



Singlehood: Unveiling Teachers' Self-Contentment in Their Professional Lives

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Abstract

In recent years, singlehood has become increasingly prevalent among working professionals like teachers, whose relationship status may impact their professional lives. As educators play a vital role in shaping students' development, understanding the factors contributing to single teachers' self-contentment and job satisfaction is crucial. This qualitative study explores the experiences of 11 single teachers in the Philippines, examining how they find fulfillment within their professional roles. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, six key themes emerged: (1) Fulfillment through student impact and success, (2) Alignment of personal interests, values, and professional roles, (3) Continuous growth and learning, (4) Importance of supportive relationships and human connection, (5) Work-life balance and time for self, and (6) Overcoming challenges through resilience and perspective. The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of single teachers' professional fulfillment, underscoring the interplay of intrinsic motivations, supportive environments, and personal resilience. These insights offer valuable guidance for educational administrators and policymakers in cultivating inclusive school cultures that empower single teachers to thrive, ultimately benefiting the educational community.

Keywords: contentment, inclusive education, professional life, self-fulfillment, singlehood

1. Introduction

In recent decades, singlehood has become increasingly common and socially accepted, marking a shift away from prior generations where marriage was the expected norm (Coontz, 2016; Esteve et al., 2020; Simpson et al, 2016). With more adults staying single, whether by choice or circumstance, it is important to understand this lifestyle and its implications. Singlehood provides opportunities for independence, personal growth, and fulfillment outside of traditional romantic relationships (Boon, 2016; Pepping & Macdonald, 2019; Stahnke & Cooley, 2020). However, it



also poses unique challenges without the support of a committed partner. These experiences can profoundly shape single individuals' psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Ochnik & Slonim, 2020).

For single working professionals, including teachers, their relationship status may intersect with and impact their professional lives. Teachers play a vital role in education, shaping students' development and academic outcomes (Banerjee, 2016; Franklin & Harrington, 2019; Franklin et al., 2019). Their own well-being and job satisfaction significantly influence their teaching effectiveness and relationships with students (Burić & Moè, 2020; Wenning & Vieyra, 2020). While general literature on teacher well-being exists, there is limited research specifically examining how single teachers navigate their professional lives and find fulfillment at work without the presence of a romantic partner.

Some studies highlight increased workload demands and emotional stressors faced by all teachers, which may be amplified for single educators lacking spousal support (Bensky et al., 2017; Purnomo, 2020). However, factors contributing to single teachers' professional contentment remain underexplored. This study aims to address this gap by investigating how single teachers find self-contentment in their professional lives. It will explore the unique experiences of single educators, shedding light on the factors that promote or hinder their job satisfaction and career growth.

Understanding single teachers' professional fulfillment is vital, given the links between teacher well-being, effectiveness, and student outcomes. By examining the elements that allow single teachers to thrive professionally, this study can inform policies and interventions to better support this demographic. The goal is to foster school environments where single educators can find self-contentment and succeed in their vital role of educating and guiding students. With singles



comprising a sizable portion of the workforce, these insights are relevant not only for the teaching profession but also have broader implications for supporting single working adults across industries.

2. Literature Review

Singlehood: Defining and Recognizing Its Importance

Singlehood, viewed primarily from an individualistic and independent standpoint, has become increasingly significant in contemporary society. It generally relates to being unmarried or not engaged in a committed romantic partnership (Ademiluka, 2021). Singlehood can stem from personal choice, societal reasons, or life circumstances (Girme et al., 2022). Understanding singlehood is important not only in recognizing it as a valid lifestyle choice but also in appreciating its broader implications for an individual's psychological and emotional well-being (Ochnik & Slonim, 2020).

Singlehood can enable positive personal growth and development (Pepping et al., 2018). It allows individuals to explore their identities, engage in self-reflection, and make life decisions without a partner's influence (Apostolou, 2018; Stahnke & Cooley, 2020). Single individuals often have increased time and flexibility to pursue diverse activities, advance their careers, and engage in social interactions, leading to an independent and empowering lifestyle (Boon, 2016; Markowska-Gos, 2019). However, acknowledging and comprehending the significance of singlehood is critical, as it provides an alternative perspective on fulfillment and enables individuals to navigate life based on their preferences.

Changing Trends: The Rising Number of People Choosing Singlehood

In recent years, significant changes in societal structure and outlook have emerged, especially regarding relationship statuses and decisions (Korayev, 2019). Singlehood is becoming more



prevalent, whether by choice or circumstance, marking a departure from previous generations where marriage was the expected norm (Greenwood et al., 2016). This shift can be attributed to various factors, including delayed marriage, greater emphasis on personal autonomy and independence, evolving gender roles, and increased acceptance of diverse relationship lifestyles (Coontz, 2016). Technological advances have also enabled maintaining interpersonal connections without romantic relationships (Craft & Garcia, 2016). This growing embrace of singlehood stems from individuals seeking fulfillment beyond conventional marriage and exclusive partnerships (Ochnik & Slonim, 2020), indicating that personal preferences now take precedence over societal pressures. Appreciating these evolving trends is key to understanding the rising prominence of individual choice in romantic status.

Understanding Self-Contentment: Defining and Recognizing its Significance for Single

Teachers

Given these trends, comprehending how individuals attain self-fulfillment through singlehood is essential. Self-contentment involves satisfaction, joy, and wholeness derived from personal accomplishments, actions, and life experiences (Cordaro et al., 2016; Paul et al., 2015). It is achieved when one finds fulfillment within oneself without seeking external validation (Walschots, 2017). Life satisfaction, mental well-being, and emotional positivity typically indicate self-contentment (Srivastava & Singh, 2015).

In modern society, self-contentment is vital for mental health and overall well-being, especially for single teachers, as the lack of a romantic partner uniquely shapes their professional and personal lives (Boon, 2016). Achieving self-contentment is crucial for preserving well-being and ensuring effectiveness as educators. Extensive research shows a robust correlation between teachers' emotional well-being, performance, and student outcomes (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Brackett et al.,



2013). Therefore, understanding self-contentment among single teachers is key for their happiness, job satisfaction, and success.

In general, content teachers tend to cultivate an atmosphere of enthusiasm and motivation in the classroom. According to Celik (2017), when teachers display passion for teaching, it spreads to students, making them more likely to engage and show interest in learning. Moreover, content teachers often utilize innovative and adaptive teaching methodologies tailored to students' diverse needs (Sawyer, 2017; Vaughn et al., 2016). This adaptability is crucial for ensuring all students can effectively access the curriculum.

Another vital impact of teacher fulfillment is the quality of teacher-student relationships. A teacher's sense of well-being and satisfaction can significantly influence interactions with students (Tsai, 2017). Teachers who are satisfied with their profession tend to be more approachable and empathetic, fostering strong relationships conducive to students' academic and emotional growth (Wenning & Vieyra, 2020; Williford & Pianta, 2020). Students view these teachers as supportive guides, positively shaping perceptions of school and learning.

Furthermore, teacher fulfillment connects to professional commitment and longevity in teaching. Teachers who find contentment in their work are less prone to burnout and more likely to stay in the profession (Mukundan, 2016). High teacher turnover has detrimental effects on students, as it can disrupt continuity and stability in the learning environment (Aulia & Haerani, 2023; Holme et al., 2018; Redding & Henry, 2018). Therefore, promoting fulfillment among teachers is critical for maintaining quality education.

Like other professionals, teachers face challenges including large classrooms and ensuring student learning. These can be magnified for single educators given the absence of a partner's support (Chou, 2017). Research shows single teachers may experience unique stressors related to their



status, such as isolation and multiple roles, impacting their well-being and job satisfaction (Iannucci & Richards, 2022; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017; Spicer & Robinson, 2021). Self-contentment also enables resilience to adversity and stressors, crucial for single teachers facing social expectations and prejudice about singlehood (Reusser & Pauli, 2015). Harnessing self-contentment can empower them to maintain positivity personally and professionally (McIntyre et al., 2015; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2016). Hence, self-contentment with oneself is crucial for the well-being of single teachers. It serves as a foundation that fosters resilience, promotes self-reliance, and enables personal growth and fulfillment (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Single Teachers' Professional Lives

The professional lives of single teachers have received some attention in educational research, though less emphasis compared to other demographic groups. Much of the existing literature on teachers' professional lives examines broad topics like job satisfaction, work-life balance, and well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). However, research focused specifically on single teachers is sparse, revealing a gap in understanding how being single might impact a teacher's professional contentment.

Historically, research has highlighted the many challenges all educators face, from increased workloads (Gibbs, 2016; Žydzūnaitė, 2020) to emotional stressors (Ekornes, 2017; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Wu et al., 2019). Studies have noted that teaching requires substantial emotional investment and personal resources, which can be especially taxing for those managing their personal lives independently (Purnomo, 2020; Xi & Yang, 2017). Yet there is limited analysis examining how single teachers navigate these challenges compared to partnered counterparts.

Some literature discusses individual variations in coping strategies and job satisfaction (Bensky et al., 2017; Chen, 2015; Coxen et al., 2021; Schaufeli, 2015). Single teachers may experience unique



circumstances regarding professional development, networking, and support systems. Irrespective of marital status, a sense of autonomy and perceived competence significantly correlate with job satisfaction and self-contentment among teachers (Collie et al., 2016; Meng, 2020; Muhangi, 2017). However, determinants and outcomes of self-contentment specifically for single teachers remain underexplored.

Potential benefits of singlehood, like fewer family obligations, may enable greater commitment to professional duties and career growth. Conversely, lacking a supportive partner could imply insufficient emotional support, potentially affecting job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2016; Woodward & Beck, 2017). Anecdotal evidence proposes that single teachers might develop strong work communities to replace support typically provided by a partner, yet research does not extensively document these dynamics (Mintrop & Charles, 2017; Reusser & Pauli, 2015). Furthermore, understanding demographic changes within the teaching profession would illuminate the evolving nature of single teachers' experiences over time (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017). Shifts in societal attitudes toward relationships may also manifest uniquely in the professional contexts of single teachers.

In summary, current literature offers limited insight into the unique aspects of being a single teacher, indicating a need for dedicated study on how this group finds self-contentment in their professional lives. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the factors and experiences that contribute to single teachers' contentment regarding their professional lives. A teacher's professional experience can be impacted by various elements, including job satisfaction, self-efficacy, coping strategies, socioemotional skills, and professional challenges. This study investigates the factors associated with singlehood in order to gain insights into the unique experiences and challenges encountered by single teachers. It seeks to understand how these



individuals navigate their professional lives and achieve satisfaction in their careers. Specifically, this study will answer the research question: How do single teachers find self-contentment in their professional lives?

The research outcomes will provide valuable insights into the experiences and overall welfare of single teachers, thereby revealing influential factors that either facilitate or impede their levels of job contentment. Furthermore, the obtained findings have the potential to contribute valuable insights towards the formulation of strategies and interventions aimed at facilitating the professional fulfillment and thriving of single teachers. Educational administrators and policymakers can utilize these findings to cultivate conducive and inclusive atmospheres for single teachers. This entails furnishing the essential resources and prospects for professional triumph and contentment. Profound comprehension of the unique encounters encountered by single teachers can facilitate the formulation of strategies aimed at effectively preserving and gratifying educators within this specific demographic, ultimately enhancing overall teacher retention rates and job satisfaction levels.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This research used a qualitative approach to investigate the factors affecting the self-contentment of the participants considering their single status in their professional lives. This type of research was suitable for this study because it allowed researchers to ask questions that could not be simply put into numerical answers but provided information about a certain human experience (Cleland, 2017). The study specifically used the basic qualitative study design adopted from Merriam and Tisdell's design (2015). The main purpose of the basic qualitative study design was to understand the participants' experiences and the meaning and interpretation they could attribute towards it



(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The basic qualitative study design was appropriate for this study because it examined the broad experiences of a single teacher's self-contentment, particularly in their professional lives.

Settings and Participants

This study was conducted in one of the universities in Northern Philippines, comprising 11 teachers who were single in status from the School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts. The method of purposive sampling was employed in this study to select participants. In qualitative research, purposive sampling was a technique used to select participants based on the specific characteristics that were pertinent to the study (Campbell, 2020). This was a technique in qualitative research in which a researcher selected participants who would participate in the study. Specifically, the following inclusion criteria were used to select participants: (1) teaching at the tertiary level; (2) regular employees; (3) never married, no biological children, not widows/widowers, and currently not in romantic relationships; (4) at least five years of teaching experience, as research had shown that teachers who were satisfied and contented in their roles in five years tended to remain in their profession longer (Perrachione et al., 2008); (5) aged 31 years or older, as past research had indicated that the socially acceptable age range for marriage was 20-25 years old for women and 23-30 years old for men (Allendorf et al., 2017).

Instrumentation

A semi-structured intensive interview was conducted to gather data for analysis. To develop the interview questions, the researchers first established an a priori coding structure by reviewing relevant literature to identify pre-existing concepts and themes (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). This type of qualitative data source allowed researchers to collect in-depth information embodying open-ended and theoretically directed questions while maintaining the study's main emphasis



and informed consent was administered from the participants in order to build rapport between the researchers and participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), emphasizing the confidentiality and privacy of the narratives of the single teachers. A brief explanation of the research objective, background, and interview procedure was given by the researchers at the outset. The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was audiotaped to have an in-depth common understanding during the interview session (Lewis et al., 2019).

The interview recordings were converted to verbatim transcription of notes. The transcribed field text underwent counter-verification and data cleaning as the researchers returned the field texts to the participants for checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) to ensure its credibility (Mero-Jaff, 2011).

The thematic analysis model of Braun and Clarke (2013) was used to analyze the data sets. Using such a model primarily aimed at finding patterns and themes from the data (Clarke & Braun, 2013) related to exploring the experiences of single teachers in their professional lives and applying these to address the research. The researchers acted as analysts observing the following procedures: (1) familiarized the data, (2) generated initial codes from transcription, (3) categorized the combined codes, (4) created codebook hierarchies, and (5) connected categories into themes.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers for this study obtained a letter endorsed by the Undergraduate Research and Innovation Coordinator (UGRIC) and the Dean of the School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts for the recruitment and dissemination of consent forms to the participants. This provided guidelines for appropriate ethical principles ensuring respondents' acknowledgement about the nature of the study, its methods applied, process of dissemination, and the significance of participants' involvement (Arifin, 2018).



In accordance with the proper protocols, a consent form served as information about the purpose of the study. Participants were politely asked and signed to take part after reading the consent form. Thus, researchers respected any decision made by the participants, whether they agreed or refused to partake in the study. This gave emphasis to their anonymity, right to renounce without giving reason, and ensured no loss of professional or personal reputation (Husband, 2020).

Further to this, the Data Privacy Act was applied in courtesy of respondents' confidentiality and documents of data during the interviews. The conduct of the study was dependent on participants' agreement about audio and video recording, reassuring them that all data gathered would be solely made available to the researchers' analysis of data and interpretation. Thereafter, ethics considerations regulated researchers about ethical standards when conducting research (Hasan et al., 2021).

4. Findings

Six themes emerged from the main research question, which explore how single teachers find self-contentment in their professional lives. These themes include: (1) Fulfillment through student impact and success, (2) Alignment of personal interests, values, and professional roles, (3) Continuous growth and learning, (4) Importance of supportive relationships and human connection, (5) Work-life balance and time for self, and (6) Overcoming challenges through resilience and perspective.

Fulfillment Through Student Impact and Success

This theme encapsulates how single teachers derive a sense of contentment from positively impacting their students and contributing to their growth and success. Five codes emerged under this theme related to the ways teachers find satisfaction through student impacts: (1) development

of students' skills, (2) witnessing of student growth, (3) hearing of students' success, (4) observation of student performance, and (5) observation of student comprehension (Table 2).

Table 2
Codes and Excerpts on Fulfillment through Student Impact and Success

Code	Excerpt	Frequency	%
Development of students' skills	"Empowering students through communication skills is valuable. English proficiency boosts confidence, especially professionally. As language teachers, helping students develop this is fulfilling."	2	18.18%
Witnessing of student growth	"Witnessing students' personal growth and development as responsible, compassionate individuals is deeply rewarding, fueling my sense of purpose and fulfillment."	3	27.27 %
Hearing of students' success	"Hearing from former student-teachers who are now teaching and occupying positions, that they are contributing positively to their institutions, is deeply rewarding."	7	63.63 %
Observation of student performance	"What amazes me is assessing my students in the classroom, then seeing them exceed my expectations during demonstrations. Witnessing their growth this way is deeply satisfying."	6	54.54%

Observation of student comprehension	"Witnessing students grasp challenging concepts, excel in exams, and demonstrate critical thinking fills me with a profound sense of accomplishment and pride, knowing I've played a pivotal role in their learning journey."	4	36.36%
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Alignment of Personal Interests, Values and Professional Roles

This theme highlights how single teachers derive a profound sense of contentment when their personal interests, values, and professional roles are closely aligned. The data reveals several keyways this alignment manifests: (1) use of talents in teaching, (2) discovery of meaning and purpose, (3) alignment of work with values, (4) pursuit of teaching as a profession, (5) enjoyment of work, and (6) alignment of interest with job (Table 3).

Table 3.
Codes and Excerpts on Alignment of Personal Interests, Values and Professional Roles

Code	Excerpt	Frequency	%
Use of talents in teaching	"My language teaching skills and talents are self-fulfilling, as they allow me to find productive outputs and outcomes in my work."	3	27.27%
Discovery of meaning and purpose	"Engaging in meaningful, purposeful work has shaped my sense of fulfillment. Knowing my efforts contribute to a greater cause or positively impact others motivates me to strive for	8	72.72

to teachers' pursuits of ongoing development: (1) pursuit of higher education, (2) improvement of knowledge, (3) willingness to learn new skills, and (4) pursuit of continuous learning (Table 4).

Table 4
Codes and Excerpts on Continuous Growth and Learning

Code	Excerpt	Frequency	%
Pursuit of higher education	"As an English teacher, I have been able to pursue the highest educational level, just like others in my field, and have completed my Ph.D."	1	9.09%
Improvement of knowledge	"Knowing that I am adapting and keeping up with the changes in my field inspires a feeling of fulfillment, despite the challenges. The drive to learn and grow in order to effectively serve my students is a key contributor to my self-contentment as an educator."	5	45.45%
Willingness to learn new skills	"The willingness and commitment to continuously learn are essential for an educator like me. I make an effort to set aside time to develop new skills, and I'm often able to learn a lot from my younger colleagues who are more familiar with the latest tools and technologies. This openness to learning from	6	54.54%

time for self, (4) securing personal space, (5) self-care, (6) work-life balance, and (7) acceptance of solitude (Table 6).

Table 6
Codes and Excerpts on Work-Life Balance and Time for Self

Code	Excerpt	Frequency	%
Travel	"Experiencing diverse cultures, traditions, and ways of life through travel is enriching and empowering for me, even if it requires funds. When I travel, I prefer to do so alone, as it provides a sense of peace."	6	54.54%
Financial freedom	"As a single person, you may have more time for personal development and the freedom to use your salary as you wish, without the obligations of supporting a family or paying tuition fees. This can provide you with greater financial flexibility and freedom."	5	45.45%
Time for self	"The fact that I have time for myself as a single person is one factor contributing to my self-contentment."	3	27.27%
Securing of personal space	"Securing personal space is crucial for personal happiness, mental peace, and stability. As a teacher, maintaining this	1	9.09%

Acceptance of Solitude	"Being single or married is simply a status in life, not a source of pressure or inadequacy for me. I am content with my situation, regardless of relationship status, as it does not define my worth or fulfillment."	5	45.45%
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Overcoming of Challenges Through Resilience and Perspective

This theme demonstrates how single teachers build resilience and adopt helpful mindsets to overcome professional challenges and find self-contentment in their professional lives. Seven codes emerged under this theme related to practices that foster resilience: (1) developing practical perspective, (2) practicing self-awareness, (3) cultivating resilience, (4) stress management, (5) learning from setbacks, (6) maintaining motivation, and (7) overcoming physical exhaustion (Table 7).

Table 7
Codes and Excerpts on Overcoming Challenges through Resilience and Perspective

Code	Excerpt	Frequency	%
Practical perspective	"With age and experience, we become less idealistic and more pragmatic. We see things objectively and are able to adapt quickly, without taking things too seriously. This realistic perspective helps us avoid disappointment, as	3	27.27%

	we see the world for what it is, rather than an idealized vision."		
Practice of self-awareness	"I regularly engage in introspection and self-reflection to deepen my self-awareness and identify areas for improvement. This enables me to capitalize on my strengths while proactively addressing my weaknesses."	2	18.18%
Development of resilience	"I cultivate resilience through a growth mindset, self-compassion, learning from failures, focusing on solutions, and seeking professional support. This resilience empowers me to navigate challenges with grace and determination, ensuring setbacks do not derail my pursuit of professional self-fulfillment."	1	9.09%
Stress management	"Managing stress and pressure is crucial for maintaining self-contentment. I employ stress-management techniques such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, regular physical activity, and seeking support from colleagues or mentors when needed."	8	72.72%
Learning from setbacks	"I view setbacks as opportunities for learning and growth. I reflect, identify areas for	2	18.18%



accomplishment and pride” they feel when observing their students exceed expectations, grasp challenging concepts, and demonstrate critical thinking skills – experiences they found “deeply rewarding” and “fulfilling”. This intrinsic reward system, rooted in the teachers' capacity to make a tangible difference in their students' lives, likely plays a crucial role in sustaining their motivation and commitment, even amidst the numerous challenges inherent to the profession (Engels et al., 2021; Peng et al., 2024). By fostering an environment that nurtures and celebrates the teachers' ability to positively shape their students' trajectories, educational institutions can better support and retain their highly dedicated teaching staff, who find profound meaning in their work (Fouché et al., 2017; Willemse & Deacon, 2015).

In relation with the second theme, which is the alignment of personal interests, values and professional roles, the findings show that teachers experience a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment when their personal interests, values, and professional roles are closely aligned. This alignment, which aligns with the concept of person-environment fit from vocational psychology (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), manifests in various ways - from the ability to leverage their unique talents and find deep meaning in their work, to the joy of pursuing their passions within the teaching profession. Participants described the congruence as "self-fulfilling" and "elevating," emphasizing the significance of discovering purpose and making a positive impact on others through their roles. Research supports the notion that such alignment promotes greater job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and long-term retention (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Boyd et al., 2011; Tehseen & Ul Hadi, 2015), underscoring the need for educational systems to prioritize the personalization of teaching roles and responsibilities, enabling teachers to tailor their work to their individual strengths, passions, and values.



In congruence with the third theme of continuous growth and learning, the findings demonstrate the significant contribution that a single teacher's deep commitment to continuous growth and learning makes to their professional contentment and fulfillment. Participants expressed their deep sense of inspiration and personal fulfillment that comes from actively seeking opportunities to enhance their knowledge, acquire new skills, and even pursue advanced degrees. These sentiments demonstrate a strong connection with the concept of a growth mindset, which recognizes that abilities are developed through continuous effort and learning (Dweck, 2006). By embracing this growth-oriented approach, the teachers maintained a sense of professional dynamism and relevance, enhancing their self-efficacy and perceived ability to positively impact their students. Research indicates that when teachers make a commitment to continuous development, they experience positive outcomes, such as increased resilience, adaptability, and job satisfaction (Amoli & Youran, 2014; Burchell et al., 2002; Han, 2022; Yuen, 2012). The findings highlight the importance of educational institutions in promoting a culture that supports and encourages teachers' continuous learning and skill acquisition. This is key to maintaining their professional well-being and dedication to the field.

When it comes to the fourth theme, which focuses on the significance of supportive relationships and human connection, the findings emphasize the critical importance of positive human relationships. These relationships, whether they occur within the workplace or outside of it, play a key role in boosting job satisfaction and overall professional well-being for teachers. Participants' experiences support the social support theory, which suggests that the availability and quality of an individual's social relationships can greatly influence their ability to manage stress and maintain their well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985; House, 1981). In the teaching context, research has found that perceived social support from administrators, colleagues, students, and



personal networks can help reduce occupational stress and promote greater job satisfaction (Demir, 2019; Soh et al., 2016). The teachers in this study articulately conveyed the "gratifying feeling of connection and fulfillment" that arises from their emotional ties with students. They also emphasized the significance of cultivating "positive relationships with colleagues" and fostering a "robust support network of friends and family" to effectively navigate the inherent challenges of their profession. These positive human connections likely provide teachers with a sense of belonging, emotional support, and validation, which can enhance their overall well-being, self-efficacy, and ability to find meaning and purpose in their work, thereby sustaining their professional contentment and motivation. The findings emphasize the importance of educational systems prioritizing the establishment and maintenance of supportive relationships and social networks for teachers. These relationships should be cultivated within the school community and extend to their personal lives.

Regarding the fifth theme, which focuses on work-life balance and personal time, the findings highlight the significance of establishing a healthy equilibrium between work and personal life. It is crucial for single teachers to prioritize their personal time. This balance and prioritization play a crucial role in increasing professional satisfaction and overall well-being. Participants articulated the importance they attach to activities such as traveling, having financial freedom, practicing self-care, and embracing solitude. These activities grant them personal space, rejuvenation, and the resilience to flourish despite the demands of their profession. This is in line with Hobfoll's (1989) theory of conservation of resources (COR), which suggests that individuals make efforts to acquire, keep, and safeguard the resources that are essential for their well-being. By prioritizing a harmonious equilibrium between their work responsibilities and personal lives, the teachers are able to replenish their physical, emotional, and cognitive resources, which can



enhance their resilience, job satisfaction, and overall capacity to navigate the inherent demands of the teaching profession. Research consistently shows that there is a strong connection between work-life balance, personal time, and increased job satisfaction, commitment, and reduced burnout among teachers (Hlad'o et al., 2020; Mulyani et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies emphasize the significance of self-care practices in enhancing teacher well-being and performance (Buttler & Kay, 2021; Cook et al., 2016). The findings point out the importance of preserving and nurturing these essential resources to maintain the professional happiness and drive of individual teachers. This highlights the need for educational systems to establish and enact policies and practices that promote a healthy work-life balance and personal time for teachers. Examples of such measures include flexible schedules, resources for self-care, and encouragement of the utilization of vacation time.

The final theme focuses on overcoming challenges through resilience and perspective. The findings uncover how teachers develop resilience and adopt positive attitudes to overcome professional challenges and achieve self-contentment in their work. Participants discussed the use of practices such as developing a "practical perspective," engaging in "self-awareness," and "learning from setbacks" to build resilience and manage the stressors of teaching. This is consistent with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which highlights the importance of self-efficacy and personal agency in an individual's capacity to navigate challenges and attain desired outcomes. By employing strategies like "stress management," "maintaining motivation," and "overcoming physical exhaustion," the teachers are better equipped to sustain their sense of purpose and fulfillment in their work. This is supported by research that demonstrates the positive impact of resilience, self-reflection, and adaptive coping strategies on teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and performance (Gu & Day, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2023; Yang et al., 2022). The



findings highlight the crucial role of resilience and perspective-taking in helping teachers overcome professional challenges, maintain a sense of control and adaptability, and achieve success despite the inherent demands of their work. This underscores the importance of educational systems providing teachers with specific support and training in cultivating resilience, practicing self-awareness, and developing adaptive coping strategies to promote sustained engagement and professional satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

The present qualitative study sets out to explore the factors that allow single teachers to find self-contentment in their professional lives. Through in-depth interviews, this research uncovered six salient themes that encapsulate the essence of single teachers' pursuit of self-contentment. These educators derived a profound sense of fulfillment from positively impacting their students' lives, aligning their personal interests and values with their professional responsibilities, and engaging in continuous growth and learning. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of supportive relationships, work-life balance, and the ability to approach adversity with resilience and a balanced perspective. Undergirding these themes was the single teachers' unwavering commitment to their roles and their capacity to navigate the unique challenges inherent in their relationship status.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for supporting single teachers within the education system. By understanding the key drivers of self-contentment for this demographic, educational administrators and policymakers can implement targeted strategies to foster environments that nurture single teachers' ability to thrive. Moreover, the insights gained from this study can have broader relevance for supporting single working professionals across various industries, as singlehood becomes an increasingly common and socially accepted lifestyle



choice. By recognizing and addressing the unique needs of this growing population, organizations can cultivate inclusive and supportive environments that enable single individuals to achieve professional fulfillment and success.

7. Recommendations

Future research on the experiences of single teachers should further explore the intersectionality of their professional and personal lives. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how single teachers' perceptions of self-contentment evolve over time, particularly as they navigate different stages of their careers. Additionally, comparative analyses between single and partnered teachers could shed light on the unique challenges and coping strategies employed by those without a committed romantic partner. Exploring the role of organizational culture and leadership in supporting single teachers' well-being and career development would also be a fruitful avenue for future investigation. By continuing to delve into the multifaceted experiences of this demographic, researchers can inform more comprehensive and tailored interventions to ensure the sustained success and satisfaction of single teachers within the education field.

8. Limitations

The study's primary limitations include its restricted geographic scope, focusing only on a single university in Northern Philippines, and its narrow participant pool consisting of only 11 single teachers from the School of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts. This limited sample may have overlooked perspectives from individuals in more diverse academic disciplines and with varying levels of experience. Additionally, the absence of a comparative analysis between single teachers and their married or partnered counterparts is a missed opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how educators in the single demographic find self-contentment in their professional lives.



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