeglasses is used to represent the single career women who willingly participated in the study. In this study, all participants have viewed their respective life-long occupations as satisfying and fulfilling careers. The head represents the present career status of the participants because most of them expressed that they are more concerned about their job, adding that their career played a vital role in their life. The eyes, nose, and mouth represent their job satisfaction, motivation at work, professional growth or advancement, and financial security, respectively. Most of the participants claimed that they enjoy job satisfaction and are motivated to work. Further, participants claimed that they had achieved professional growth and advancement in their respective work.

The upper part body of the picture shows the participants' views on their single status and their challenges. Out of the findings, six major themes were generated: the perceived source of happiness, enjoyment of freedom and independence, perceived disadvantages of being single, reasons for remaining single, their fears, and their difficulties. The lower part of the body represents the different coping strategies of the participants in handling difficulties or challenges of being single. A strong bond with self and family was emphasized as the second primary source of their strength next to their strong faith in God. Another coping strategy of the participants noted was the forging of good friendships. Most of the participants said that they enjoy being with their friends aside from their family. Their friends are their companions in the absence of their family members. Though most of the participants have gained intrapersonal skills already because they have more time to reflect when they are alone, they became individualistic and independent in the process.

However, all of the participants expressed that their greatest weapon in handling life's challenges is praying. Having faith that is deeply rooted in God makes them stronger and wiser. Another effective way of coping, for them, is the leisure time they spend with their pets at home and the opportunity to travel. They find relief whenever they tend to their pets; while are soothed by the tranquillity of the new places they explore.

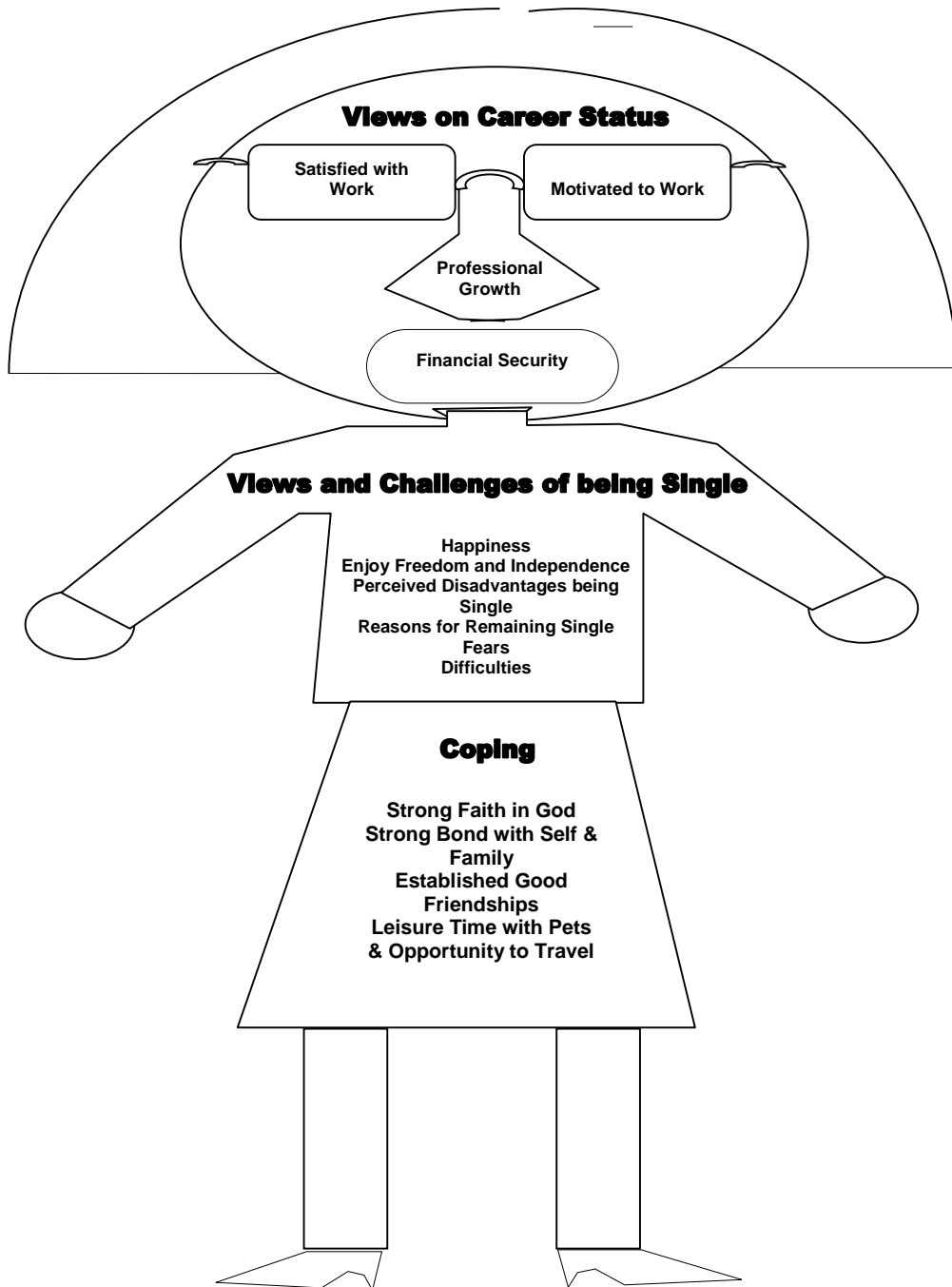


Figure 1. The Emerging Framework: Views, Challenges, and Coping of Single Career Women

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