

Burdened Provider: Understanding the Societal Pressures Faced by Female Breadwinners in Supporting Their Families

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ABSTRACT: Societal pressure experienced by female breadwinners in Digos City often manifests as increased emotional stress, financial strain, and pressure to fulfil these expectations while supporting their families. This study seeks to understand the lived experiences of female breadwinners, how societal expectations heighten their responsibilities, the financial and emotional challenges they face as the primary provider in the family, and the coping strategies they developed to sustain their families under constant pressure. This study used a phenomenological approach, which captures the lived experiences and perspectives of 14 participants selected through snowball sampling and who underwent an in-depth individual interview. The thematic analysis highlights the self-sacrificial life led by female breadwinners, including experiencing a heavy burden of responsibilities, sacrifices, deferred dreams, emotional, mental, and psychological stress, and the financial struggles and economic pressures of fulfilling their families' needs. Despite these burdens, participants show remarkable resilience, utilizing coping techniques like spiritual resilience, emotional and mental strength, family-centered aspirations, financial management, and work-life balance strategies. This study highlights the need for the government and private sector to engage in inclusive policy discussions and implement supportive programs that recognize the dual responsibilities of female breadwinners and promote gender equality within marginalized communities.

KEYWORDS: Female Breadwinner, Societal Pressures, Financial Struggles, Coping Strategies, Digos City

SDG Indicator: 5 – Gender equality; 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries

I. INTRODUCTION

"In the silence of their sacrifice lies the heartbeat of the family" Gender norms are the expectations set by society on how individuals should behave based on their gender. These roles emphasize that men and women adopt separate but complementary behaviors, with men expected to be dominant, assertive, and powerful. In contrast, women are expected to be nurturing, kind, and communal. These gendered expectations reinforce societal hierarchies where men develop traits that lead to higher-status roles, while restricting women to roles of lower status (Kalajdzic, 2020, pp. 1-93). Despite women's contributions to the economy, they face lower returns to education, a persistent gender-based wage gap, and occupational exclusion that reinforce existing inequalities.

In South Africa, being the female breadwinner is not a choice but a necessity to survive. Their struggles are often concealed, as they sacrifice for their family to live. The impact of society makes them vulnerable despite their strong appearance (Parry, 2020, pp.33-49). In Australia, higher income does not always mean having the power at home. For many women, stepping up as the sole provider in the family brings pressure as they fulfill their role in the non-traditional economy: despite their massive contribution to the household, they stay silent to avoid tension. Women often play down their power to keep the peace and reduce the conflict (Blom & Hewitt, 2020, pp. 1340-1357). Husbands facing economic insecurity and financial disparities with their spouses often struggle for more control in the relationship, which can lead to increased domestic violence and family instability (Akanle & Nwaobiala, 2020, pp. 398- 411).

In the Philippines, social gender norms are significantly influenced by family and relatives, shaping how individuals perceive their identities and roles (Pedragoza et al., 2024, pp. 89-98). Fathers, often called *haligi ng tahanan* or "pillars of the home," are typically seen as discipline's leading providers and enforcers. Meanwhile, mothers are called *ilaw ng tahanan*, meaning "light of the home," and are expected to take on nurturing and homemaking duties within the family (Reyes-Espiritu, 2023, pp. 75-95).

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However, this traditional Filipino family dynamic has shifted due to globalization and migration, with many mothers now assuming the role of breadwinners (Ballaret & Lanada, 2022, p. 10664807221123551). During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is reported that the pandemic disproportionately impacted women's employment in the Philippines (Ducanes & Ramos, 2023, pp. 883-899). The impact of the pandemic was tough on breadwinners, who are responsible for meeting their families' financial needs. The pressure and responsibility that come with this role make the experience of unemployment during the pandemic especially challenging, as it affects not only their financial stability but also their mental well-being. The loss of income and disrupted employment negatively impacted their mental, emotional, physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual well-being (John Albert et al., 2024, pp.1352-1360).

Some female students at the University of Cabayao in the Philippines are not just students, they are also breadwinners for their families. They have to balance their academic work with the pressure of providing financially for their households. This dual responsibility strains their mental health, leading to constant exhaustion and emotional fatigue (Alsisto et al., 2025, p. 6). In Mindanao, breadwinners often feel pressured to prioritize family, with women shouldering a greater share of caregiving responsibilities. This dual burden is shaped by the deeply ingrained Filipino cultural values of strong family ties, often leading women to put family before their careers (Alvior et al., 2025, pp. 1-1). The prevalence of female breadwinners in our local area reflects a shift in societal norms, influenced by changing gender roles, increased educational access for women, and community support. While more women are stepping into the role of primary earners, this shift remains complicated, as it often comes at the cost of added stress from the ongoing balancing of family and career demands.

In our study, we draw on social exchange theory, which was proposed by George Homans (1961), Peter Blau (1964), and Richard M. Emerson (1976). These theories examine how repeated exchanges shape social structures that can both constrain and empower individuals. Differences in valued resources among individuals lead to interdependence and create the necessity for exchange, forming the foundation for inequalities and power imbalances in exchange outcomes (Cook, et. al, 2006, pp. 53-76). The central concept of social exchange theory is that interpersonal relationships involve costs and rewards, influencing rational decision-making based on the efforts invested and benefits gained. The three primary goals of social exchange theory are that social behavior is transactional; individuals seek to minimize costs and maximize rewards, and people feel obligated when they receive rewards (Stafford & Kuiper, 2021, pp. 379-390). Many female breadwinners tolerate unequal divisions of labor to achieve an ideal family life and for the opportunity to work in the labor market (Jurczyk et al., 2019, pp. 1731-1754). They may perceive the labor imbalance as a cost in exchange for maintaining family harmony and meeting societal expectations, highlighting power imbalances and societal pressures that hinder their ability to negotiate more equitable divisions of labor.

This study provided valuable insights into the societal pressures faced by female breadwinners in Digos City, Davao del Sur, in supporting their families. The study sheds light on how these factors impact their capacity to provide for their families, which can lead to feelings of being undervalued in a patriarchal system that often overlooks their contributions. The findings of this study benefit researchers by offering a deeper understanding of the unique experiences of female breadwinners. This knowledge guides future research and informs policy discussions aimed at addressing the inequalities faced by women in the workforce. Thus, it would help raise awareness about the importance of recognizing and supporting the roles of female breadwinners, advocating for societal change that promotes gender equality and economic empowerment. emotional, physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual well-being (John Albert et al., 2024, pp.1352-1360).

A. Research Objectives

This study aims to understand the societal pressures faced by female breadwinners in Digos City, Davao del Sur, as they support their families amidst various challenges. Specifically, this research seeks to address the following questions:

1. What societal pressures do female breadwinners encounter as primary providers?
2. How do these societal pressures impact their ability to support their families?
3. What strategies did they use to cope with their situation?

II. METHODS

A. Participants

The participants in this study were women who are the primary financial providers for their families, also known as female breadwinners. They must be 18 years of age or older and have a stable source of income working for more than 2 years, either through employment or self-employment, which constitutes the majority of their household's earnings. They must be supporting more than one dependent. The participants of this study were selected explicitly from various barangays in Digos City, Davao del Sur, with a total of 14 participants who fulfilled all these requirements. These criteria were established to ensure the relevance

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and validity of the study. Participants excluded from the study were those under the age of 18, those who do not reside in any selected barangay in Digos City, and individuals who are not the primary financial providers of their households. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Should they choose to do so, they must inform the researchers of their intent to withdraw. While participants are not obligated to disclose their reasons for withdrawing, their decision to exit the study was respected without prejudice.

Upon selecting the participants, the researchers utilized the snowball sampling method. This method starts with an initial group of participants who met the established criteria for inclusion in the study. Following their participation, these individuals were asked to refer other potential participants who shared similar qualifications or experiences. Also known as the "chain referral sampling," each successive participant was encouraged to refer additional potential respondents. This referral process continued until the required number of participants was reached and data saturation was achieved (Hossan et al., 2023, pp. 209-222).

B. Instruments

This study used a guided interview questionnaire and a face-to-face interview to gather qualitative data. Face-to-face interviews provide direct interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, eliminating delays from technical disruptions. This format allows the interviewer to observe body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues, enhancing the conversation. Meeting in person can create a safe and comfortable atmosphere, promoting open dialogue and building participant trust (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021, pp. 329-396). Research indicates that technology-mediated interviews often result in lower performance ratings for interviewees than face-to-face (FTF) interviews (Basch et al., 2021, pp. 921-940).

In data gathering, we used in-depth interviews (IDI) to evaluate the participants in the study. In-depth or unstructured interviews are a key data collection method in qualitative research, allowing researchers to understand participants' perspectives. Personal narratives play a central role in social research, with language as a powerful tool for conveying meaning. The expressive nature of language enables individuals to provide diverse descriptions, explanations, and evaluations about nearly any aspect of the world, including their own experiences (Legard et. al, 2023, pp. 138-169).

C. Design and Procedure

This study employs a qualitative data analysis to classify and interpret linguistic or visual material, aiming to understand the implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning within the data. The process of meaning-making can encompass both subjective and social interpretations, and it serves to uncover and various issues, structures, or processes present in routines and practices. Mezmer (2020, pp. 15-27) states that qualitative analysis can serve multiple purposes, including the detailed description of phenomena, examining the unique features and interconnections of specific cases, and analyzing the commonalities and differences across various cases. The analysis also aims to investigate the conditions underlying observed differences, seeking explanations for why specific individuals or groups may cope more effectively than others in specific social contexts. Additionally, the analysis aims to develop theories based on empirical evidence to understand better the phenomena being studied.

The following procedures were followed to gather and analyze the data. First, the researchers assessed whether the participants met the qualifications to proceed with the interview. Second, the researchers obtained informed consent from the participants, ensuring they voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Third, the researchers conducted the interviews accurately and meticulously to collect the required data. Fourth, the researchers transcribed the audio recordings from the initial phase and translated the material. During the familiarization stage, the researchers performed the initial coding using a specialized coding tool, taking notes in a table format within a Word document or on a printed transcript. Researchers then refined the codes to identify distinct themes. Afterward, the researchers reviewed, refined, and explained each theme. Finally, they compiled the results, incorporating participant quotes to illustrate the conclusions.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Life of Breadwinners as the Primary Source of Living or Provider in the Family

Being the primary breadwinner in a family does not always equate to stability and ease; it often comes with emotional, mental, and psychological strain. The weight of responsibilities can lead to personal sacrifices and deferred dreams. Breadwinners face societal pressures and financial struggles as they bear the burden of supporting their family, which heavily relies on them.

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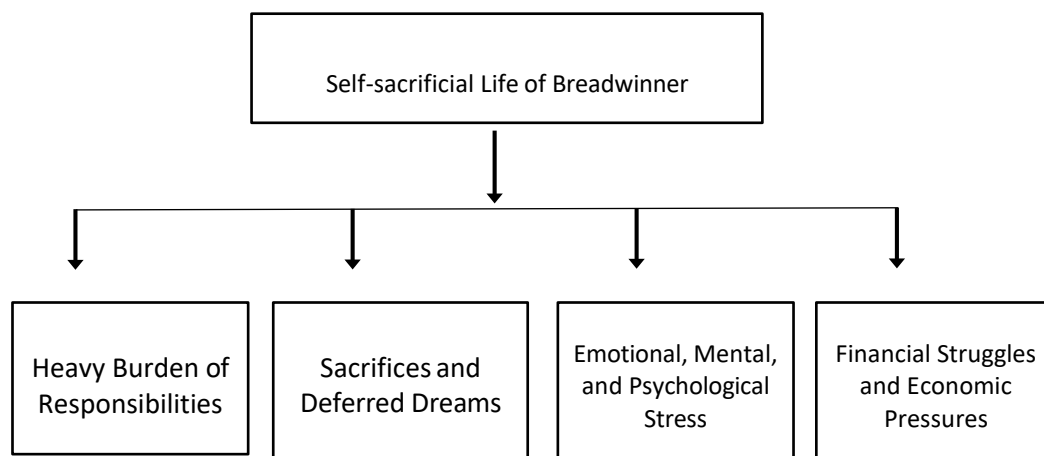


Figure 1. Life of Breadwinner as the Primary Source of Living or Provider in the Family

Heavy Burden of Responsibilities. The participants expressed that being the breadwinner means bearing the weight of responsibility as the family's primary provider to provide and sustain their daily needs.

Participant 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 12 stated that,

"Lisod uy kay dli pud basta-basta baya, kay syempre ikaw naningkamot jud ka sa pang adlaw adlaw nimong kuan aron maka palit jud mog mga konsumo ninyo, lisod baya. It's hard because it's not that easy. Of course, you need to work hard every day just to afford your family's daily needs. [Par 2, Line 11]

"Perti gyud bug-ata siguro pag start pajud nakog mahimong breadwinner nag start kog trabaho as early age jud noh until nga nag dako ko nahuman ko ug elementary until nag high school working student najud ko and then pag ka college nako nga namatay akoang mama dira na nako na feel ang kabug-aton as a breadwinner kay naa paman gud koy duha ka manghud so kay kailangan pud nako sila supportahan in terms sa ilang pag eskwela, sa ilang mga balon, sailang mga pagkaon, though naa may trabaho akoang papa dili pa jud siya enough nga maka sustain ug sa amoa kay upat man gud mi kabuok so until nag graduate kog college, nag graduate kog high school nag college ko nag working student gihapon ko to provide jud sa mga panginahanglon matag adlaw" (It was really heavy; I started becoming a breadwinner and started working at an early age until I became an adult. I was already a working student from elementary and until I graduated high school. When I was in college, my mother passed away. That was the time when I felt the burden of being a breadwinner because I still have two younger siblings I have to support in terms of their education, their needs and food. Though my father had a job, still it wasn't enough to sustain us, While I was in college I was still working to provide for our daily needs.) [Par 3, Line 14]

"It was actually hard cause you have to manage both personal and family matter and you have to make sure that, your family are able to eat three times a day and you're able to provide medical expenses especially if they are already a senior and especially if they are no longer able to work and provide for themselves". (It was hard because you have to manage both personal and family matters, ensuring your family can eat three times a day and covering medical expenses, especially they are already seniors who can no longer work and provide for themselves.) [Par 5, Line 24]

"Very difficult since student paman ko then ako na ang gina- asahan sa akong parents if nay mga panghitabo like naay mga mag sakit-sakit ako nay gina-asahan nila sa kwarta. Also, lisod pud siya since babae man ko kinahanglan pud ko mulihok sa balay at the same time maningkamot para sa amoa." (It is very difficult since I'm still a student, yet my parents often rely on me when things are to happen like when someone gets sick, they would depend on me financially. Also, it is hard because I'm a woman, so I have to juggle household responsibilities while also working hard for our family) [Par 7, Line 38]

"Lisod actually, hastang lisoda kay for now nga naga eskwela ko kumbaga gi sabay nako ang paghati sa ako ng sweldo bayad sa tuition ug sa paghatag sa akong pamilya." (It is actually really hard because, while I am still studying, I am dividing my salary between paying for tuition and supporting my family) [Par 8, Line 41]

"Because walay trabaho akong husband then naa papud koy mga igsoon na need ug support jud as eldest murag responsibility na nako sila" (Because my husband does not have a job, and I also have siblings who need support, as the eldest, it feels like it's my responsibility to take care of them) [Par 12, Line 62]

Participant 3 and 8 added that,

"Karon nga namatay akoang papa mas nizamot ang kabug- aton, resposibilidad nga iyang gibilin sa akoa kay as an ate jud sa akong mga igsuon responsibilty bitaw sa ginikanan napasa sa akoa so burden jud kaayo siya sa akoa labi nag nangiskwela pa sila naa pay balon so kana nga kanang mga everyday needs jud sa akoang mga igsuon sa akoa pajud na ginapangayo, so lisod jud

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kaayo siya bug-at siya as part sa akoo nga mahimong breadwinner" (Now that my father has passed away, the burden of responsibility he left me is even heavier. As the eldest sister of my siblings, the responsibility of a parent has been passed on to me. It's a heavy burden, especially since my siblings are still studying and have other needs. I became responsible for my sibling's allowances, so it is really difficult and heavy for me to become the breadwinner) [Par 3, Line 14]

"Karun man gud kay akong mama ug papa senior citizen na then mostly sa ilang duha dili najud sila ka trabaho ug maka provide para sa ilang kaugalingon so akong sahod which is mahati para sa akoo ug para pud sa ilang kunsumo" (Currently, both of my parents are senior citizens and can no longer work or provide for themselves, so my salary is divided between covering my own needs and their daily expenses) [Par 8, Line 42]

Some of the participants expressed that being the breadwinner of their family is extremely challenging and burdensome. Many of them are students who are expected to financially support their families despite their academic responsibilities. They feel a significant weight on their shoulders as they have to balance their studies while also working to provide for their family's daily needs. Women often bear the weight of dual responsibilities, managing household task while also fulfilling roles as a partner to their husband. They take on family duties and support their children's education (Aziz, 2023, pp. 227-244). A wife is considered obligated to support herself and her family if certain condition are met, such as when the husband is absent, incapacitated, or unable to provide for them (Raihan, 2023, pp.1-86). Some of these women are widows who, due to various circumstances, have been compelled to take on the role of the primary earners, while most are married women whose husbands are alive but unable to provide for the family as the main breadwinners (Kowalewska & Vitali, 2021, pp. 125-142).

Sacrifices and Deferred Dreams. Breadwinners often sacrifice their dreams and professional careers to focus on providing the needs for their families first. They feel the need to focus on what is best for their families more than themselves.

Participant 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 13 and 14 stated that,

"Naay times na kanang maka-ask ka nga, nganu kayang ako ang napili. Ako ang napili na mahimong breadwinner, though dile man siya giingun sakong parents na kinahanglan ka maging breadwinner para lang masuportahan nimo mi, pero kana ganing as a loving daughter tas nakahunahuna pud ko na gipa-eskwela ko nila, gipakaon ko nila, gikan sa pagkatawo nako sa kalibutan so ana kanag balik lang pud sa ilaha. (There are times where I ask myself why I became the breadwinner, why it fell on me. It is not because my parents told me to do so, but because as a loving daughter, I would remember that they provided me education, they fed me, they brought me into this world. Somehow, I wanted to reciprocate their sacrifices)" [Par 1, Line 3]

"Naglaum jud ko uy na kanang kuan dako man gud kog dreams sa kinabuhi. Mao nang maningkamot jud ko kay para maka survive jud ang tanan sa akong pamilya, mao lang pud na. (I really have hopes because I have big dreams in life. That is why I worked hard, for my whole family to survive. That is all)" [Par 2, Line 88]

"Siguro kung sa lisod jud siya kay labi nag kining for example kanang dalaga bitaw ka katong times nawa pako naminyo, dalaga bitaw ka niya pagkahuman naa bitaw unta kay gusto na paliton like mga anything and then pagkahuman pagkabalo nimo na mokuan dayon na imong mga igsoon nga "te walay bugas, te walay sud-an, so instead unta nga kanang kini unta imong paliton imoha nalang ikuan sa imong mga igsoon kay labi nag nahimo bitaw kang mama'g papa nila, and then siguro sa part nga sayon, dili man jud siya sayon, dili jud siya sayon mahimong breadwinner. (It is really hard, especially for example if you're a young woman and you wanted to buy some things for yourself, but then your siblings would come to you and say, 'Ate, we do not have rice, 'Ate, we do not have anything to eat'. So instead of buying the things that you wanted, you have to think about your siblings and provide for them because it's like you have become both their mother and father. The part where it is easy? It is not easy. Being a breadwinner is never easy.)" [Par 3, Line 16]

"It is really hard cause you know, you have wants especially if you are teenage girl and then you also wanted to go to school but you have to give way cause you wanted to have your siblings first, finish their school before yourself and aside from that you are, you wanted also like to explore and then, but, in the other hand also you have priority to feed them and then that is it. It is really hard. (It is really hard because, as a teenage girl, you have your own wants and desires, like wanting to go to school and explore. But you have to set those aside to prioritize your siblings, making sure they finish their education before you. On top of that, you also have the responsibility to provide for them. It is challenging, but it is something that you have to do)" [Par 5, Line 28]

"Naa koy mga stuff na gusto mabuhay pero dili nako mabuhay since akoy may gina-asahan sa akong parents and ang uban nako like family members ginalibak ko nila sa akong trabaho since live streamer man ko. (There are things that I wanted to do, but I cannot because my parents mostly rely on me. On top of that, some of my family members criticize me for my job since I am a live streamer)" [Par 7, Line 39]

"Oo pressure noon sa palibot samot na makita nako akong mga classmate nga mahatag nila sa ilang kaugalingon kung unsa ilang gusto unya ikaw murag nag tipid ka para sa imong kaugalingon nga naa pud kay mahatag sa ila unya imong sarili wala kay mapalit,

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ana gani. (In what way? yes, I felt pressure around me, especially when I see my classmates being able to get what they want, while I have to budget carefully for myself to be able to give to my family. Meanwhile, I cannot even afford to buy anything for myself)" [Par 8, Line 44]

"Kana there's a lot thing na I feel I am a adventurous person but I am contain in my room having needing to work gani mga in ana na sense karun, dili ko satisfied in ana na point gani, pero nalipay lang jud ko nga naka provide nako but I feel like I can do more. (There are so many things I feel like doing, I am an adventurous person but here I am, confined to my room because I need to work. I am still not satisfied at this point, but I am genuinely happy that I can provide for my family. Still, I feel like I can do more)" [Par 13, Line 70]

"Dili jud lalim uy, lisod jud kaayu kay daghan ka, ug para sa imong kaugalingon unya imohang i-give up (It is really not easy, it is very difficult because you have so many things for yourself, but you have to give them up)" [Par 14, Line 71]

Participant 3 and 14 added that,

"Na puy time noh nga makahunahuna jud ko nga hala may pa sila jud nga kuan kanang kanang kompleto makuan nimo nga naa juy naa jud bitaw ginikanan nga responsibilidad, nga kanang ang ilahang mga siguro ilahang mga gusto maprovide sa ilahang ginikanan. Unya samtang ako, as a breadwinner nga kailangan pako mo sakong mga igsoon unahan panako akong igsoon kaysa sa akoang kaugalingon, so kana nga mga tendency sa akoang kinabuhi ba nga naa jud mga kasuya pud sa uban nga makaingon ka how i wish ako pud unta. (There are times when I thought about how fortunate other people are because they have a complete family. They have parents who take responsibility for them and may provide them with whatever they desire. While me as a breadwinner, I have to prioritize my siblings over myself. Sometimes, I cannot help but feel jealous and think, "I wish I had that too.")" [Par 3, Line 17]

'Although lisud pero happy naman kay sa akong kalisud nga naagian, na provide nako ang mga paningahanglan, pero malipayon ko kay sa akong pag sakripisyo nahuman sila. (Although it is difficult, I am still happy because, despite the challenges I have gone through; I was able to provide for their needs. I'm happy that they are able to finish their education because of my sacrifices.)" [Par 14, Line 73]

Most of the participants came up with same answer, expressing how their aspirations had to be put on hold due to the responsibility they need to provide for their family. Women tend to make huge career sacrifices, often putting their professional ambitions on hold or prioritizing family responsibilities over their career growth. Many women have had to step back from their commitment to the public roles, and dreams, putting aside their professional goals for the sake of their family (Villanueva-Moya & Expósito, 2025, pp. 495- 513). Starting work early helps develop important life skills, but the need to balance work and education often negatively affects academic performance, as the pressure of supporting their families compromises their ability to focus on schoolwork and study effectively (Dungon et al., 2024, pp. 750-755). Despite education being their best opportunity to escape poverty and improve their lives, some working students are forced to abandon their studies to provide for their families (Nene et al., 2023. pp. 2595-2601).

Emotional, Mental Emotional, Mental, and Psychological Stress. Participants expressed that being the primary provider for their family brings significant emotional, mental, and psychological stress. They often feel exhausted and isolated, believing they must remain strong as the foundation holding their family together, with no room to falter.

Participant 5, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 14 stated that,

"The greatest pressure really is from my relatives, cause they really have a high expectation from me, so they really expected me like maybe closed to be perfect cause I am the eldest, I have to be good, I have to be a good example for everyone and then, that's the greatest pressure. Also, I came from, traditional or conservative family so eventhough I have like, I wanted to be free but I have to consider them cause there are eyes are looking at me then, I have to be perfect somehow but I know its not really reliable or it's not in reality but you cannot really do, but you have maybe fake it until you make it, something like that. (The greatest pressure came from my relatives because they had high expectations of me. They expected me to be almost perfect since I was the eldest, and I had to set a good example for everyone. This was the biggest pressure I faced. I also came from a traditional or conservative family, so even though I wanted to be free, I had to consider their expectations because they were always watching me. I felt like I had to be perfect, even though I knew it was not realistic. But sometimes, I had to fake it until I made it)" [Par 5, Line 29]

"Sobra kalisod, kay dili jud sya ingon na lalim samot nag ma pressure ka sa kadagahang bayrunon every monthly sa balay then naa pakay huna hunaon na allowance na nimo everyday sa school bayronon ug allowance pa ug then kanang mga xerox-xerox pa samot na karun na naay research hasta jud lisoda. (It is really difficult because it is not easy at all, especially with the pressure of managing many expenses at home each month. On top of that, I also have to consider my daily allowance for school, bills, and even photocopies for my subjects. It is even harder now with the added responsibility of research work. It's genuinely tough)" [Par 8, Line 43]

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"Usahay ma down jud ka usahay jud paminaw nimo bitaw no murag tinood man ilang gina ingon bahin sa amoa na diri lang mi taman, kanang mawala ka sa imong focus taga adlaw mag trabaho masakitan pud baya ta no maka dungog tag ingon ana samot nag gikan sa atong mga kaparyente kasagaran mao pajud ang mu down sa atoa ug taman mga paryente muingon na dili kaya kay daghan ko ug igsoon diha ra taman inyong kinabuhi kanang ka minusan ka ba, minusan jud ka mao jud na akong mapansin sa palibot kanang himuon rakag diha ra kutob inyong kinabuhi kay wala moy kapadulngan kay mao ra inyong trabaho wala moy mama. (Sometimes, you would really feel down. It feels like what other people say about us is true, that we can only achieve so much. When you get caught up in work every day, it is hard not to feel discouraged, especially when these words come from your own relatives. It often feels like the people closest to us are the ones bringing us down. They say things like, "You will not make it, you have too many siblings," or "This is all you will ever achieve in life." It is as if they are belittling us, saying we will never get anywhere in life because this is the only job we can manage and we no longer have a mother.)" [Par 9, Line 49]

"Lisod kaayu basta ikaw lang ang mag buhi. Wala kay kaakabay sa tanan. (It is really hard when you are the only one providing. You do not have anyone to rely on for everything.)" [Par 11, Line 56]

"Usahay stress kay especially sa akong line of work naa jud time na walay client labi na tung pandemic time nga ang mga businesses ato sa amoa kay tikubo so ang pressure na sa akoo na mu provide ato na time, lisod siya kay naa jud time nga anxious ka perme kay unsaon nalang ang mga anak nimo noh. (Sometimes it is stressful, especially in my line of work, when there are times with no clients. During the pandemic, many businesses in our area were struggling, so the pressure was on me to provide during that time. It is difficult because there are moments when you are always anxious, wondering what will happen to your children.)" [Par 12, Line 61]

"Although sa mga tao na gina underestimate ka sa inyohang status dili malikayan nga masakitan ka tungod kay mubo ilang pag tan-aw sa imoha. (Although some people underestimate you because of your status, it is hard not to feel hurt by how they look down on you.)" [Par 14, Line 74]

Participant 12 added that,

"Syempre, stress out ka, it would cause you like tension sa amoa na couple kay lagi diko gusto mag salig and reality check kung wala jud kwarta sige jud away. (Of course, it stressed me out. It caused tension between us as a couple because I did not want to rely on anyone. The reality is that without money, we kept arguing)" [Par 12, Line 64]

Most participants stated that they felt psychological distress from dealing with other's opinion regarding their situation and mental exhaustion from carrying the burden of familial responsibilities. Breadwinners experience emotional, mental, and psychological stress facing dual responsibility associated with balancing the demands of work and those of their family (Ningrum & Mas'udah, 2021, pp. 76-85). The growing exhaustion of female providers affects their productivity in their relationship, disrupts their emotional balance, and weakens their sense of fulfillment and happiness in life (Sarkis, 2023, pp. 1-171). Social stigma from people's moral outrage contributes to the emotional burden on female breadwinners (Fisher et al., 2025, p. 16)

Financial Struggles and Economic Pressure. Breadwinners face not only the challenges of financial struggles but also the economic and societal pressures placed upon them. They must provide for their families while simultaneously navigating the expectations and judgments imposed by society.

Participant 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14 stated that,

"So, sama sa akong giingun, kung unsa lang jud ang kaya na ma-provide gyud nako, mao lang pud gyud to. Dile na pud mi naga, panlitan usahay muana, though naa may time na nga kanang short na pud gyud ba, so dira nata makasud-an ug kanang mga dile napud kaayo lami, like yung first sahod pag-abot sa imong kwarta hatag sa ginikanan nako, kanang lami- lami gyud ang sud-an, naa pa tay lechon manok syempre barato-barato pa makaya pa to sauna, pag-abot ana sa ting-tinga napud na days. (As what I have said, I only provide to the best of my abilities. There are times where we are struggling financially, so we end up eating simple bland foods. When I received my first paycheck, I gave it to my parents and we were able to treat ourselves lechon manok, since we can afford it that time. However, when the budget is tight like five days before my next paycheck, we often eat vegetable dishes. Of course, vegetables, it is healthy living as well.)" [Par 1, Line 4]

"Na pressure ko kay gi judge man gud ko sakong, tinuod jud na gi judge ko sa mga tao, naa jud ga judge sa akoo pero naningkamot jud ko mo angat-angat gamay. (I feel pressured because I know that people are judging me, despite that I am still working hard to improve myself.)" [Par 2, Line 12]

"Ang societal sa pamilya, kanang uban kay mo ingun man ila na kanang ngano mag antos man kag sigeg panarbaho, kay sauna na assign man kog basurahan ingon sila nga "hugaw mana kayo dira ana ana tanan sakit gipanglabay dira" ingon ko wa jud koy mahimo kay mao mani akong trabaho para pud ni sa kaugmaon sa akoang pamilya. (In terms of societal pressures, some people

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question why I have to suffer working in a garbage dump. They said, "It is so dirty there; they dispose of sickness in that place." But I tell them there is nothing else I can do because this is my job, and I am doing it for my family's future.)" [Par 4, Line 22]

"The greatest pressure really is from my relatives, cause they really have a high expectation from me, so they really expected me like maybe closed to be perfect cause I am the eldest, I have to be good, I have to be a good example for everyone and then, that's the greatest pressure. Also I came from, traditional or conservative family so even though I have like, I wanted to be free but I have to consider them cause there are eyes are looking at me then, I have to be perfect somehow but I know its not really reliable or it's not in reality but you cannot really do, but you have maybe fake it until you make it, something like that. (The greatest pressure came from my relatives because they had high expectations of me. They expected me to be almost perfect since I was the eldest, and I had to set a good example for everyone. This was the biggest pressure I faced. I also came from a traditional or conservative family, so even though I wanted to be free, I had to consider their expectations because they were always watching me. I felt like I had to be perfect, even though I knew it was not realistic. But sometimes, I had to fake it until I made it.)" [Par 5, Line 29]

"Since mas dako man akong monthly income kaysa akong parents, so nahimo akoo ang source of income. (Since my monthly income is higher than my parents, I became the primary source of income.)" [Par 7, Line 37]

"Lisod actually, hastang lisoda kay for now nga naga eskwela ko kumbaga gi sabay nako ang paghati sa akong sweldo bayad sa tuition ug sa paghatag sa akong pamilya. (It is actually really hard because, while I am studying, I am dividing my salary between paying for tuition and supporting my family.)" [Par 8, Line 41]

"Naay mga instance na sayun pero mas daghan ang jud ang lisod, mas daghan jud ang lisod kay mag hunahuna ka syempre bahin sa pagkaon mga gastohon sa adlaw-adlaw sa mga bata na mag eskwela akong mga manghud kanang lisod jud siya pero kayahon jud .Ako ang naga provide sa ilang eskwela ako ang naga pangita ug paagi ug maka eskwela sila tuod maka tabang man akong papa pero kay tungod wala lagi siyay trabaho na permanente ako man jud ang naa ako jud ang mas dako ug responsibilidad sa akong mga manghud ug sa among pamilya. (There are instances when it is easy but most of the time, it is really hard. It is mostly difficult because I have to think about our food, daily expenses, and the school expenses of my younger siblings. It is tough, but I managed to get through it. I'm the one providing for my siblings' education and finding ways to ensure they can go to school. While my dad helps when he can, since he does not have a permanent job, I carry the greater responsibility for my siblings and our family.)" [Par 9, Line 48]

"Lisod jud kaayo as in pirte jud lisoda, kay sa akoo tanan nag kuha ug pangbayad sa eskwelahan, balon, ug mga bills sa balay. (It is very difficult because the burden falls entirely on me. My income goes towards paying tuition, covering our daily expenses, and settling household bills.)" [Par 10, Line 51]

"Maka apekto jud kanang daghan man kaayu ug bayrunon sulod sa balay sa gastohon sa adlaw-adlaw unya makadungog kag chismis sa imoha musamot kag kawala sa imong mga paningkamot jud. (It really affects me when there are so many bills to pay for daily expenses at home, and on top of that, I hear gossip about me, making my efforts feel pointless.)" [Par 11, Line 59]

"I'd say I don't really care so much about what other people say, kay naa raman gud ko sa akong room murag akong say- say ra kay tulog, kaon, work mga in ana gud but when it come sa societal pressures siguro akong na experienced right now kay murag nag divert man gud akong time kay syempre nag work ko sa USA company as a VA I feel the need to level up and to think as a woman there are a lot of biases and to say na dili nimo kaya mga in ana and even question gud na gina buhat diay nimo na? And it comes to your age pud when you are young, they think you are foolish and stupid to do such things or even question if you are capable enough to do that. (I would say I do not really care much about what other people say, because I am mostly just in my room. My routine is basically sleeping, eating, and working things like that. But when it comes to societal pressures, I think what I am experiencing right now is the way my time has shifted. Since I work for a US company as a VA, I feel the need to level up. And as a woman, there are a lot of biases like people doubting if you can do it, or even questioning, "Are you really able to do that?" It also ties to your age. When you are young, they think you are foolish or stupid for doing certain things, or they doubt if you are even capable enough to do that.)" [Par 13, Line 69]

"Although sa mga tao na gina underestimate ka sa inyohang status dili malikayan nga masakitan ka tungod kay mubo ilang pag tanaw sa imoha. (Although some people underestimate you because of your status, it is hard not to feel hurt by how they look down on you.)" [Par 14, Line 73]

Participant 10 added that,

"Syempre naningkamot ka mabuhi human maka dungog pa kag mga dili maayo na mga istorya mao jud nay isa sa akoo na nakapalisod sa palibot nako. (Of course, I'm working hard to survive, yet I still hear unpleasant comments from others, which adds to the pressure and makes my situation even harder.)" [Par 10, Line 54]

Most participants stated that breadwinners face significant financial struggles and societal pressures while striving to support their families. Despite these challenges, they continue to push through, often sacrificing their own comfort and well-being.

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Growing up in Filipino culture, many Filipino children develop the "Tagasalo" syndrome, stepping up as caregivers or family leaders to support their loved ones during times of hardship (Quindoza, et. al, 2025, pp. 1-13). Families facing financial difficulties often experience increased pressure as they struggle to meet their daily expenses and long-term responsibilities (Friedline et. al, 2021, pp. 34-51). People with mental health problems, financially unstable households, children of unemployed parents, and low-income families were the groups most affected by the financial crisis (Nasr et al., 2025, p. 556).

Impact of Societal Pressures on Breadwinners

Breadwinners endure the weight of responsibilities that go beyond financial obligations. Their ability to support their families is often hindered by societal expectations, mental and emotional stress, and the constant demands that are placed upon them. This heavy burden expresses a variety of challenges that affect their overall well-being.

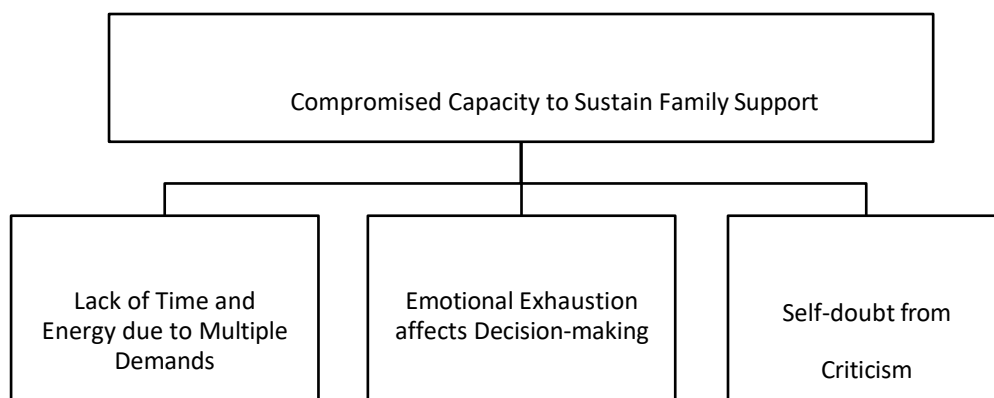


Figure 2. Impacts of Societal Pressures on Breadwinners

Lack of Time and Energy due to Multiple Demands. Breadwinners are prone to exhaustion due to multiple demands that are associated with the responsibility of supporting their family while being expected to provide both financial support and emotional care.

Participant 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14 stated that,

"It was actually hard cause you have to manage both personal and family matter and you have to make sure that, your family are able to eat three times a day and you're able to provide medical expenses especially if they are already a senior and especially if they are no longer able to work and provide for themselves. (It was hard because you have to manage both personal and family matters, ensuring your family can eat three times a day and covering medical expenses, especially they are already seniors who can no longer work and provide for themselves.)" [Par 5, Line 24]

"Akoa lang jud kanang kakapoy lang gyud, ana niya usa pud naa tay mga lihokon sa balay syempre naa pata nagatrabaho sa computer labi nag number one najud ang panghugas ug plato kay atoang kamot mag kurog mao rajud akong kuan kana pud diay mga trabahuon sa balay tapos mo trabaho pud ka mao rana. (I guess I am okay with it, just that I get tired. Another thing is having chores at home while I work on a computer. I find it hard especially washing the dishes, because my hands are now trembling. That is all there is, when I both have work and chores at home.)" [Par 6, Line 105]

"Very difficult since student paman ko then ako na ang gina- asahan sa akong parents if nay mga panghitabo like naay mga mag sakit-sakit ako nay gina-asahan nila sa kwarta. Also, lisod pud siya since babae man ko kinahanglan pud ko mulihok sa balay at the same time maningkamot para sa amoa. (It is very difficult since I am still a student, yet my parents often rely on me when things are to happen like when someone gets sick, they would depend on me financially. Also, it is hard because I am a woman, so I have to juggle household responsibilities while also working hard for our family.)" [Par 7, Line 38]

The overlooked reality of being a breadwinner lies in the persistent imbalance of household labor where women are expected to continue performing housework and child care. These inequalities are often tolerated by female breadwinners due to traditional gender norms, where conforming to 'gender display' is perceived as a form of compensation for their participation in the workforce (Khamis & Ayuso, 2022, pp.534-545). Female Breadwinners frequently face time and energy constraint as they balance earning income with managing household responsibilities and caregiving. Their continued involvement in domestic roles, despite being the primary providers, often results in fatigue and reduced personal capacity (Pinho & Gaunt, 2021, pp. 315-330).

Despite their financial contribution, they often remain primarily responsible for household management and childcare with limited support from their partners unless they are being told, resulting in time and energy exhaustion (Carelock, et al., 2022, pp.3-8).

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Emotional Exhaustion affects Decision-making. Being the primary provider requires significant emotional strength to handle the complexities in making important and effective decision that would potentially create both positive and negative impact on breadwinners in supporting their families.

Participant 9, 12 and 14 stated that,

“Usahay ma down jud ka usahay, mawala ka sa imong focus, himuon rakag diha ra kutob inyong kinabuhi kay wala moy kapadulngan kay mao ra inyong trabaho wala moy mama. (Sometimes, you would really feel down, it is hard not to feel discouraged, they are belittling us, saying we will never get anywhere in life because this is the only job we can manage and we no longer have a mother.)” [Par 9, Line 48]

“Syempre, stress out ka, it would cause you like tension sa amoa na couple kay lagi diko gusto mag salig and reality check kung wala jud kwarta sige jud away. (Of course, it stressed me out. It caused tension between us as a couple because I did not want to rely on anyone. The reality is that without money, we kept arguing.) [Par 12, Line 63]

Although lisud pero happy naman kay sa akong kalisud nga naagian, na provide nako ang mga paningahanglan, pero malipayon ko kay sa akong pag sakripisyo nahuman sila. (Although it is difficult, I am still happy because, despite the challenges I have gone through I was able to provide for their needs. I am happy that they are able to finish their education because of my sacrifices)” [Par 14, Line 72]

Constant exposure to financial strain, social expectations, and psychological pressures lowers the quality of life among female breadwinners. As these stressors can lead to emotional exhaustion which negatively impact their focus, well-being, and ability to make sound decisions in both family and personal matters (Zarean & Latifi, 2021, pp.101334). Extended working hours and work-related stress further contribute to emotional exhaustion especially when tied to the sole breadwinner role (Nnubia, Ibeanu, & Okechukwu, 2022, pp.508-522). This ongoing strain often creates internal conflict where emotional tension from one role interferes with fulfilling the demands of another. This strain-based conflict intensifies emotional exhaustion that would further affect their capacity to respond effectively in both household and work-related decisions (Novitasari, Sasono, & Asbari, 2020, pp.122-134)

Self-doubt from Criticism. Due to constant criticism surrounding the role of women taking in breadwinning roles, it creates a subtle yet long term effects on breadwinners as they experience patterns of judgment which eventually made them to actually doubt themselves and start to question their own capacity.

Participant 9, 11 and 14 stated that,

“Usahay ma down jud ka usahay, mawala ka sa imong focus, himuon rakag diha ra kutob inyong kinabuhi kay wala moy kapadulngan kay mao ra inyong trabaho wala moy mama. (Sometimes, you would really feel down, it is hard not to feel discouraged, they are belittling us, saying we will never get anywhere in life because this is the only job we can manage and we no longer have a mother.)” [Par 9, Line 48]

“Maka apekto jud kanang daghan man kaayu ug bayrunon sulod sa balay sa gastuhon sa adlaw-adlaw unya makadungog kag chismis sa imoha musamot kag kawala sa imong mga paningkamot jud. (It really affects me when there are so many bills to pay for daily expenses at home, and on top of that, I hear gossip about me, making my efforts feel pointless)” [Par 11, Line 58]

“Although sa mga tao na gina underestimate ka sa inyohang status dili malikayan nga masakitan ka tungod kay mubo ilang pag tan aw sa imoha. (Although some people underestimate you because of your status, it is hard not to feel hurt by how they look down on you)” [Par 14, Line 73]

Socially imposed gender norms often pressure women to conform to traditional roles causing female breadwinners to feel conflicted and inadequate. When community expectations reinforce the belief that men should be the main earners and women are the caretakers, female breadwinners may face disapproval or judgment for defying these roles (Goldstein, et al., 2025, pp. 12406). Criticism does not only stem from societal pressures imposed by society but also from your own extended family that reinforce harmful gender norms. The presence of crab mentality is deeply rooted in persistent feeling of anger and malice in effort to shift their resentment and blame others from their own incapacity (Ikea, 2024, pp. 1-11). Self-doubt from criticism, although both mothers and fathers experience similar emotional challenges in caregiving and breadwinning roles, women who serve as primary providers often face an added layer of social judgment. Breadwinning mothers report feeling empowered by their role, yet simultaneously conflicted as they struggle to meet both professional and maternal expectations.

Coping Strategies of Breadwinners Amid Societal Pressures

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance and establishing positive coping strategies are essential for the well-being and empowerment of women who serve as breadwinners (Fadil El-Turkey, 2021, pp. 79-116). Li and Yu 2024, pp. 1-23 stated that the way an individual manages stress plays a crucial role in their mental health. Utilizing positive coping strategies is essential for sustaining both physical and emotional well-being, especially during prolonged stress. Lazarus, Kanner, and Folkman, stated that

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problem-focused coping involves taking steps to resolve the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping aims to regulate emotional distress associated with challenging situations (Ovsyanik, et. al, 2022, pp. 765-780). Supported by recent studies, these coping mechanisms enable breadwinners to maintain stability and adapt to their circumstances over time. The key methods or strategies include spiritual resilience, emotional and mental strength, family-centered aspirations, financial management, and work-life balance strategies.

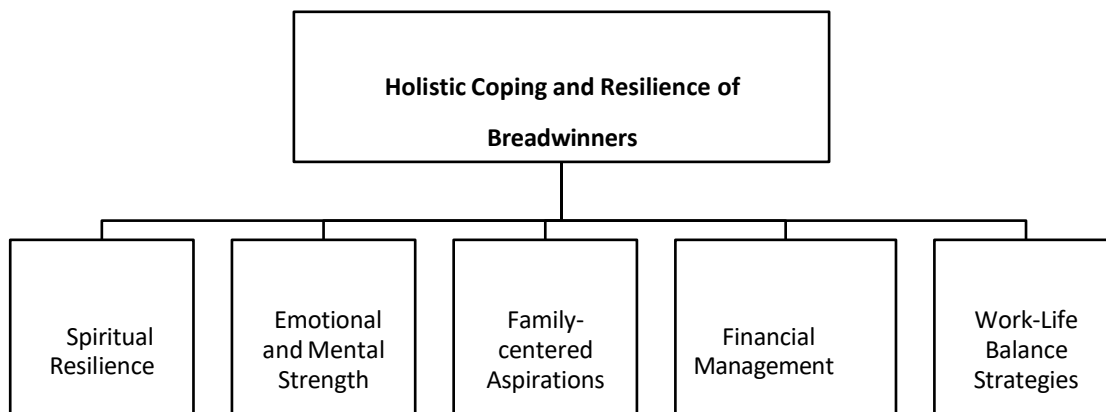


Figure 3. Coping Strategies of Breadwinners Amid Societal Pressures

Spiritual Resilience. Breadwinners rely on their faith and spirituality to find strength in difficult times. Their God-driven aspirations provide them comfort and emotional support which gives them hope and determination despite uncertainties.

Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14 stated that,

"First is prayer gyud. Numero uno gyud na. Prayer, kay kanang dira ra ka makahilak gyud sa tanan. Bisan pag, sa akoo man gud na part nidako man gud ko na kanang strong woman. Coping up gyud nako is kana, ang prayer gyud. (First is prayer. That is number one thing. Prayer, because that is the only time where I can cry everything out. For me, I can say that I grew up as a strong woman, an independent woman so to speak)" [Par 1, Line 76]

"Kanang mo adto lang ko sa massage dayon magpa massage ko kay pangtanggap sa mga panuhot diha stress- stress kanang mag beauty rest gani ko ana niya tapos sabayan nalng pud nakog pag-ampo. (I will just go out for a massage and take a beauty rest to get rid of the stress, and also accompany it with a prayer.)" [Par 2, Line 84]

"Mohilak rajud ko sa Ginoo ana as in mao ra pa jud na akoang aron ma ease bitaw akoang burden (I pour out everything to God in prayer to ease my burdens as it is my only source of comfort.) [Par 3, Line 89]

"Sa akoo noh kay isa rajud, mag ampo ra jud sa Ginoo, mao ra jud. (As for me, I would pray to God and that is all.)" [Par 4, Line 96]

"Mag pray lang ko nga unta katong tanan nako na bulohatonon is mabuhay nako ma good as effective jud siya na mahitabo gani. (I rely on prayer, asking for the strength to accomplish everything I need to do effectively)" [Par 8, Line 116]

"Kanang mag ampo jud sa Ginoo permente kanang samot nag naa tay madunggan na dili maayo mag ampo rajud ug mangita ug paagi na masulbad. (Just pray to God always, especially when I hear negative things. I pray and look for ways to solve the problems.)" [Par 9, Line 121]

"Pangitaan ug paagi na ma solusyonan ang pang adlaw- adlaw ug mag ampo jud bisag unsaon mag ampo. (Getting through everything with a prayer hoping for resolution. No matter how hard life gets, all I can do is pray.)" [Par 10, Line 125]

"Ako jud siyang gi atubang pina ag isa pag ampo mabuhi wala may lain mugabay nato kundi Ginoo lang bisag lisud kaayu kayahon gihapun. (I had to face it through prayer to keep going, because there is no one else to guide us but God. Even though it is so hard, I still manage to keep pushing forward.)" [Par 11, Line 130]

"Prayers, it always prayer lang jud. (Prayer, it is always prayer.)" [Par 12, Line 135]

"Pag paningkamot lang jud, focus sa pag paningkamot, pray na malampasan ang tanan. (Just keep working hard, focus on working hard, and pray that you will overcome everything.)" [Par 14, Line 147]

Participant 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 11 and 14 added,

"First gyud na, dira nako ikuan kay God, nga kanang Lord kayahon gyud nako ni kay wala man siguro ko ani na sitwasyon ug dile nako makaya. Mao gyud na ang first. (That is the first thing; I surrendered everything to God. Lord, I have to make it because I would not be here if You knew I could not overcome this. So that is the first thing.)" [Par 1, Line 76]

"Number one jud nako ginahimo jud is mag ampo jud sa akoang mga dealings jud sa life especially as a breadwinner wala jud koy mahimo og kanang bitaw akoo lang kusog ang akoang saligan so mao na akoang mga cope up mechanism nga ma ease pud bitaw"

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ko ma mapagawas pud nako akoang mga burden, akoang mga burden sa kinabuhi mao nang ihilak og i ampo ra gyud nako ang tanan." (The number one thing that I do to cope with certain situations in my life is to pray. Especially as a breadwinner, I have no one else to turn to but God. Prayer gives me the strength I need and something to rely on. It is the only coping mechanism that truly eases my burdens, allowing me to cry and pour everything out.)" [Par 3, Line 91]

"Kay kung wala ang Ginoo sa atong pamilya og sa akoo dili jud na mahimo kay syempre ang tanan natong gisalig man nato tanan sa Ginoo. (If there is no God in our lives and in our family, it is impossible to do things alone because we entrust everything to God)" [Par 4, Line 97].

"Sa prayer kay actually kana jud ang main ginabuhat nako every night para although dili nako masulti sa uban akong huna-huna masulti mapagawas nako siya through prayer." (Prayer is the main part of my routine, especially at night. Even though I cannot always share my thoughts with others, I release them through a prayer)" [Par 8, Line 117]

"Sobra jud ka epektibo kay wala may lain maka tabang namo no ang ginoo raman jud bisa unsa pa ang kalisod ginoo rajud mapadulngan namo kay kaning kinabuhia sa iyaha mani gikan siya jud among gisaligan sa tanan maningkamot lang jud mi. (It is really effective because no one else can help us but God. No matter how difficult things get, we can only turn to Him. Our lives come from Him, and He is the one we rely on for everything. All we have to do is keep working hard in return.)" [Par 9, Line 123]

"Epektibo kay masulbad raman jud basta mag ampo sa ginoo tabangan man ka mabuhi raman gihapun mi, agwanta ug maningkamot. (It is effective because things get resolved when you pray to God and He will help you. We will still survive, I will just have to endure and work hard)" [Par 11, Line 133]

"Tungod kay wala koy lain masultihan, so only God, so akong gi ampo lang ang tanan na gisubmit na nako ang tanan, na siya na ang bahala. (Because I do not have anyone else to talk to, only God. So, I just pray and submit everything to Him, trusting that He will take care of it.)" [Par 14, Line 148]

Most of the participants stated that that prayer was their main source of strength to endure or overcome their challenges, as they relied solely on God. Religion emerged as the primary coping strategy for breadwinners, with many acknowledging its role in helping them cope. The majority of them emphasized how their faith provided inspiration and strength to withstand the difficulties of being the primary earners in female-headed households (Dagunduro, 2023, pp. 1-331). Faith and prayers help alleviate existential distress, anxiety, and spiritual struggles. For female breadwinners, spirituality is rooted in a belief in God which can serve as a personal framework for making sense of their challenges and coping with financial and societal pressures. Unlike secular approaches, faith-based resilience provides narratives that help them navigate the burdens of providing for their families while maintaining a sense of purpose (Kira et al., 2021, pp. 992-1024). In difficult situations, breadwinners mostly rely on positive religious coping such as prayer, faith, and seeking spiritual support, rather than negative coping mechanisms (Surzykiewicz et al., 2022, pp. 954382).

Emotional and Mental Strength. Breadwinners manage their stress and psychological well-being to stay emotionally stable to handle work pressures, financial burdens, and family expectations.

Participant 2, 4, 13 and 14 stated,

"Katong naga judge sa akoo dati gina dedma nalang man pud nako, mao ra pud to. (Those people who used to judge me, I just ignored them.)" [Par 2, Line 85]

"Deadma lang, ana ra jud. (I just ignore them. That is all.)" [Par 4, Line 95]

"Tama jud tu ilang ingon na wala silay pake sa iingon sa uban dili man ingon sa dili naga matter ang giingon sa uban as long dili siya naga gives value sa things you do kay ma less ang value ana. My point is why would I spend my time to unnecessary things when I get paid in my time. (Maybe when it comes to character, I feel like people would not reach that point if they were not capable enough or courageous enough to face societal opinions whether about gender, age, or status. At some point, when you have things in your hands like when you already know who you are, what you are doing, and what you need to do, those kinds of people already know. It is true about what they say of not caring about what others think. It is not because other people's opinions do not matter, but if those opinions do not add value to what you are doing, then they do not really hold any weight. My point is why would I waste my time on unnecessary things when I could get paid for my time?)" [Par 13, Line 140]

"Gina-ignore nalang nako kay tuta wala man sila naga hatag sa akoo. (I just ignore them because, in the end, I will not benefit from them.)" [Par 14, Line 146]

Four of the participants stated that they cope with societal judgment by choosing to ignore or dismiss it, allowing them to maintain emotional and mental strength. Despite facing criticism or judgment, they emphasized the importance of focusing on their personal responsibilities and goals rather than letting external opinions affect their well-being. These traditional embedded labels were perceived by participants as demeaning and stigmatizing, leading to stress and various mental and emotional challenges. As a response, female breadwinners choose disengagement by withdrawing from social gatherings or reducing public appearances to

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lessen judgment and scrutiny, aligning with the stigma perspective's notion of avoiding stressors (Shah, 2024, pp. 251-264). Self-efficacy highlights the significance of female providers confidence in their own abilities, which often lead in building resilience and managing stress effectively (Amparo et. al, 2024, pp. 250-279). Despite female breadwinners actively resisting societal and gendered stigmas, they remain unable to fully escape its influence. Even when they challenge negative stereotypes about women as primary providers and assert their own values, they often internalize these stigmas on a personal level (Evans, 2022, pp. 690-700).

Family-centered Aspirations. Breadwinners are driven by their deep commitment to their families. Their aspirations to provide a better life for their loved ones fuel their determination to endure hardships.

Participant 3, 9 and 10 stated,

"Makita nako akoang mga igsoon na naglambo pud sa ilang kinabuhi nga dili ko gusto nga siguro maagian nila ang akoang mga kalisod kay as a breadwinner noh kay lahi ra jud ang kalipay kung makita nimo ang imong mga igsoon nga naglambo pud sa ilahang mga tagsa-tagsa na kinabuhi (To see my siblings succeed in their lives. I do not want them to experience the struggles I have been through. As a breadwinner, it is a different kind of happiness in watching them thrive and build their own paths to success.)" [Par 3, Line 94]

"Maka human akong mga manghud tanan sa ilang pag eskwela nga, dili lang in ani permente among kinabuhi na unta maka lampos lang jud sila, dili man ko ingon na gusto ko madato noh ang amoa lang jud okay rajud among kinabuhi na dili sila maparehas sa akoo na masulayon nila akong kaagi samot na nga wala mi mama pero mao rajud tu mahuman lang jud sila ug eskwela malipay najud ko ana. (Able to finish their studies and that our lives will not always be this difficult. I just want them to succeed in life. I am not asking to be rich; I just want our lives to be better, and for them not to experience the same struggles I went through, especially since we no longer have a mother. What would truly make me happy is seeing them complete their education.)" [Par 9, Line]

"Mahuman akong mga anak para dili sila ma pareha nako na mag lisod sa pag-abot sa panahon ug kaluy an na maka human maabot pud ang panahon na akong gusto sa Negosyo na mukusog ug mudako pa mao lang. (My children will finish their studies so they will not have to go through the same struggles I faced. I also pray that in the future, my business will grow, thrive, and become successful.)" [Par 10, Line 129]

Most of the participants stated that their perseverance is driven by their hopes for their families. Many aspire for their children or siblings to complete their education, in hopes that they won't have go through what they went through. Their job choices are influenced by family values and traditions that follow cultural and social expectations, which prioritize household and caregiving duties as a key part of their role (Zulfiqar, 2024, pp.1-20). Breadwinners use various coping strategies to handle the four aspects of family adaptation: maintenance, control, emotion, and meaning. Their strong determination to survive and their commitment to reinvesting in their families are key factors in building family resilience (Herlusia et al., 2021, pp. 228-235). Breadwinners experience a deep sense of love for their families, which fosters strong social relationships, both at home and in the workplace. By staying connected with their family, friends, and colleagues, they actively engage in social networks, increasing their overall life satisfaction (Casipong, et. al, 2021, pp. 1-1). The breadwinner's strong family-centered aspirations reflect Filipino culture, which is deeply rooted in unconditional love and commitment to family.

Financial Management. Effective budgeting, saving, and investing helps breadwinners to manage their finances. They cope with financial stress through effectively managing their income and expenses to sustain the needs of their family.

Participant 5, 7 and 8 stated,

"I budgeted my salary I have like a certain percent maybe I think it's almost 70% of my salary I give it to them to support and I just manage to sustain myself the 30% left in my salary and then that's it. (I lived on a small portion of my salary and budgeted it carefully, setting aside about 70% to support them and managing to live on the remaining 30% to sustain myself.)" [Par 5, Line 26]

"Like budgeting, kanang naga plan ko sa akong kwarta para dili ko mag lisud. (Like budgeting, I plan my finances to avoid difficulties)" [Par 7, Line 110]

Budgeting para pud ma fix akon mga bayronon kumbaga naay mga plan asa mapadulong ang kani na kwarta, asa ni mapadulong sa akong mama sa akong allowance ug sa everyday na gasto nako. (Budgeting, on the other hand, helps me manage my bills. It is like planning where my money goes, whether it is for my mother, my allowance, or daily expenses.)" [Par 8, Line 117]

Participant 5 added,

"One of my coping mechanisms is budgeting so in order for me to prepare myself in the future expenses. I have to prepare a budget where I can still provide for them and also support myself" (One of my coping mechanisms is budgeting. It helps me prepare for future expenses while ensuring I can still support my family and myself)" [Par 5, Line 102]

Three of the participants stated that budgeting is an essential strategy in managing their finances as breadwinners. Budgeting helps them to manage financial stress, organize expenses, and support both their families and themselves. Effective

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financial management in a family context involves not just achieving financial success but also making sure that the needs of the family are satisfied fairly (Oktoviasari, 2025, pp.765-780). Establishing a clear budget, individuals can gain better control over their spending, reduce financial stress, and make informed decisions, that support long-term financial instability (Choe & Kan, 2021, pp.937-958). Financial literacy is a vital skill for managing personal finances, enabling individuals to make smart financial choices, avoid or manage debt, and boost their savings (Declaro-Ruedas & Guico, 2022, pp. 1-9). Reinforcing positive coping strategies such as financial management, breadwinners are able to handle their finances wisely and reduce financial stress.

Work-Life Balance Strategies. Breadwinners developed a balance strategy between their professional and personal lives. They manage their time for rest, family commitments, and self-care to prevent burnout.

Participant 6, 8 and 13 stated,

"Akoa lang jud kanang kakapoy lang gyud, ana niya usa pud naa tay mga lihokon sa balay syempre naa pata nagatrabaho sa computer labi nag number one najud ang panghugas ug plato kay atoang kamot mag kurog mao rajud akong kuan kana pud diay mga trabahuon sa balay tapos mo trabaho pud ka mao rana. (I guess I am okay with it, just that I get tired. Another thing is having chores at home while I work on a computer. I find it hard especially washing the dishes, because my hands are now trembling. That is all there is, when I both have work and chores at home.)" [Par 6, Line 105]

"Actually, akong gina buhat karun focus nalang ko kung unsay mga trabaho nako samot na nga naga duty ko as working student gina focus nako unsay mga trabahoon nako diha then aside from that inig klase focus nalang ko sa klase kung naa koy buhaton sa gawas ibilin nako akong mga trabahoon kung unsay dapat trabahoon ato na time then focus napud ko unsay trabahoon nako ani napud na time. (Currently, I focus on my tasks one at a time. As a working student, I dedicate my attention to my work duties when I am there. Similarly, when I am in class, I concentrate solely on my studies. If I am working on something specific, I set other tasks aside and focus entirely on the priority at hand. This approach helps me stay organized and manage my responsibilities effectively.)" [Par 8, Line 115]

"Maybe in ana jud ko as a person like sleep, work, academic, nganong in ana akong ginabuhay kay it saves money other than going outside na mag spend sa people na dili value imong time or efforts kay matulog nalang ko, mag work nalang ko, mag watch ug Cdrama, mag yoga mga in ana. (I might just be this kind of person who revolves around sleep, work, and academics. The reason I do it is to save money. Instead of going out and spending time with people who do not value your time or effort, I would rather sleep, work, watch Chinese dramas, or do yoga, things like that.)" [Par 13, Line 142]

Participant 8 added,

"Time management para dili ko pressure sa akong mga bulohaton then mahati nako akong time aron dili mag sagol akong huna-huna kung unsa akong buhaton every minute (Time management helps me avoid feeling overwhelmed by my tasks and it allows me to organize my time so my mind is not cluttered with what needs to be done)" [Par 8, Line 117].

Most of the participants stated that time management is one of the essential coping strategies for maintaining work-life balance as a breadwinner. Effective implementation of work-life balance strategies reflects a sense of fairness, enabling employees to successfully balance their work duties with their personal life roles (Ganiyu et. al, 2021, pp. 1-10). Effectively managing their time helps them reduce stress, fulfill work responsibilities, and still dedicate time to themselves and their families, as women are more affected than men by work-life balance demands due to their traditional household responsibilities (Munyeka & Maharaj, 2022, pp. 1874). Maintaining work-life balance helps stabilises the work and home responsibilities to reduce stress and prevent burnout (Roopavathi & Kishore, 2021, pp. 31-37)

IV. SUMMARY

The following section presents the summary based on the results and discussion. It provides an overview of the study, what has been stated regarding it, and what it has attained. This study finds that being a female breadwinner who supports your family is never easy, especially when dealing with the pressures that society has set upon them. Breadwinning requires significant emotional, mental, psychological, and physical strength to carry the burden of the role. They carry the burden of being the pillar that holds the family together, the responsibilities they have to assume, the financial source of the family, and the sacrificial life they have to live, so long as they achieve the hopes, they had for those people who depend on them. Breadwinners assumed their roles as a single mother, as a working student, as a working wife, as a benevolent sibling, and as a loving daughter. The most common trait they share is the decision to become the breadwinner out of love for their family, despite knowing the weight of the responsibilities that come with it, even if it means personal sacrifices and putting their dreams on hold.

The Female Breadwinners in Digos City, Davao del Sur, faced challenges as they are consistently expected to provide for their family amid economic uncertainties. We concluded that Female Breadwinners face societal pressure while supporting their families. However, they have developed coping strategies amid societal pressures through holistic coping and resilience. Breadwinners most

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commonly lean on spirituality to find comfort with faith and prayers. They focused on protecting their emotional and mental well-being rather than falling in line with other people's opinions, as they also draw aspirations from their families. All of these result from proper work-life balance strategies, such as effective time management to handle their financial hurdles, allowing them to fulfill both professional and personal responsibilities. Moreover, female breadwinner expressed their hopes for their families and themselves. Most of them want their dependents, like their sibling and children, to finish their studies and achieve their dreams without going through the hardships they went through. Most importantly, they have individual hopes and dreams that someday they will achieve. These hopeful desires are something they hold on to, as they continuously navigate the complexities of life as a breadwinner.

V.IMPLICATIONS

May we respect and acknowledge the struggles that female breadwinner went through; they experience great lengths to provide for the needs of their families. They faced enough stigma surrounding their role, and after conducting numerous awareness campaigns on equality and gender roles, they should receive the recognition they truly deserve. According to the participants, they experience belittling and judgment regarding their path, adding to the pressure and struggles they are already dealing with from their families and work. They need their voice to be heard as well. They have too much on their plate already; the least society can do is be fair and make sound judgments that are not related to the social construct of stereotypes and stigma around traditional gender roles.

The findings of this study are also accessible for individuals who are interested and invested in thoroughly understanding the lived experiences of female breadwinners while supporting their families and how they cope with societal pressures. Provided that the result is essential to future researchers who need data to support their study of female breadwinners

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