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Exploring the Challenges of Single Mothers in the Philippines:

Empowerment as Diaconal task of Evangelical church in the Philippines.

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Abstract

Single mothers are in need, discriminated against and marginalized in the Philippines. The issues of gender inequality affect the life of single mothers globally. In this master thesis I reflect upon and discuss the research question: "What are the challenges of single motherhood in the Philippines? And how does the Evangelical church meet the needs and empower single mothers?". The research explores the challenges and experiences of a single motherhood in the Philippines in the extended societal context they live within and looking at the overview of how the church can be a vehicle in empowering these women.

Qualitative interview was used in this study. The participant consisted of 4 single mothers and 1 local church leader. Data collection took place using open-ended interviews. Three relevant theories have been employed in this master thesis- perspectives of gender, ecclesiology and the theory of empowerment as diakonia which utilized to answer and explore my research question.

The interviews with the single mothers reveal that they live under challenging conditions. The cultural norms and practices have seen to be continually discriminating and undergird inequalities to the daily life journey of the single mothers in the Philippines. The study reveals that the paternalistic and discriminatory practices influenced by the society are existing within the church, deterring the church to fully meet the needs of the single mothers. The study reveals that the church has primarily been working through traditional ways (e.g. preaching) as responding to the needs of the single mothers in the Philippines. The study found out that there is no collaboration between the church and the public states in response to the needs of single mothers. The church as diaconal agent is called to respond to the human suffering, injustice, care for creation; fostering empowerment to every individual, in family and in communities. Empowering single mothers might be best fulfilled and meet the needs of the single mothers if the civic society and church are both collaborating between programs and initiatives.

Key words: single mother, church, gender, empowerment

Acknowledgements

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ADS: Asian Development Bank

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination

DSWD: Department of Social Welfare & Development

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

MCW: Magna Carta of Women

MDG: Millennium Development Goal

NEDA: National Economic and Development

NSD: Norwegian Centre for Research Data

OHCHR: Office of The High Commission on Human Rights

PCEC: Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches

PHILRADS: Philippine Relief Services Inc.

PSA: Philippine Statistic Authority

SGDs: Sustainable Development Goals

SWTCI: Shepherd's Well Transformation Center Inc.

UN on Women: United Nation on Women

WCC: World Council of Churches

WHO: World Health Organizations

1.0 Chapter 1 Introduction

This master's thesis seeks to understand how the church in the Philippines have been carrying out their mission mandate to those single mothers who are in need, discriminated and marginalized in the Philippines. As a rapidly developing country, Philippines is plagued with societal issues related to socio-cultural and gender inequality that result in disparities of income, opportunity, roles and responsibilities within family relation. Gender inequality exist in the form of socially constructed, predefined gender roles firmly anchored in Philippines sociocultural fabric that has deep cultural and historical roots. The issues of gender inequality affect the life single mother as a woman and as a mother globally that needs to stem. At this time of what we called COVID pandemics, one local newspapers, emphasizes that single mothers in the Philippines has less access of social protection and suffered much more than men due to the reason that women earn less, hold less secure jobs, more likely to be employed in informal sectors. Since women hold greater care demands in home, their jobs will also less disproportionate affected by cuts and lay-off (Pedrosa, 2020).

Considering that the Philippines has been already adapting the principles of Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and being one of the more advanced countries in terms of gender equality implementation. However, such strong adaptation and implementation of gender equality does not mirror changes, since there is still strong gender division within the Philippine society (Centeno& Prieler, 2013, p. 25).

Reducing gender inequality is a major global policy concern. The Goal no. 5 of the ratified Sustainable Development Goal (SGD) is "*Achieve gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls*". The themes of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women is "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls," (UN on Women, 2020). This theme calls for women' right to decision-making in all areas of life, equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end all forms of violence against women and girls, and health-care services that respond to their needs.

This goal stems from global estimates which shows the majority of the 1.5 billion people living on one (1) dollar a day or less are women, whereas women earn on average slightly more than 50% of what men earn (UN, 2000). According to the UN on Women (2019), most single mothers, often juggling paid work, child-rearing and unpaid domestic work. Globally, there are more than 100 million mothers that are single-handedly raising their children (UN on Women, 2020). Women continue to enter the labor

market in larger numbers, but motherhood reduces their labor participation rates, income and benefits that come with it.

UN on Women (2000), stated that women bear a disproportionate and growing burden of poverty at global scale, often encapsulated in the concepts of a "feminization of poverty". Poverty has a distinctly female face in the Philippines (Mendoza, 2010). The poverty incidence in the Philippines was 28.4% percent which is about 4.3 million families or 26.5 million Filipinos. From this statistic, there are approximately 17.7% percent of the total single mother household living below the poverty line.

The church as diaconal agents call in response to the suffering of people, to injustice and to provide care; as such have a decisive part to play in response to the issues of single mothers in the Philippines. The church as diakonia relates Haugen (2014, p.124) understanding as diakonia must be undertaken with the purpose of fostering empowerment of individuals, households and communities. It is that the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how the church is working in empowering single mothers. The study aims to explore the challenges of the single mother in an extended societal context in light of the gender perspective and how the church community responds will be the focus to this master's thesis.

1.1 Research Question

Based on the aforementioned background and the diaconal theories, I have developed the following research question, "What are the challenges of single motherhood in the Philippines? And how does the Evangelical Church in the Philippines meet the needs and empower single mothers"?

1.2 Motivation of the Study

Several factors motivated me to choose this topic for my thesis. I live in the northern part of the Philippines and I was struck with the situation of several women I have known who have been single handedly raising their children. As they often tell their stories and difficulties of being a single mother, I was feeling overwhelmed, and sometimes saw how they are trying their best to provide for the needs of their family. Several of these women I have known are forced to work further away from their children, living their children under the care of their grandparents. They often work in multiple jobs such, laundry work, engaging in online selling, some had to travel to the cities to find jobs. Some of them had no choice but to work outside the country, so that they may be able to provide the necessities of their children.

I was further motivated as I myself is a mother. I was living alone with my son here in Norway away with my husband. Though I am living alone here, I didn't find it difficult as there are support system policies and programs here in Norway to alleviate the burden of mothers such as kindergarten for as early age so that the mother could work, there are monthly allowances for the child and other benefits such as 1 year maternity leave. These factors motivated me to write in this master thesis to explore the

challenges of the single mothers in the Philippines, when there aren't many programs like this in the Philippines and how are they coping being alone. And looking at what are the other agencies doing particularly church to help and meet the needs of these women.

1.3 Scope and Limitation of research study

Though single mothers cover a wide range of categories, the focus of this study will mainly be concentrated on single mothers who are separated from their ex-husband and ex-partner and who alone are responsible for the upbringing of their children. The focus of this study is on the experiences and challenges of single mothers interpreted in the extended societal context they live within. The experiences and struggles of single fathers will not be addressed in this study nor any experiences of the single mothers within the course of their marriage life. This study will not address any reason or issues behind this single mother's separation from their ex-husband. It is not the intention of the study to map the preaching aspect of the church response to the challenges of single mothers but rather how the church is doing or is not doing to empower single mothers in the church community and its society.

1.4 Literature Review

There is a plethora of literature that has been useful and relevant while working on my research thesis. One relevant book "Gender Stereotyping ", Rebecca J Cook and Simone Cusack (2010), this book perspectives has been enlightening my work and inspired my interpretation on how the socialization of roles affects the life of women. The book does a good job of highlighting how gender stereotyping as women are socially constructed into subservient roles; having inferior attributes and characteristics are devaluing and degrading women. She discusses the harmful effect of constant application of gender stereotyping roles on women and men and its effect in the life of women. She does highlight that some law is and might be used as a means of perpetuating factors to harm women through the denial of a benefit and imposition of a burden.

Another relevant article "Empowering the Church for Gender Justice", (Limas, 2007). Though this article makes similar attempts as the previous one mentioned about gender, it is more focused on the context of the Philippines and does locate the possible role of the church in empowering Filipino women. She discusses the potential of the church to enable discrimination and exclusion among women within the church. She does give insight on how patriarchy is an overarching term which the various forms of women oppression are placed.

Both these books and articles highlight the negative impact of socially and culturally constructed gender roles attached to women in the daily life spheres of women particularly in women's work, in their participation on the labor market, and in family household activities. The book of Cook and Cusack (2010) and the article of Limas (2007) discuss a possible way on how gender inequality can be stemmed.

Cook and Cusack (2010) focus much on arguing for the changes of some perpetuating law existing while Limas focuses on the role the church can play in realizing its task in advocating gender justice.

Cook and Cusack (2010) had some certain part of her discussion mirroring some cases of gender discrimination within the Philippines context. Therefore, both these authors (Cook & Cusack and Limas) are influenced by and reflect much of the Philippines context which mirror the reality of women in the Philippines.

1.5 Definitions of Terms and concepts

In this section the key concepts in the thesis will be defined and explained.

Single mother

Single mother as a woman who alone had been responsible for the upbringing of her children, without the help of an adult partner. These women were either widows, separated/divorced, or had not been in a relationship when their children were born. These women are the primary or solely provider of their family household.

 Single mothers face enormous challenges as head of the family as they need to juggle competing priorities in providing financial means and managing their children's needs. Becoming a single mother is a traumatic experience for many women due to emotional stress, psychological and physical problems, economic problems and challenges in providing education, care and love. Single mothers were empirically associated with poverty in countries being tagged as patriarchal society, who often category as the "poorest of the poor" (Kabeer,2015, p. 193).

Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed identities, attributes and roles for women and men and society's social and cultural meaning for these biological differences resulting in a hierarchical relationship between men and women in the distribution of power and rights favoring men and disadvantaging women (OHCHR Commissioned Report, 2013, p. 46). The discrimination on women resulting from the social norms or customs on a country context, linked to certain stereotypes about gender roles; unequal access to land and to economic opportunities, unequal wage employments; equal roles within the household; gender division in labor market, that result to poverty for women and women's marginalization from decision-making spheres at all levels.

Filipino women should be treated first and foremost as mothers being entrenchment of their role as homemakers and caregivers. These gender roles are deeply rooted in Filipino gender consciousness, reinforcing the single mother in the Philippines to be the major custodians and caregivers of their children.

Gender inequality is rampant across societies, though it takes different forms in different societies. It is pervasive across different groups within societies, cutting across class, race, caste, ethnicity, and other forms of inequality (Kabeer, 2015, p. 202).

Poverty

In the thesis I use Wolff (2019) understanding of poverty. Wolff (2019) emphasis that poverty is related to an income too low to cover minimum necessities for the maintenance of physical efficiency. Poverty basically deprives people of vital resources, goods, services necessary to sustain life such as food, housing, and basic health care services. According to Schmidt (2010) poverty affects not only the ability to sustain life, but also to lead life. It alienates people from acquiring capabilities that allow the person to function according to their sense of value.

The poverty line for those living in the world's poorest countries was developed in 1990 and was set at 1-dollar concept which became the basis of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG). According to WCC (2017, p. 52) growing poverty is a result of political mismanagement, corruption, warfare, climate change, and inequalities; not because of lack of development. More than a billion women and children continue to be imprisoned by poverty. In Ridge understanding, quotes by Abela & Renoux (2014), pointed out that poverty is almost always overwhelmingly negative and can have psychological, physical, relational and practical effects on people's lives. To eradicate poverty is not about addressing symptoms but rather addressing the structural factors that deprive women of their dignity, rights and entitlement. Such as cultural and norms factors affecting women to fully participate in the labor market because of the socializing of roles attached to them. It should focus on the process that contribute to the social exclusion, discrimination in access productive resources and exclusion from participation in decision making that bars certain women from the full enjoyment of their rights (WCC, 2017). Sustainable development Goal (SDG) no.1 aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, pointing out the importance of social protection for the poor and vulnerable, while SDG no.10 calls for reducing inequality in all aspects of life.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter 2: Background and Context

In this chapter explore the background context of the research question. The background and contexts of the research study serve purpose in this study. Part of this chapter describes the background information, history and cultural aspects of the study context, exploration of the roles of religion in the society, overview of the evangelical church in the Philippines and relevant law, policies and initiatives of the study context.

Chapter 3*:* The aim of this chapter is to provide the framework of the theories which I will use in the discussion chapter in answering the research question. Particularly three theoretical perspectives, will be presented in detail: the perspectives of ecclesiology, perspectives of gender, and empowerment as Diakonia.

Chapter 4: This chapter will provide an overview of the process in carrying out the study. The design, recruitment of informants, data collection and analysis, as well as validity and reliability, ethical considerations and other limitations will be discussed to enlighten some insights to the process.

Chapter 5*:* the previous chapter discussed how the data was collected and expounded on the measures that were taken into consideration for the uniformity and neutrality of the interview. This chapter will concentrate on analyzing and interpreting the data from the transcription of the interviews.

Chapter 6*:* In this chapter will bring the aspects of Chapter 4 and chapter 5 by way of discussion with an aim to answer the research question.

This master thesis will conclude in **chapter 7** by summarizing what this study revealed and some possible recommendations.

Chapter 2: Background and Context

2.0 Chapter Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the background and context of the research question in this master thesis. First, I will give a brief introduction on the historical status of women and how women in the Philippines viewed will be discussed to locate the importance they play. Secondly, I will give an overview of the role of religion in society particularly to Philippine women. An overview of the church in the Philippines particularly Evangelical church will be presented.

2.1 Philippines background contexts and its culture

With an approximately 109 million in population, making Philippines placed in top 12 having the highest population in the world. Geographically, the Philippines is made up of over 7,107 islands, however according to Philippine Statistic Authority (2016) the national mapping authority reported that hundreds of new islands have been discovered and increased the number of the islands to 7,641 which approximately 2,000 are inhabited. The islands are categorized into three main clusters namely Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao which vary in terms of cuisine, languages and culture. The Philippines has a total area of 300 000 sq. km, 298 170 sq.km of its island area, and estimated 41% is agricultural land as of 2011 and estimated 25 % is forest as of 2011 and an 1,830 sq.km is water area (PSA, 2016).

Figures 1: Map of Philippines (Borlaza, 2020)

The Philippines is linguistically diverse, with eight major dialects and over 170 languages spoken throughout the inhabited islands. The official language of the Philippines is Filipino or known as Tagalog apart from that English is widely spoken throughout the Philippines, and it is common to hear Filipinos mix English and Tagalog (known informally as 'Taglish') in everyday conversation, some of which was used in the interviews.

Before Spanish colonization the indigenous Filipino women revealed that women have enjoyed a high status in society and equal value given to both men and women (De Chavez Abenes, 2015, p.25). However, during Spanish colonization, the early forms of feudalism had started to take root in some communities, and class structures had germinated and were well on their way to full development; as women had become part of social and productive relations which had need for dependence and exploitation. When Spanish masters brought in their Institutions, the social being of women was invested with new meaning, new dimensions. The 'new' Filipina was now her father's meek daughter, her husband's faithful subject, the Church's obedient servant.

This colonial legacy has been continued in the American colonies in the Philippine which increasingly linked and made the local economy dependent on the world capitalist market (De Chavez Abenes, 2015). The traditional self-sufficiency of the Filipino rural households become a nuclear family dependent on the male wage earners who worked mostly as landless peasants, as factory, and office workers, or other low-paying jobs. The historical process of colonialism and capitalism led to the class division of Filipino society and to the sexual division of labor, and gender subordination of women in the home and public workplaces.

The Philippines is tagged in a patriarchal culture society which is deeply ingrained in the consciousness of Filipino men and women through the socialization process they got from the various social institutions-the family, religion, the education system, mass media and the science (Centeno & Prieler, 2013). This is as well inculcated alongside the institutionalization of property ownership and natural identity among women in the Philippines. The Ordinance and Law in the Philippines highlighting the women's "natural" role and destiny in Filipino society as a mother's, Filipino women should be treated first and foremost as mothers being entrenchment of their role as homemakers and caregivers (Cook & Cusack, 2010). It is as well echoed in the Family Code under article 102(6) and article 129(9), that after marriage dissolution, any child below 7 years old is deemed to choose the mother, unless the court decides otherwise. Thus, it creates a legal culture that promotes a climate of women subordination whereas women don't have any option as well as authority in decision with regards to the aspect of childcare.

Due to the global and national levels of urban society that led to the growth of export-based industries and the service sector, which then created more opportunities for Filipino women. Women have been in politics, supreme court justices, administrators and head of major business enterprises. Despite the increase of women's participation in the labor force, women in some spheres do not enjoy comparable employment opportunities, privileges and benefits as men. Work outside the home does not result in liberation because jobs are gender stereotyped. Most of the jobs that are open to women are usually extensions of the mothering, caring and educating roles that they do at home such as teachers, nurses, midwives, social workers, salesladies, vending and other jobs in the service sectors (Centeno & Prieler,

2013). More often, working women are also left open to displacement, marginalization, inequality and unfair treatment in public and private spheres due to the strong patriarchal socialization in the country and they are subjected to many regulatory policies by the government. The lack of opportunities and unfavorable work conditions at home lure women to overseas employment mostly as domestic helpers.

The Philippines has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies in Asia, with an annual GDP growth rate of 6.1% in 2014. Despite the talk about economic growth, the poverty rates have not changed significantly since 2006 which according to Asian Development Bank (2020) the poverty rate in Philippines in 2018 is 16.6 % of the proportion of the population living below the poverty line. Though a fast-growing economy, the Philippines still needs to address the issues of poverty, unemployment, and poor infrastructure. On top of that, natural calamities further push people below the poverty line. About 17.6 million Filipinos are living in poverty, approximately 8.7 million of individuals residing in rural areas, children and women were the sectors with higher magnitude of being poor in 2018 (PSA, 2020). The Philippines' economy largely depends on remittances from Filipinos residing overseas and investing in the homeland. More than 10 million Filipinos are currently living abroad.

2.2 Role of religion in the Philippines

Christianity is the largest practiced religion in the Philippines (*figure 2*). In the Philippines, all religion is protected by the law, and no one religious beliefs are given priority over any other. Between 1565 and 1570, at this time, the Philippines was under Spaniards colonies, the Church first began to aggressively evangelize in the Philippines. Christianity was further introduced during American missionaries under Evangelical Protestantism which to date are affiliated with the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). During the 2015 Philippine census by the Philippine Statistic Authority found that approximately 2.6 % of the population during 2015 were members of the PCEC churches (*figure 2*).

Philippines religious affiliation (2015)

9.5%

2.4%

2.6%

6.0%

79.5%

- Roman Catholic
- Muslim
- Iglesia ni Cristo
- Evangelical
- other
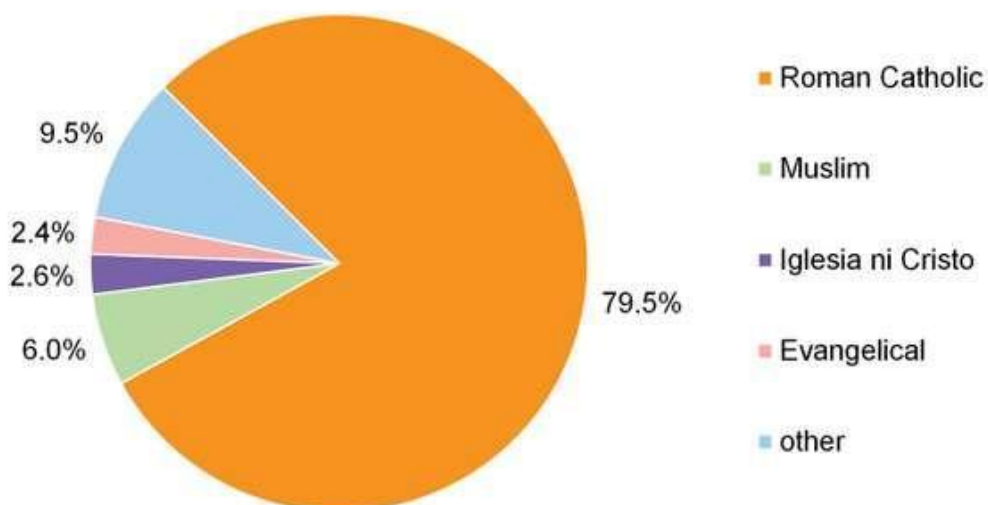
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Figure 2: Philippines religious affiliation. (Borlaza,2020)

The role of the religion can be traced during 1872 of Spaniard colonial, when the execution of the three priests (Gomez, Burgos, Zamora) incited Filipino people and churches to protest against abuse of Spaniards and campaign of equal rights among people (Bacalso, 2017). The introduction of Evangelical Protestantism to the Philippines served as a catalyst for massive reform of the approach of the Church towards the Philippines, particularly in its civic scope and outreach to the community.

The religion has played and continues to play a key part in matters of development in the country evidenced by their critical voice regarding political, social and cultural issues. As an ecclesiastical institution, the churches in the Philippines project a united position on issues affecting the political, social and cultural of Filipino. With so many churches in the Philippines, there is the near universal expectation that religion must be actively working towards the alleviation of suffering, marginalization and discrimination, to promote justice and equality, and longevity of peace (World Faith Development Dialogue, 2019, p. 1). According to the report of World Faith Development Dialogue in the Philippines (2019) religion has a significant source of legitimacy, linked in a part of a common Filipino ethos of helping others: *kapwa*, a Tagalog word meaning "fellow being" express the importance of helping others as a fundamental moral duty of churches. As many churches dedicate their lives to helping others.

In fact, the churches have played a crucial role in changing and liberating the socialization role of women, as evident in the nonviolent toppling of the Marcos regime during the 1986 People Power

Movement and openly introducing Corazon Aquino as President successor. The first woman President in the history of the Philippines and a starting point that women in the Philippines become liberated from their traditional role inside the home and able to participate in terms of civic service and political position.

In the Philippines, the church is the institution most trusted by Filipinos according to the First Philippine Trust Index conducted nationwide by the Public Relation Firm in 2011 (Santos, 2013). The church played a unique place in people's lives as for milestones such as infant dedication, weddings, funerals are very significant. Through its constitution, Filipinos have freedom of worship and all have the right to equal and fair treatment. Theologically and legally acknowledge the ordination of women as pastor or priest in the churches (Limas, 2007). However, due to strong patriarchal practice in the Philippines, some churches, women are still not ordained or elected into leadership positions. Women's organizations in the churches mostly assume auxiliary and service roles, and do not have much say in church decision-making (Limas, 2007). Religion teaches equality, but practices subordination and exclusion on women. This is partly because of the influence of colonialism that the cultural framework of many churches sanctified the family and cementing the place of women as culturally important and distinctive order of women (De Chavez Abenes, 2015 p.34). On the contrary, evangelical churches and some other protestant churches are now slowly moving beyond from male domination as women now ordain as pastor or priest. Thus, in turn reflected, the strong diaconal understanding of Evangelical churches to challenge the cultural and norms on social roles posed on women. Though still the majority of the evangelical church leaders are dominated by man.

2.3 The Evangelical Churches of the Philippine

The evangelical church is a trans-denomination within the protestant Christianity having shared an authoritative approach the Bible emphasizing the substitutionary atonement through Jesus Christ conversionism being born again. In 1965, a group of evangelical church leaders came together seeking to form an organization that would express their oneness in Jesus Christ which is now known as Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC). The PCEC is a cooperative ministry that promotes unity and solidarity among evangelical institutions in the Philippines. From small umbrella organization PCEC has grown into largest network of denominations, churches, mission groups and para-church organizations nationwide, which seek to become the main catalyst of promoting unity and cooperative ministries, presenting a distinctively evangelical voice and presence to the Philippine government and other publics

This PCEC together with its affiliated churches has been engaged in social development of the society and offer support through its development programs by social outreach and offer support through its development organizations affiliated which is the PHILRADs (Philippines Relief services, Inc.) These

organizations centered on the concept of holistic ministry, an intertwining of evangelicalism and development through mobilizing support for disaster response, livelihood enhancement programs, child sponsorship and agricultural development. Engaging in ministries that help poor and needy to become economically self-reliant and rightly related with God and Jesus Christ with a vision of having a transformed nation where peace, justice and righteousness reign, where everyone has a decent standard of living.

This is as well in affirmation on the Shepherd's Well Transformation Center , Inc (SWTCI) of Evangelical churches of the Philippines seek the transformation of individuals and communities, as a church called out to be "salt" and "light" in this world, thus serving as catalyst for positive change in the lives of people and societies for the Glory of God. The Evangelical churches urged the other evangelical community to refocus and redefine their understanding of fellowship based on Act 4:23, being united in sharing each other's burden and in united generosity. According to Bishop Pantoja (2020) the Evangelical church must translate faith into action.

The PCEC has been engaged in a sport commission as a strategic way of catalyzing church health where women and men, children and elderly, and persons with disabilities are welcome to participate in the said sport programs.

Furthermore, the church is stepping up in reflecting on its ecclesiastical role in the area of mental health. Dr. Bautista (PCEC Home, 2020) a licensed clinical Psychologist and one of the Evangelical church leader advocates mental health, urging all leaders to create mental health awareness and educate members on the important of mental health in their church's activities

The women commission of PCEC seeks to meet the needs of Filipino women through encouragement, fellowship, communication and holistic way, and development programs. Envisions to see women members in every sector of society consistently walk with God and make an impact on their respective spheres of influence in the society (PCEC Home, 2006). The PCEC affirmed equality of both men and women as God created humankind as male and female in the likeness and image of God and were therefore equal in dignity and worth before God. According to Pantoja (2020) pointed out that the church must be sensitive to every form of unjust discrimination against gender, having equal rights to employment, education and social service.

PCEC has been advocating the change of principle laid down in the Article 63-66 of the Family Code which grants the spouse (women) a favorable share in terms of division of property, equal authority in decision about child custody and equal share responsibilities after marriage dissolution. This organizational church has been supporting the Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill that adheres people's right. The Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination law protecting the dignity and equality of every person in the Philippines. According to Pantoja (2020) national director of PCEC and PHILRADs, the

form of discrimination has been plaguing many people in the Philippines such as discrimination based on sex and gender. The Evangelical churches in the Philippines are called to support law that respect and adhere to a specific fundamental right enshrined in the Philippine Constitution and in international Law, upholding its theological basis as disciples of Lord Jesus Christ, whose utmost love and concern for the marginalized and the oppressed (Matt. 25:34-30). The PCEC seeks to follow Jesus Christ in upholding the dignity of all human beings, especially to those who are being oppressed, for every person without exception is created equally in God's very image (Gen. 1:27). Human dignity is not based on something intrinsic to humanity, since human beings get its value because it is created by God. Therefore, PCEC stands firmly against desecrating human dignity through a form of oppression which is often exemplified in direct and indirect act of exclusion or discrimination. According to Pantoja (PCEC, 2020) such act not only devalue the human person, but they cut people off from the community's network of interdependence and from enjoying the goods shared in the community due to their perceived inferiority based on certain grounds such as gender, health status and social class.

The PCEC has been supporting prohibiting various discriminatory act such as the promotion of stigma, discrimination on work, education and public service and access. On the contrary, the Evangelical churches of the Philippines has been firmly maintained that when an act is done in accordance and faithful conformity with the beliefs and practices of generally accepted religious tradition such as hierarchical and patriarchal tradition in family relation; such acts are not discriminatory (Pantoja, 2020). The PCEC (2020) believes that religious beliefs and human rights are complementary in seeking to address issues of poverty, exclusion, violence that devalue human dignity.

The Evangelical churches consistently serve as moral guardians of the states duly recognized by the different sectors of the society as a well-informed coordinating institution for the issues affecting the cultural, social, political, and economic life of the Philippine people particularly women (PCEC, 2020). As leaders, individually, and corporately in the context of the local church must educate, empower, enable the Filipino people, particularly women as they are the one who face life's challenges especially in the time of crisis (PCEC, 2020).

2.4 Philippine Law, Policies, Programs and Initiatives

One particular law to find out the benefits of single mothers under Philippine is the Republic Act 8972 known as the " Solo Parent Welfare Act of 2000 (Philippine Commission on Women , 2009) with an act of providing for benefits and privileges to single parents and their children, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes. It is the policy of the State to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development. Through this policy, a comprehensive program of services for single parents (single mothers are also included in this category) and their children shall develop to be carried out by the government and non-government. Therefore,

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single mothers whose income is below the poverty threshold as set by the National Economic and Development (NEDA) and subject to assessment of the DSWD worker in the area shall be eligible for assistance. However, if the single mothers whose income above the poverty threshold are not eligible for assistance, on the other hand, she shall enjoy flexible working hour, no discrimination inside the work place, parental leave not exceeding 7 days every year if this mother has been working at least one year in her employer.

However some Lawmaker found that Solo Parent Welfare Act 2000 is not enough to fully meet the needs of the single mothers as workers burdened with the responsibility being the sole responsibility Therefore, proposed amendment, such as having PhilHealth Card, discount Card about 20% on product, food supplement as well as medical supplies for their children. Another proposed amendment is penalization to employers who fail to provide benefits due to these women under Solo Parent Welfare Act.

The DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and development) through its comprehensive package of development is integral to the process of meeting the needs of single mothers and their families. Such as livelihood development, counseling services, parent effectiveness services, critical incident stress debriefing and special projects in need of protection which include temporary shelter. They also provide legal assistance, medical care, self-concept or ego-building, crisis management and spiritual enrichment.

With regards to addressing the child support of children after marriage dissolution, a law under Article 193 to 203 of Family Code mandated parents to support a child based on the needs of children and the means of parent.

The Philippines is a country beset with serious gender bias owing to centuries of colonial influence (Salcedo, 2017). As a reason for the establishment of the Philippine Commission on Women in 1975 with an intention of promoting and protecting the rights of Filipino women including single mothers. Over several time some law have introduce as relevant to the struggles of single mothers as a women and as a mother, such as the Prohibition on Discrimination against Women (RA 7625), prohibits discrimination with respect to terms and condition of employments sole based on sex. The Philippine Evangelical Churches is onboard on this anti- discrimination law that adheres to people 'rights particularly the women, protecting the dignity and equality of every women in the Philippines (Pantoja, 2020). The Assistance for Small-scale Women Entrepreneur Act (1995), seeking to enhance the development of women by aiding in their pursuit of owning, operating and managing small business enterprises.

Having been ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981 Philippines is obliged to abolish all discriminatory law against women and add provision of their law system that protect women from all form of discrimination. The

aim of CEDAW is to provide women with equal access and opportunities in all areas of life. The participation of the Philippines on CEDAW has contributed to massive advancement and empowerment of the Filipino women. However, the Philippines still has a long way to go in promoting gender equality as there are still existing laws that continually undergird inequalities of Filipino women as a mother and as a woman in the society of the Philippines. For instance, the CEDAW committee urged the State to repel discriminatory law existing such as Family Code giving the husband the final decision reinforcing Filipino macho male culture that their wife is their property to do their bidding. Another, the CEDAW urges efforts to enhance the situation of women in the informal economy. Thankfully, the Magna Carta for the Informal Sector is proposing a bill that will give informal workers the right to self-organization; development enhancement, right to just and humane working conditions, equal access to productive resources and social protection. Though the Philippines has a long way to go, the states have continually acted to create law in accordance to the fundamental needs and rights of women in the Philippines.

One significant law in the Philippines has been adopted in 2009 with an intention to seek and eliminate discrimination against women in the Philippines is the Magna Carta on Women Act constituting the Commission as Gender and Development Ombud. What special in this law was that its principles and frameworks has been incorporated directly on international law, the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women). The Magna Carta of Women (MCW) is a comprehensive women's human rights law that seeks to eliminate discrimination through the recognition, protection, fulfillment, and promotion of rights of Filipino women, particularly those belonging in the marginalized sectors of the society (Philippine Commission of Women, 2020). Under this Law, it states the approval and adaptation of Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2025, having an intention to translate the CEDAW Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action into policies, initiatives, programs, strategies and projects for Filipino women. These aimed at gender equality and to protect the rights of women and children in keeping with SDG 5.

The Philippines as part of their solidarity with the Filipino women declaring one day each year as holiday in commemoration to every Filipino woman, this was under the National Women's Day Act or known as RA 6949 declaring the 8th of March every year as a special working holiday.

Chapter 3: Theory

3.0 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I will present the theoretical perspectives that will be used in the discussion of material in chapter 6. I have chosen an ecclesiological perspective in order to reflect on the nature of the church and its "mandate". Secondly, I will present empowerment theory as a form of diakonia as a form of community service of the church. Thirdly, I will present gender perspectives in order to reflect upon and discuss the socialization role attached to women.

3.1 Ecclesiology

What is church? What is the role of the church as an institution and as faith? According to WCC (2005), the church is a gift of God, called into being by God the Father who sent the Holy Spirit to remind those who believed about all that Jesus taught while on the earth.

The word "church" is a translation of the Greek word "ekklesia" that means "what is called out or forth". Hegstad (2013, p. 30) states that the church is a visible and concrete fellowship between people as defined by its relationship with the triune God. The church becomes the church when people gather in the name of Jesus and believe that Jesus himself, through the Spirit, is made present in their midst .The church is both the sign and anticipation of the fellowship between God and people with the forthcoming kingdom of God. Being church therefore means coming together of followers who are of similar faith and belief and who are committed to the One they are following. This as well in affirmation of Philippine Evangelical Church as oneness in the body of Christ being called into fellowship means being called into communion and mutual care for each other (2.3). It is not simply the place where people meet Jesus individually, but is a fellowship that seeks Jesus together, having care for one another, sharing lives, sharing emotions, and bearing one another's burden, encouraging one another and helping those who have needs. And to form the interpersonal connections that ought to be parts of Christian churches, need to go out to establish Christian friendship and to know the real needs of people outside the church or the society of community. The relationship needs to involve more than words, it needs action by helping those who need help. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (Ådna, 2019, p. 62).

The Church as the body of Christ, each person is significant with one another and has a unique function intended for everyone just each part of our body, though having different functions but all are essential to our body part. Women or men, single mothers or couples are essential in the eye of God. Each is upholding the same value and dignity in the eye of God since everyone is created in His likeness. It is then the task for the church to ensure that whenever there is part of the body that is weak and lift behind are helped by those strong so the entire body can function as it should. This requires by acknowledging

and being aware of the needs of the people around, such as , single mother, that in some degree are not experiencing the fullness of the life that God intended for everyone, therefore the body is not functioning as it should be. To be part of the body of Christ is to reassure that, even if society stigmatizes and discriminates, the church does not abide by these rules (Deifelt, 2019, p. 116).

The Church's existence is instrumental in God's mission. The church is not a building, social club or a self-benefit society. The church is the people of God; both the church and the people of God have a mission to the world. Therefore, the church is a group of people, in response to God's call on their lives, are committed to helping others experience a fulfilling and satisfying life. Regardless of their social identity or status, alike is called to care and love each other as equal, lifting and complementing each other and not leaving behind. According to Dietrich (2019, p. 24) the life of the Church in the world is intrinsically interwoven with the life of the Church as communion, in words and sacrament. God's communion/ koinonia becomes lived and experienced within the church that is placed within the world, within the societies and concrete contexts.

The church being part of God's mission is called out to liberate, restore dignity and ensure justice and peace. The WCC (2013) Busan Assembly invited Christians and people of good will everywhere to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace. Everybody, male and female, is created in the image of God, thus has an intrinsic dignity, which forms the same dignity, value and rights for protection and meaningful life as oneself (Dietrich, 2014, p. 30).

Ecclesiology brings together the understanding that the church is called to live its diaconal call and identity, because God has lived this call in the world through God's own Son, his incarnation and service, death and resurrection (Dietrich, 2019 p.24). In an active role the church fulfils its task to bear witness to God's reconciliation, healing and transformation, by serving the world and human people. As this church happens where people journey together in faith in the triune God, facing and engaging with life and challenges of humankind both in their nearest communities, societies and countries, and globally (Dietrich, 2019, p. 25).

The Christian church mandate to care for the widows and orphans contextualized to our society is set. The church must be aware of the needs of single parent families and beyond to our communities. God has concern for single parents in the Old and New Testament and their children, the church ought to share that concern. The church today is to have the same attitude held by both the Old and New Testament as well as God himself towards its care and concern for the divorced, widowed and single parent. This is in accordance to what Abdullah et al (2017) stated, because single mothers are the most group of people who are experiencing the difficult personal and emotional experiences that a human can experience, thus the church should respond to these critical issues of life.

As an outworking of its task, the church is faced with challenges as often the church can be considered to play a role in shaping social attitudes about gender that contribute towards women's subordination. According to WCC (2017, p. 64) "many religious traditions", including Christian, express paternalistic and discriminatory practices as regards women's role and rights". Christian religions often support patriarchal values that have potential to oppress and limit women life chances; such as priests, or pastors relegated to men, and by acknowledging that men are the head of the family, as it relates to Jesus as the head of the Church and that women must submit to her husband. Tomalin (2013, p. 191) emphasize that all religions, including Christian religions vigorously promote and enforce gender roles whose explicit intent entails the subordination of women. An understanding of the place and role of women in Church context and by extension all of life, is important in how the church functions and responds to the needs and issues of all people of God.

3.2 Gender

Gender refers to socially constructed differences in attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male, and to the social interactions and relationships between women and men (Jørgensen, 2016, p.202). The gender roles are deeply entrenched in every culture. Culture explains a people's way of life, it tells about the identity and things that people keep scared of, thus is mostly passed from generation to generation. Therefore, it determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in each context. Most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men associated in their roles and responsibilities, in activities and in access to and control over resources as well as in decision-making opportunities. Culture has created a gap by humanly constructed patriarchal tradition in the Philippines, women regarded as homemakers, nurturers, child bearers and child carers of the family. Patriarchal values endorse the current situation of women in the society where equality for women is hardly a priority. Jørgensen (2016, p.202) states that the religious interpretations, cultural practices and institutionalized structures have played a key role in creating and perpetuating the patriarchal ideology in social behavior and socio-economic aspects.

In Philippines societies, where the discussion and strong implementation of women equality in all areas, education, advocacy, programs, yet it is evident that inequality and discrimination against women still exist. Still, women are deprived of their economic, political, social and cultural rights. More women are in poverty than men, and they experience more often exploitation, discrimination and violence. Therefore, there is a challenge for re-socialization of gender roles and responsibilities of women in the Philippines.

The Goal number 5 of the SDG emphasizes not only the empowerment of women and girls but also gender equality. This goal as WCC (2017) say can only achieve through gender justice as target of end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere. Gender justice aims to eliminate all

forms of violence and harmful practices, recognize and value unpaid care or domestic work. Ensure women full and effective participation and equal opportunities. To undertake reforms that give women equal rights to economic resources.

Esteve-Volart, quoted by Batra & Reio (2016, p.90) says that inequalities between women and men arise in the construction of unequal power in a relationship, creating a distinct convention of male domination and female domination in most spheres of life, including the workplace. Boys and girls are socialized differently and the inequality in the relationship reflects a societal gender inequality. The roles women relegated to the task of being the primary carer of the family, and men being the head of the household of the family provides an indication of the pervasiveness and perniciousness in the life of women. Often the gender role stereotypes attach to women contributes to poverty and inequality and undermines women's human rights. The connections of women's poverty and the fact that because "women are primary caregivers of the children and older adults, they have more difficulty in seeking remunerative work outside the home (OHCHR Commissioned Report, 2013). If they were able, it is more likely in informal sectors that are often less paid. The gender inequality arising from multifaceted social practices viewed as normal from a religious or cultural standpoint, resulting in women being disproportionately underrepresented in the economic mainstream (Barta & Reio, 2016 p. 91). This affects the overall development of the society as labor: unequally distributed and productivity is reduced. Even though women hold the majority percentage of the labor market, they are paid less, while failing to gain favorable recognition of their unpaid works both within the family and the society.

According to Cook &Cusack (2010) the elimination of creating a gender equality consciousness is through education and training of the children within the family setting will help to stem the risk of gender disparity at large. Gender is one of the first social categories that children learn in today's societies, and thus knowledge of gender stereotypes is evident from early childhood (Kachel, et al, 2016, p. 2).

According to World Bank Group (2015) gender equality is a core development agenda in terms of economic growth, stability, and enhanced productivity and its cumulative effects on education, health and family. Gender equality allows everyone to have equal power to shape their own lives and contributions to their families, society and to the nation at large. Gender equalities means equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys (Jørgensen, 2016, p. 202). The equalities of women's and men's opportunities, rights, and responsibilities do not depend on whether they are born female or male. This gender equality emphasized about being equally valued within the society, in terms of social protection, rights and access to and control over resources and in decision-making opportunities. When both men and women achieve equal opportunities and rights, a better improvement in all aspects of life will also be achieved. The improvement in women health, education and labor participation is reflected in child development in all aspects of life as well as in

women development and health. Therefore, for the overall development and for the success in achieving Sustainable Development Goal number 5, a discussion and implementation of action on women' empowerment must consider not just the impact on women but on children, family, church and society.

3.3 Empowerment and Diakonia

Empowerment is about having the capacity to lead, to take responsibility, experience equality and be able to decide on their own lives and in turn gain self-confidence. Nordstokke (2013) states that "true empowerment" equips an individual or a group of people with the necessary skills for transforming their community and society. It is the process of increasing the capacity, income and participation and equality of an individual or a group of people which is constituent to the development.

According to Rowland-Serdar & Schwartz-Shea (1991, p. 607) empowerment is a process in which women come to believe in their ability to construct, and take responsibility for, their gendered identity, their politics and their choices. Often, women are in a state of powerlessness due to the cultural prescriptions attached to them being a woman in a patriarchal society- subordination of women. Empowerment of women involves the process of resolving the conflicts posed by the beliefs of women subordination in order to develop a sense of self, that able to make, and take responsibilities for, and choices affirming their sense of self even when those choices challenge the prevailing cultural ideologies.

Cornwall (2016) urges the needs of engagement with culturally embedded normative beliefs, understandings and ideas about gender, power and change. This takes the process of change to address commonly held and neglected assumptions that a firm basis for gendered inequalities in any cultural contexts. By changing the assumptions of what a woman or a man should be or do, and the challenging understanding of gender identities and relations in which according to Cornwall (2016,p. 9) take a variety of forms ; by training courses that expose participants to different ways of framing their realities; by creating women's group gathering to share experiences together, through experience and offer solidarity, by shifting in process the way this women come to think of themselves and their entitlement not only as individuals but also a people who share something in common. The process of empowerment enables women to stand back and inspect critically the beliefs about themselves and others they take for granted, and then using this expanded understanding to inform an analysis of what needs to change and how they can be part of that process of change (Cornwall, 2016). It is a development towards positive change in the situations where they live, by creating justice, inclusiveness and participation towards transformation and fullness of life (Ham, 2014, p. 111). These definitions accord the control of change to women allowing them to redefine their gender roles, define their path for the future and enhance their ability to serve different tasking.

I concur with Cornwall (2016) who argued that empowerment is not about addressing the surface needs of women such as providing loans, business opportunities and means to generate income that enable women to better manage their poverty. Rather to be transformative- needs to address the root cause of poverty and the deep structural basis of gender equality, that calls more than facilitating women's access to assets or creating enabling institutions, laws and policies. She goes on saying that empowerment needs a process that produces shifts in consciousness. This definition accords the control of change to women by overturning limiting normative beliefs and expectations that keep women locked into situations of subordination and dependency. Challenging restrictive cultural and social norms and contesting the institutions of everyday life that sustain inequity. This will be critical for those women who have been discriminated against and marginalized because of the imposed societal assumption attached to them as a woman and as a mother, making them vulnerable to poverty and inequality.

In this study, empowerment is then understood as a social process that helps people gain control of various aspects of their own lives and be able to participate in the community as a person of dignity and worth. In doing so, they may be able to reclaim and build their own autonomy as a human being created in the likeness and image of God, capable of making their own decision and choices about their lives and able to contribute in the community and society (Dietrich, 2014). They are then capable and able to foster power as a person with self-worth, with dignity and self- esteem. According to Narayan (2005 p.4) empowerment has intrinsic value- having a feeling of confidence, walking with dignity, feeling respected, living without fear is a value. This understanding is in keeping as a main theory of diakonia, being understood as a caring ministry of the church, meeting the needs of people in the areas that they are being marginalized and discriminated against. Nordstokke (2013) states that empowerment has "a God-given goal (telos) of energizing people to participate in God's mission and realizing God's good intention for creation and human being through mutual love and care and of promoting human dignity and justice.

The needs of those seeking empowerment will vary from one individual or group to another and as such Cornwall (2016) argues that empowerment was not something that could be bestowed by others, but about recognizing inequalities in power, asserting the right to have right and acting to press for and bring about structural change in favor of greater equality. She asserted that empowerment can be temporary, and some pathways of empowerment can lead women into experiences of disempowerment, from which they may or may not surfaced empowered. What empowers one woman might not empower another: there are no one-size-fits-all recipes for empowerment. Therefore, the process of empowerment is not an easy journey, as one women who travel alone or in the company of others, may encounter different barriers and obstacles, in which along the paths leads them to dead-ends or double-duck on themselves, or might as well open up new insights, expanding their own horizon and extended their own possibilities (Cornwall, 2016).

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In this perception of empowerment according to Cornwall (2016) comes a perspective on the contribution that external actors can make to help those women overcome those obstacles and barriers, by clearing the obstacles through networking and a go-between, collaboration, educating and providing knowledge, fellowship and encouragement for those women who are making the journey. This understanding points out the decisive roles that diakonia as an expression of church played in meeting the needs of single mothers. As women in the Philippines have been marginalized, discriminated and excluded in many ways due to socialization roles assumption as primary carer of the family, homemaker and nurturer, constituting their own inequalities. In this regard diaconal actors must be sensitive and conscious of their needs, allowing them to define their own path. Diakonia begins with the awareness of context. It is about listening to the voices that tend to be neglected; the stories of women marginalized, excluded and being discriminated against. The church as an agent of change should embrace and demonstrate mutual care and equality, listening to each single mother's unique life stories. The church played a role as mutual support in terms of being involved in the struggles of the single mothers.

Being able to empower single mothers will require the church to be open to a new way and embark on the news approaches, programs and initiatives that the state has. In this process of women's empowerment allow women to build their own agenda, speak of their own voices, able to create their own identity and being, and able to move at their own pace. Women's empowerment has been the gender discussion and debate since decade, as this woman has been continually experiencing disempowerment in their own context. This has been the basis for the mandate of the Church as the expression of diakonia-as a concept that holds together what the Church called to be and to do, both at local, national and global level. Similarly, the basis of SDG goal 5, mandated to promote gender equality and empowerment of women.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.0 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I will present and discuss the methods I have used in order to explore the challenges of the single mothers in the Philippines in order to discuss how the Evangelical Church in the Philippines meet the needs of the single mothers. I will present the design, how I recruited the interviewees, the data collection and how I have analyzed and interpreted the data. Finally, I will reflect on this study the validity, reliability and the ethical considerations I have made during the different stages of the doing and writing of this master thesis.

4.1 Research Design

Creswell & Creswell (2018 p. 4) emphasis that qualitative research is a good approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This research method tends to examine how individuals or groups understand a particular social or human problem. Hence, qualitative research is relevant for this research as we explore the phenomena of single motherhood in the Philippines. An open-ended interview will be conducted to collect information and experiences from the participant with an intent to understand the dynamics of their lives and experiences and what the church is doing in empowering single mothers.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the tool. Therefore, being a researcher in this qualitative research, I was able to see and understand the social context and life events of the single mothers in the Philippines. Since I live in the Philippines where the context of the study is. I know the languages they are spoken off and I myself have a child and that I have an idea about motherhood. I have known some single mothers as well in the Philippines, and I have seen their journey being single handedly raising their children.

Qualitative research expresses a commitment to viewing events and the social world through the eyes of the people that studied. From this understanding, I chose qualitative research design because I was able to achieve the in-depth understanding of the experiences and challenges of the single mothers. Since the single mothers' stories are reported in their own words and using their own frames of references. I have interviewed a local church leader in an Evangelical church. And I set out to achieve a textured analysis of the responses of the Evangelical church, hearing their account with regards to the phenomena of single mothers.

This study was influenced by abductive reasoning. I followed the principles of adduction by grounding a theoretical understanding of the contexts of single mothers and the church looking at their language, their way of making meaning about their lives and self-understanding and their worldviews (Bryman,2016 p. 394).As adduction reasoning tends to be described and understood by the world from

his or her participants' perspectives, the researcher must come to a social scientific account of the social world as seen from those perspectives. In the interviews, I was struck by the hardship of these single mothers being the sole responsible and provider of their family. As when I look at the theories, I came to see the gender in poverty in relation to the suffering of these single mothers. As exploring the single mothers' experiences and difficulties and looking at the church leader views and response to the needs of single mothers, help me to understand the lives of single mothers and to develop a theoretical proposition. Therefore, in this study, I chose to emphasize the worldview of my informant and to focus on understanding their everyday lives in their own terms.

4.2 Selection and recruitment

4.2.1 Recruitment and Selection of Participant

In an interview study, it is connected to the decision about which persons to interview and from which groups these should come. Sections are procedures used to identify, choose, and gain access to relevant data sources from which you will generate data using your chosen method (Mason, 2002 p. 120).

Separate questions were prepared for two categories of interviewees. The questions for the single mother's participants were guided and focused on the dynamics of the experiences and challenges of a single mothers' impact. While the interview guides on church leaders ascertaining the church views on the matter and how churches are seen in empowering single mothers.

As required, protocols were followed in the recruitment of the participant. A detailed consent form was provided to each participant indicating what the research entailed and how their participation would be treated and their freedom to withdraw from the process at any time.

In gathering my participants some of them I used the snowball effect while the rest were directly approached by me. I choose to interview these single mothers. My concerns are not to know and speak generally about all single mothers in the Philippines. But the topic and the phenomenon that the single mothers tell about, is a strong phenomenon, that in their own way raises and represents insight to the Philippine society as well. The individual life stories of these participants are also relevant to understanding societal problems. The recruitment of participants was to take place in a local community that I know in the Philippines. However, I will not disclose which community they belong to because of their anonymity. The fact that I know the community they belong too, and that I know these women, raises ethical challenges

The respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability. I have recruited and interviewed 5 participants: 4 single mothers and 1 local church leader. Interviewing a cross section of individuals is best thought to gain a fair assessment of the situation

A detailed consent form was provided to each of respondents or participants indicating what the research entailed and how their participation would be treated and pointing out their freedom to withdraw at any given time from the process.

4.2.2 Church

With the help of one person that I've known to me was able to directly approach the pastor of Jesus History Maker Church (JHM Church). People from the church were selected based on their position and their knowledge. The leader was also affiliated with another church from another province.

4.2.3. Single Mothers

Two single mother participants were recruited using snowball effects as described by Bryman (2016), who states that a participant can be achieved through asking another participant from the other participant who have had the same experience relevant to the research. Three of the participants were directly approached by me and the fact that I have known their locality creates ethical challenges. I have reflected about my connectedness and tried to be aware of this as I interview these women and in the analysis.

4.3 Data collection

The data collection steps include setting the boundaries for the study through selection and recruitment; collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents and visual materials; as well as establishing the protocol for recording information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018 p. 185). The aim of my study was to explore the experiences and challenges of being a single mother and the impacts of these experiences in the lives of single mothers as well as church responses, their opinions on the concept and construction of single mothers. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was done to interview 5 participants, 4 from single mothers and 1 church leader. Interviews through video call from messenger, emails and telephone call was the primary method used in collecting data for this study. The aim of a semi-structured interview is to ask all the questions on the list with sensitivity to develop a conversational structure, but not necessarily any questions and orders.

4.3.1 Interviews

Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. Through conversation we get to know other people and learn about their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they live in. Interviews is believed to be one of the most widely used methods of qualitative research. An interview is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest (Brinkman and Kvale, 2015, p. 4). The research interview is a conversation of daily life and is a professional conversation, where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the

interviewee. During this study, interviews were intended to elicit views and opinions from the participant through semi-structured and generally open-ended questions. The inquiries are carefully prepared and crafted to ensure that the research question would be fully explored and addressed. The participants were then chosen and introduced to the interview guides prior to the actual interviews.

Prior to start the interviews, a briefing was conducted with the interviewee informing their roles in the conversation, briefly tells about the purpose of the interview, the use of a recording instrument and giving the interviewee an opportunity to ask any question before starting the interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 154). The interviews ranged from 30 mins to 90 mins through video call from messenger and telephone calls. The language being used is majority in English, while in some instances the interviewee used local language which is Tagalog.

While the ideal interview is face-to-face or a one-on-one interview, there are also other acceptable modes of conducting interviews as stated by Creswell & Creswell (2018, p. 188) such as telephone calls, internet interviews such as video calls as well as in written form. One of the interviews was conducted in written form where the participants chose to write their responses to the interview guides. Another two of the participants were conducted through video calls from a messenger while the rest were conducted by telephone call.

In this study, I chose an open-ended interview since it allows better interaction with the participants and better opportunities to present follow up questions as necessary for clarification. Follow up questions were necessary to probe and explore further the answer that was provided. Open ended interviews are widely used in qualitative research since it provides better access to interviewees' views, interpretation of the event, understandings, experiences and opinions and when done well can achieve a level of depth and complexity (Silverman, 2014, p. 171). Apparently, open ended interviews offer a deeper picture for accessing individuals' attitudes and values. The interviews could be described as narrative interviews, telling the stories of the participants, as outlined by Brinkmann & Kvale (2015, p. 178). Being aware of asymmetric power relation between the interviewer and interviewee as mentioned by Brinkman & Kvale (2015, p. 37). I tried to ensure not to dominate the conversation but approach the participant equally in questioning, interpreting and let them take the opportunity to express themselves freely.

4.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis is fundamentally about data reduction as mentioned by Bryman (2016, p. 11) it is concerned with reducing the large body of information that the researcher has gathered to make sense of it. This involves transcribing interviews and reviewing the data collected by getting the general sense of information and reflecting its overall meaning. It is like peeling back the layers of the onion as well as putting it back together, carefully segmenting and taking a part of the data. A process of breaking down data collected into themes, patterns, and trends that are manageable and that will help the

researcher to identify the relationship between the concepts and theories. Interpretation then seeks to summarize the overall finding, comparing the finds to the literature, discussing a personal view of the findings. About finding the meaning that explains the observed patterns or themes, thus applying data to bring out new insights.

During the process of analyzing and interpretation, I shared parts of the material in an analysis group (Annette, Florence and Sissle during Easter) with members of other cultures who have no connections to the informants- in order to get a fresh look at the interviews. On the other hand, this sharing of some part of the materials creates an ethical implication and challenges.

4.4.1 Coding/ Thematic strategy

Data collected was analyzed using qualitative methods of analysis. It was hoped that the data collected would give a realistic and deep understanding of the situation of single mothers and how the church empower single mothers. The interview data analyzed using thematic analysis. A list of initial categories was developed and refined by reading and categorizing the data in each transcript and in turns developing themes through comparing each transcript with other.

One of the main elements of the identification of the themes was through coding each transcript. Coding is a process whereby the data are broken down into their component parts and those parts are then given labels (Bryman., 2016, p. 11). During the coding process of the interviews, I was struck on the experiences and challenges of the single mothers being sole responsible and providers of their family, their struggles on financial aspect, struggles to juggle between work and responsibilities at home and their susceptibility on health issues. The process of narrowing and grouping the data into categories by reviewing transcripts, making notes, giving labels to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance.

As part of interpretation of the data, the finding was summarized by taking the notes on similarities, differences, significance and trends, comparing the finding to literature.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018, p. 199) validity means the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures while reliability indicates that the researchers' approach is consistent across different researchers and among different projects. Validity talks about whether the research is accurate and has credibility, and reliability talks about the consistency of the data presented along with other research of similar nature. The consistency of the responses from my different respondents revealed that the information and data collected was valid and accurate. The research question was understood clearly by the respondents and self-explanatory.

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By constantly checking the transcription to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription helps me ensure that the data collected is reliable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 2002). Therefore, transcribing data is one way to test reliability of the research. The process of cross checking of collected data and by continually comparing data with the codes and by writing memos and findings determine the reliability of my research. These were utilized during and after the collective respectively. During transcription I was careful, and I understand that transcription is part of the interpretation.

4.6 Ethical Consideration

The protection of the privacy of the respondents was the main concern of the research subjects. Several steps were taken before, during and after the research in order to achieve privacy protection of the respondents. Firstly, interview guides were carefully crafted, the church leaders were accommodating, facilitating and joyfully participated knowing that I am not part of their church members. Then approval was sought and received from Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) (*see appendix ii*) in keeping with the regulation of VID Specialized University. A required consent form was prepared and given to all participants indicating that the interview would be anonymized and that it was their choice to participate in the research and at the same time can withdraw from the interview at any moment.

In keeping with the Norwegian regulations and to protect the participant identity, the interviewee was anonymized, a made-up name was made; Anne, Beth, Carwina, Jenny and the church leader. As required all stored data will be subsequently destroyed after the research is complete.

The fact that some of the participants I have known and that I have shared some of the material in the analysis group with no connection with the participant, create an ethical challenge.

4.7 Challenges during Data Collection

Important to note in my research are the possible factors that may have impacted the process of conducting the study. As I have known some of the participants, I have certain biases and even though this is an advantage it was a challenge of certain preferences and prejudices. I tried to remain objective.

During the data collection, my first choice of Church to be interviewed was not responding to my email and even messages, which pushed me to look for another church within the same area. In the case of single mothers' respondents, some of my prospects interviewed were not responding, a reason as to why I ended up with only 4 single mothers' respondents. During the interview process, there was a bit of struggle with the connection since most of my respondents; the single mother as well as the church leaders are living in the rural areas where internet connection isn't functioning well. In which it took quite sometimes to gather all the data interviews from the respondent. There are some instances where the interview will be disrupted, since one of the participants has some other appointment, or need to go

to work. I also admit that my interview question is not fully enough to answer the research question. Thankfully, we are now in the digital world. I was able to conduct follow-up questions from the participant.

However, this challenge had not affected the richness of the data I have collected, and I can say that all data collected was able to provide answers to the research question.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Respondent Interviews

5.0 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter discussed how the data was collected and expounded on the measures that were taken into consideration for the uniformity and neutrality of the interview. This chapter will concentrate on analyzing and interpreting the data from the transcription of the interviews.

In order to hide and protect the identity of the interviewees, a made-up name was made; Anne, Beth, Carwina, Jenny and church leader. Quotes and excerpts from the respondents' responses have been included to substantiate the analysis and to provide the reader with a better understanding of the findings (Patton, 1987). A mix of views from a single mother presented in response to a question and to give the outlook of the respondents to the specific themes after the interviews has been read over and over and choose to use this theme. These will be discussed according to the sequence of the questions and answers given by the respondents as described in the following sections to provide the reader a better understanding.

5.1 Background information

This part of the interview process was a warm-up exercise to establish rapport with the respondent and somehow to learn to know them a little bit. This is to provide a clear glimpse about who the respondent is to the readers. I created a made-up name of all the respondents.

Anne is 37 years old, has been separated for 5 years after 10 years of marriage. She lives alone with her children; two girls and 2 boys. Her eldest son is now 15 years old; second daughter is 12, the third is 9 years old and her youngest is 7 years old. She works with 3 different jobs such as lottery agent, doing laundry work (Washing other people clothes) and working in a local health center. When asked about where the father of her children is, she answered that "*he has another family already*" and that her ex-husband just occasionally meets their daughter. She is having difficulties being alone and no one to rely on, especially when she is sick, she doesn't have anyone to ask for help to look after her children and that even if she is sick, she still needs to stand up and do everything. *No one can ask for some help to take care of my children. Even though I am so weak I still need to stand up, do everything.* She is as well struggling financially and having difficulties to balance between work and childcare. I work as a lottery agent; I accept laundry work (Washing other people's clothes).

> *I work in a local health center, just to meet our daily needs to survive. It's been so hard having four children to take care alone and at the same time working to earn for living* (Anne).

Beth is a 31-year-old single mother for seven years now. She has a 7 years old daughter. She is currently working as a domestic worker in Dubai. Beth's daughter lives with her grandparents. Beth is the sole provider of her daughter. When asked about how long she lived with the father of her daughter, she mentioned that "*We didn't live together nor got married*". Moreover, the father of her daughter hasn't met his daughter even once in person, however he has seen their daughter in a picture. I didn't ask whether her ex- partner has been contacting her daughter though. She is having difficulties being away from her daughter, especially when her daughter is sick and that she wasn't there with her to care.

> *Life as a mother is very difficult; "difficult" because I am working far from my daughter. I can't be with her especially when she is sick, and I am not with her* (Beth).

Carwina is 31 years old, a single mother for 10 years now. She has a 15 years old daughter. She is an ex- domestic worker in Singapore. As of now, she has been to online marketing and selling goods. She is a sole provider for her daughter. According to her, her daughter's father has his own life now. In addition, when asked about how often he meets her daughter, Carwina replies that they meet each other often since the father of her daughter is working at the same school where their daughter is attending school. She mentioned being stressed and quite struggling financially as she doesn't have that much saving while she works abroad.

> *Life as a mother is a bit hard, sometimes stressful, moody and I need to sacrifice everything. It's a bit hard especially now that I am back in the Philippines and don't have much savings* (Carwina).

Jenny is a 31 years old, single mother for 4 years. She has two children: age 8 years old and 5 years old. She is living with her family (mother and father) and she works as a teacher in primary school. According to Jenny, her ex-husband is currently working in Malaysia and that he (Father) hasn't seen their children since 2015. She does receive child support from her ex-husband with an amount of 5000 to 6000 monthly. Jenny is having difficulties with regards in disciplining her children, while mentioning being stressed about the life of being a single mother. I thought that it is difficult to be a mother every time I see them quarreling and if they say or utter hateful words. It is the most difficult part of being a mother. It is sometimes stressful and challenging. She also struggles financially as she mentioned asking financial support with her family when she is short with money. *I get support from my family every time I badly need financial support.* I have also interviewed one of the Church leaders in local churches in our place. This church is a Non-profit Christian Organization based in Baguio City and La Trinidad Municipality of Benguet Province. Their Ministry have outreaches in different areas in the Philippines including Alaminos City of Pangasinan Province, and Small Groups in another Country like Canada and in the Middle East. They have approximately 200 plus members present in different locations. The church leader mentioned having few members of single mothers. They have a Regular Sunday Worship

Gatherings, Regular Fridays Night Youth Fellowship, Regular Prayer Intercession, Regular Campus Ministries in High Schools and Colleges, and Regular Outreaches Leader with their Teams of Disciples.

5.2 The themes of the interviews of single mothers

In this section I will present the stories and different aspects of difficulties being a single mother. Upon reading the interviews data over and over. I choose these different themes as it commonly struggles that these women encountered in their daily lives as a mother and as a woman.

5.2.1 Sole responsibility

Single mothers feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of juggling childcare, housework and work. When the single mother asks of their typical days, most of them response that their days revolve between taking care of the kids, preparing the kids to school and their food and then went to work, in the afternoon, they need to do household chores, cook food and tend the needs of the children before taking the kids in the bed. Jenny mentioned that her days begin with getting the children up, dressed, and off to school, and then, after quickly cleaning up the breakfast dishes, getting herself dressed and off to the job. Then in the afternoon, she may hurriedly rush home to join the children. The evening meal must then be fixed and served and afterward the dishes done. Then the children must be settled into an evening activity and there supervising the children's homework. This would be an ordinary day of a single mother. Anne elaborates on her typical weekdays:

> *I wake up early every day…. Look after and prepare my children's needs for school. I Need to prepare all the things for the whole day before I go to work. In the afternoon, I need to clean this, clean that. Need to prepare food for my children, tend my children's needs, before they go to sleep".* This goes the same with Jenny *"My typical weekdays, umm, start with preparing things to go to school. Eating breakfast with family, bathing the kids, preparing them to go to school. Then after that, I prepare myself to go to work. Then after work, I will tutor the kids with their homework. Eat dinner with them and then prepare them for bedtime. We also pray together before going to sleep* (Anne).

This cycle goes the same in the following days.

5.2.2 Economic struggle

Anne and Jenny elaborated into different types of job to earn for living in order to bring food on the table for her children and their struggles for survival at the subsistence level. When a question is asked about their works; one respondent mentioned having 3 types of work:

I work as a lottery agent. I accept laundry work (Washing other people's clothes) ...I work in a local health center, just to meet our daily needs to survive. Aside from being a teacher, I work online as well as selling goods online and I am also into networking business (Jenny).

Though some single mothers engage into different jobs and extra work, they still experience a shortage in financial aspects. These single mothers are still asking help financially with their family and friends. When asked if they are receiving any support from family and friends, most of the single mothers mentioned asking help financially from family and friends. Anne mentioned having occasionally received support or help from family; however, her friends are there with her every time she needs money but most of the time, she is alone.

Beth claimed that her family supported her all the way and even had a monthly allowance from her brother and sisters.

I can say that I am blessed that my family never abandoned me in those times of need. I got their full support financially and emotionally. Before when I'm still jobless and depending on them in every single cent. They never let me down, in fact I got monthly support from my siblings and I'm thankful for that (Beth).

Jenny claimed to be asking financial help from her parents once in every three months.

I get support from my family every time I badly need financial support- once in every three months.

5.2.3 Being Powerless and Helpless

When a question is asked about their experiences when you felt it was difficult to be a single mother? Each of the single mothers expresses difficulties in different areas from one another. Anne expresses her difficulties being alone and no one to rely on specially in those crucial times such as being sick.

Yes, one time I got sick. No one can ask for some help to take care of my children. Even though I am so weak I still need to stand up, do everything. I blame myself, crying, why my life is being like this. I ask the Lord if what is my deepest sin why it is like this. Is He punishing me? I stayed at one corner of the house, crying alone (Anne).

Her "crying" illuminates her feeling of being helpless and a feeling of guilt.

Beth expresses her difficulties with regards to being away from her daughter and that she wasn't not able to personally care when her daughter is sick. This single mother in order to support her daughter, is forced to work aboard to provide the needs and necessities of her daughter.

Yes, *the day when I lift her to work abroad, it is so hard for the feelings and it is more intense after a month when my mother told me that my daughter has been 4 days in fever. That's the worst feeling and time that I can't even work properly. I can't even do anything to help my daughter* (Beth).

Jenny expresses difficulty in disciplining her daughter.

I thought that it is difficult to be a mother every time I see them quarreling and if they say or utter hateful words. Sigh…it is very difficult to discipline them. It is the most difficult part of being a mother (Jenny).

Single mothers face different difficulties and unique stories in their everyday life. Being the sole responsible in childcare and sole provider of the family is greatly associated with their everyday difficulties that made them feel helpless and powerless by virtue of their own circumstances.

5.2.4 Lack of support outside family

When a question is asking about the support received by the single mother respondent. Most of them elaborated on having support emotionally and financially from their family. One of the respondents claimed to have full support from parents as well as from siblings. Beth mentioned that her parents and her siblings supported her all the way, financially and emotionally, particularly at the time she was jobless and depending every cent with them. As she said they never abandoned her and got monthly support with her siblings. And she was very thankful for that.

While Jenny mentioned that she asks for financial support from her parents every time she's badly in need.

Umm, I get support from my family every time I badly need financial support- once in every three months (Jenny).

Anne claimed to have support occasionally from family. However, she mentioned asking support financially with her friend every time she needed it.

I can only have their support occasionally; umm…like birthdays and Christmas, as from my family. For my friends every time I need their financial support, I ask them for credit or loan. But most of the time I'm alone (Anne).

With regards to the child support from ex-husband or ex-partner, three of the single mothers claimed to not have child support from their ex-husband. While Jenny claimed to have child support from ex-husband monthly. Beth on the other hand refuses any support from her ex-husband. Anne mentioned receiving child support occasionally from ex-husband and that it is directly given to the children, "*As*

for my ex-husband, he gives ones in a while directly to the kids". While Carwina mentioned not receiving any child support from her ex-partner.

When asked about if they are receiving any support and social benefits from the government, most of the respondents claimed to not receive any support or benefits as a single mother from social government or any organizations. Anne even mentioned being denied when she tried to apply:

> *The Department of Social and Welfare on Development (DSWD) mentioned that I am not qualified. Because my ex-husband is just living nearby our house* (Anne).

Beth claimed of not receiving anything at all, "*Sad to say but I got nothing!*". While Carwina mentioned being aware of the programs of the states but lack connectivity and information to whom she should approach," *I think there is but I have no connection to that*", while Beth and Jenny mentioned being aware but had not had the opportunity to apply and claimed.

5.2.5 Overloaded with negative emotions

These single mothers have been struggling with difficult emotions. A question is asked on how the life of a single mother, most of them response of having experiencing difficulties, stress and moody, there is a sense of anger, denial and guilt.

Anne elaborated on being in a miserable state, being in a state resembling depression, worried and having an emotional shock and confusion on how she will start again.

> At *first, I felt so miserable, so downed. I don't know where to start. It's been so hard having four children to take care alone and at the same time working to earn for living* (Anne).

Furthermore, Anne is on the stage of denial to accept her current situation.

On behalf of those hard days. I hold on, as I am being inspired by my children. Nothing is impossible if you find a way for your goals.... life is like that when there is a sense of responsibility and obligation in life (Anne).

Carwina has been experiencing denial and anger toward her husband. She expresses in a way of refusing to accept child support from her ex-husband and even from anyone else. She voices it out in this way:

> *About the support, I don't ask for it. If he gives or not, I don't need it. I can support my daughter. For me, I don't need support from anyone, especially from my daughter's father and relatives, if I have my work. Supposed to be I don't need to remind him, that's his obligation* (Carwina).

She was noted for having difficulties as her daughter does understand why she needed to work away from home. While at the same time feeling stressed, moody and irritated when we talk about the life of being a single mother.

Beth elaborated her guilt, being away from her daughter especially at the crucial moment such as when her daughter is sick, and she was not there with her and not able to care for her.

> *Life as a mother is very difficult and happy, "difficult" because I am working far from my daughter. I can't be with her especially when she is sick, and I am not with her.*

The feeling of guilt on her part expresses being unable to do anything in a situation when presence is in most needed.

The overburden of single mothers leads to exhaustion of their body and causes them being sick sometimes as Anne mentioned of being sick. Their multiple tasking and burden as a mother and a primary provider made this single mother being stressed. Three of the single mothers claimed of being stressed while Beth attested of being moody and irritated.

Furthermore, Anne even describes herself into a balloon.

> *I am like a balloon. When the air gradually disappears, it falls to the ground.*

A balloon is known to be fragile and at any moment of being exposed to any sharp things or being exposed to high heat, it easily bursts. The single mother was overburdened with responsibility, often vulnerable to health issues and emotional distress due to the multiple tasking they were performing, being the sole earner-carer of the family.

5.3 A feeling of being excluded from the Church

When a single mother asks about their expectation of the church. Three of the single mothers mentioned being in the church and finding the church as their support system. According to Jenny the church itself serves as a stronger partner.

> *Church is my strongest partner to raise my children properly. So, I look forward to bringing them to church every Sunday. IT is also one of the reasons I enrolled them in a Christian school….to bring them closer to the church* (Jenny).

While Beth claimed that the Church is where she had fellowship with other members and was able to perform her god-gifts abilities, *"Yes, I go to church every Sunday. I do the ushering, choir and then chat with each other".*

Anne on the other hand stated that the church itself helps her a lot.

> *Church has been a big help for me to stand with my both feet through the guidance of the Lord. Every time I have free time, I visit church to kneel and sit down alone and speak to God. It's been a comfort home for me in times of trouble and life trials* (Anne).

The church itself played a vital role in the life of a single mother respondent. However, in my own understanding though the church played a vital role in the life of this respondent. It also shows that she was alone as no one approached her, "*kneeled and sitting down alone*".

Anne further elaborated that the church could act as educator to the young generation specifically children, "*Church must teach our children that they should be grateful whatever kind of life they have right now*". Anne even mentioned how the youth ministry she had been joining in her high school days serves her as her strength in facing her situation as a single mother.

While the church played a vital role in the life of this single mother, it also had the ability to discriminate, oppress people and misused its power and made people individualize their own struggles. Beth mentioned about her bad experiences in church and how the church itself treated her; she even utters of having no expectation about the church.

> *No, I had a bad experience at church. The time I want to baptize my daughter. She was just 3 months that time. Then the priest in our place refused to do the ceremony (Christening) for my daughter, because she didn't have a father. He humiliated me and he even uttered an offensive word. That's why instead of doing baptism in our place, I was forced to take my daughter to Manila and there we did the Christening* (Beth).

From Beth stories of encountering the two different Churches, it made evident that there is something of a gap between how the Church in rural areas viewed single mothers compared to the Church in urban areas (Manila). Whereas the Church situated in Manila is more open, being inclusive in nature regardless of the identity, race or circumstances of one's person. Because of this incident Beth mentioned she never participates and even enters the Church. "*That's why I don't participate in any activities of church or either go to church. But I never forgot to pray even though I don't go to church* ". From this story, it shows how the Church influences and affects one's life. While the Church has the potential to change one's life or empower, the Church as well has the potential to degrade, devalue one's life as Beth mentioned of being humiliated, made one's feeling being not included. And has the potential to exclude people from the Church by virtue of their own beliefs.

In addition, Carwina mentioned her disappointment about the relationship with the other members of the church which resulted in her not to expect anything from the church.

> *Nothing. It is difficult sometimes to talk with the people in the church I'm attending. Umm...Just share your past, just like that* (Carwina).

To these single mothers, church played a vital role in their daily life. The church provides their strength and anchor to move forward and face the challenges of being a single mother. However, the church has also the potential to discriminate, to oppress and make people feel being individualized and responsible for their own struggles. As a result, the single mother resulted not to expect anything from the church. These made the single mothers individualized on their own vulnerability and needs. The Church is failing to fulfill its task as mandated by God to care for those who are in need. The Church should also be critical and examine its own doctrine as they were blinded of their own misconception and beliefs.

5.4 Church leader representative view of the single mother

In this section, I will present the Church leader views about single mothers and how the church believes they can empower single mothers. Different themes have been presented based on the gathered data from Church leader interviews.

5.4.1 Church views in relation to single mother

The church leader personally thinks that God loves the single mother and that single mothers are welcome in God's kingdom if a single mother wants to be part of it. According to the church leader, everybody is welcome to come and be part of God's family.

> *I personally think that God loves them also and is welcome to His church if they want to belong. If they want to belong". "I say, 'If they want to belong' because I believe that Faith is personal and can't be forced on anyone.*

The church leader also mentioned some Bible verses for a single mother.

> *As he said in Matthew 11:28-31 'Come to me all of you who have worked for a long time. You are like people who have carried heavy things. Come to me and you will find a place to rest". Do what I teach you to do. Learn from me everything that is true. I am very kind and I obey God. Then you will have a true life and you will not be anxious. I will only ask you to do good things. I will not ask you to carry anything that is too heavy for you. And I will not ask you to do things that are too difficult.*

Furthermore, the Church leader also mentioned a verse from Romans 8:1

> *The Bible also says, 'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in union with the Messiah Jesus…*

From these Bible verses, the Church leader strongly believes that all single parents are welcome to belong to any Bible believing Churches around the world.

I strongly believe that all Single parents are welcome to belong to any Bible believing churches around the world.

5.4.2 Awareness from other institution or organization

When asked about being aware of other institutions or organizations that offer support and care to single mothers. The Church leader mentioned that he doesn't know any, I *personally don't know any.*

The Church leader however mentions being open to any opportunity to know and take part in any organization that cares for single parent or single mothers.

If I will have an opportunity or if God will lead me and the Ministry to know of such Organizations that cares for single parent or single mothers and will have an open opportunity to partner with them…..We would definitely love to be part of it to extend their services or Ministry to our Church Families and their Contacts.

5.4.3 Ministry role for Single Mother

When asked about the church leader's experiences on how they empower single mothers. The church leader mentioned his personal experience though it was in a short period and elaborated his approach on how he empowered single mothers within their Church.

According to the church leader, one of their sisters in their former outreach minister is a single mother. He mentioned his basic approach was to treat her without biases and treated the same as the other members of the church. He also extended all the ministry of service to this (single mother member) just like he does with other members.

My personal experience in caring for single Parents was truly short lived…..I mean, the Sister of our former Outreach Minister in one of our area of Ministry was a single mother….And one of the basic approach I personally applied was to treat her without biases or the same like we all Members of the Church Family….I saying that, we have extended to her all Ministry of Service to her like we do to others.

5.4.4 The Church "not seen the need" of single mother

The church leader mentioned about "*not seeing the need"* for specialized ministry for single mother's based on their observation.

But as to a specialized ministry dedicated for people like her, we have not seen the need based on our observation.

Though the church leader mentioned a single mother being not in need for specialized ministry. He mentioned and concluded about being open to accept and serve to their best to minister and dedicate a special ministry for single parents.

> *In conclusion…If in the future, the Lord will open a door for us to Minister or dedicate a special ministry for Single parents…. we are going to joyfully and lovingly accept and serve to the best of our ability.*

5.5 Summary

I have now described the topic from the interviews of the single mother. Based on the interviews, the single mothers have been the sole responsible for the childrearing as well as providing the basic needs and necessities of their children. From the interviews, the single mother has been struggling economically, prone from physical and mental health such as stress, depression, anger, denial, lack of social support. From single mothers points of views the church played a vital role in the journey of single mothers, however as single mother attested the Church seems exclusive and has the potential to affects one's life such as one of the stories on her encountering from the Church where she felt humiliated, felt being excluded which leads this single mother never entered in any Church. The church offers a ministry leadership role to their single mother members and claims to treat these women without biases, rather equally with other members. However, the Church claimed it did not see the needs for specialized ministry for single mothers.

<center>**Chapter 6: Discussion**</center>

6.0 Chapter Introduction

In the following, I will discuss the research question: What are the Challenges of a Single mother in the Philippines? And how does the church (Evangelical Church) in the Philippines meet the needs and empower single mothers? In order to answer the research question, in this chapter I will explore the challenges of the single mothers based on the interviews and how they might be interpreted in their extended societal context and gender perspectives presented in chapter 3. I will discuss if or how the church empowers the single mothers. This will be discussed in light of empowerment and diakonia perspective.

The chapters are divided into two themes as follows: challenges faced by the single mother and how the church empowers single mothers.

6.1 Challenges faced by the single mothers

As I investigate the interviews, these following themes came as an important aspect to understanding the single mothers in the Philippine context.

6.1.1 Double Burden: Primary carer- unshared responsibility challenges

In this study, it reveals that single mothers are the primary carer and provider of their family. One of the single mothers mentioned:

> *I wake up early every day…. Look after and prepare my children's needs for school. I Need to prepare all the things for the whole day before I go to work. In the afternoon, I need to clean this, clean that. Need to prepare food for my children, tend my children's needs, before they go to sleep" (Anne).*

The gender roles are deeply rooted in Filipino gender consciousness, reinforcing the single mother to take the sole responsibility in childcare, full custodian of the children resulting in the numerous burdens of these single mothers. In the case of single mothers, though some mentioned living with their extended family such help comes from extended family don't replicate the role of the single mothers being the primary carer though it somehow moderate their burden. According Pattanaik & Singh (2020), the availability of relatives and servants who functioned as helpers and child caretakers may somehow moderate the burden of single mothers, however, the use of servants and relatives has sometimes been denounced as equivalent to exploiting some women to free others.

In a paternalistic culture of the Philippines, gender roles are fixed in such a way that men are dominant, and women serve, child-bearers, child-carers, and housekeepers. The home befits the women because

of her socialization to be a caregiver and skills brought about by motherhood. Mother is expected to be the primary carer, home makers and domestic household, as such, the mothers are the major custodians and caregivers of the children. The cultural and norms understanding relegating the role of women in the Philippines normalize the situation of these single mothers having the full custodian about childcare of their children. Even the law and ordinance imposing this natural role (as homemaker, primary caregiver), design to Filipino women as I mentioned in the background context (2.1).

The law and policies are highly favoring men with regards to full decision in childcare, child custody and properties. As a result, it created an atmosphere of legitimacy and normalcy of its usage in general. And because of this, it creates a wall that makes invisible the struggles of single mothers in relation to gender role stereotyping attach to them as women and as a mother. Thus, it fails to respect the basic choices these women have made about their own life without option, negatively impacting their sense of self, goals and/or life plans, hence, it degrades them. As it constrains these single mothers' own identities, meaning that it prevents these women from defining and presenting themselves as they would like. Instead, these women have been publicly defined or presented in the manner of another's choosing of their own identities and direct their lives according to their own value, preferences, and aspirations has been denied.

The absence of equal participation in childcare as well as the parental responsibilities, create a room where these single mothers feel stressed of their multiple roles. As these single mothers feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of juggling childcare, housework and work alone. Their unshared responsibilities made the single mother feel helpless and powerless, as Anne mentioned of being helpless when she was sick, and no one she can ask for some help to take care of her children.

 The absence of involvement of the father to the children limits the care, time, income and flexibility of these single mothers. These observations bear out the idea that this asymmetry attached to these gender roles and responsibilities is exacerbated by the fact that the single mothers do not have "partners" to contribute extra value from unpaid domestic work as well as responsibilities financially.   In addition, the societal attitude relegating single mothers to a subservient being the primary caregivers, is both a result and cause of their prejudice. Justice Kriegler, quoted by Cook & Cusack (2010, p. 56), emphasize that the gender roles stereotypes of women as primary caregivers are both a result and cause of prejudice, a societal attitude which relegates women to a subservient. As relegating the women's task of being the primary caregiver of the family pushed these single mothers into an exploitation towards equal care. These single mothers cooperate on their own oppression because of limited economic and social options for them as a woman and as a mother. Considering that the Philippines has adapted and ratified the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and one of the most advanced countries in term women equality in politics empowerment, economic participation, educational attainment , and health and survival, does not mirror the changes within Philippine society

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(Centeno & Prieler, 2013, p. 25). Since there are still gender divisions in the Philippine society, therefore, still lagging changes in society in terms of gender equality.

In response to the needs of single mothers, the process towards transformation should be governed by justice either in the church or in the society. The gender role stereotype diminishes the dignity of the single mothers as human being, as it fails to recognize their intrinsic and equal value as human being since these single mothers has been treat in a ways that do not take into account their actual situations because of others paternalistic attitudes that mother, should be the primary carer of the family. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) on Gender Justice Policies says that…… Gender justice is expressed through equality and balanced power relationship between women and men, and the elimination of the institutional, cultural and interpersonal systems of privileges and oppression that sustain discrimination (Mungure, 2014, p. 48). A step toward the replacement of the patriarchal family, a recognition and promotion of paternal role, by de-naturalizing the women's role and by allowing for father's childcare on equal footing with women.

6.1.2 Poverty- employment, earning and social benefits challenges

The interviews reveal that most of the single mothers are experiencing work conflict.

> *It's been so hard having four children to take care of alone and at the same time working to earn for living*" (Anne).

These single mothers feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of juggling childcare, housework and work. When the single mother are asks of their typical days, most of them respond that their days revolve between taking care of the kid's needs, preparing the kids for school, and going to work, in the afternoon, they need to do household chores, cook food and tend the needs of the children before putting the kids in the bed. This challenge is closely related to the unshared responsibilities of these single mothers. These single mothers are living on a single income hazardous. It is particularly risky on their part when paid work must be juggled with other unpaid domestic work, having no one to rely on with childcare to fall back on. The work as well as their family duties can become very pressing on part of single mothers. As these single mothers had no one to depend on with regards to the household work, their employment as Chant (1997) stated has also meant a heavy "Doubleday burden" of labor. Having lack of excess time and energy, impinging upon their potential economic productivity of their domestic work.

In this study, it has been observed that being the care-earner alone is closely related to the financial struggles of the single mother. Due to the multiple tasking of these women, their time-and resources have been constrained. According to UN Women (2015), more often single mothers choose occupations that offer more flexibility in terms of working hours in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work with family responsibilities, even if those occupations are generally less well paid. The multiple burdens of

the single mothers limit their mobility and flexibility in working hours, thus deterring them from adequately supporting their family. The lack of infrastructure of childcare institutions in the Philippines also seen a factor perpetuating in the so-called double burden of these single mothers. Some countries such as UK, Spain, and Nordic countries with childcare institutions have seen increase participation of women in labor participation and able to find jobs on their own preferences with sustainable income or high paid income ((Pfau-Effinger, 2012).The low opportunity cost of unpaid domestic work in a market economy, restricts the choice of women to go for higher paid works according to their own job preferences.

For the above reasons, it is not perhaps surprising that in Alphora et, al (2017, p. 10) noted although women in the Philippines" hold half the sky" in terms of labor participation, yet, majority of these women works remain concentrated in lower paid and lower status jobs in the formal sector, presumably because these are the only types of jobs made available to them and the only ones allow them to balance work and Family responsibilities. The low-level earnings of these women have made them forced to find or either create part-time jobs, flexible, and or home-based work in order to reconcile their work with childcare. As the study shows most of the single mothers are taking multiple part time jobs to sustain the needs of the family. For instance, Jenny and the two of the other single mothers have been holding two or more jobs.

Other factors I have observed in the interviews, related to low paid jobs by the single mothers is the nature of their work. It was observed that most these single mothers' works are in informal occupations such as local health center, domestic service and teacher, lottery agent; thus, in turn, reflected lower average earnings and less job security especially those working as domestic helpers outside the country who are prone to violence and exploitation. Because domestic work was traditionally performed by female family members for free, many employers feel reluctant to pay a serious salary for their work. According to Chant (2008) jobs held by women in general tend to be lower paid, less secure and lacking opportunities for upward mobility.

This is basically because, women in the Philippines are prevented from entering the labor force because of the gender role attached to them particularly in relation to the reproductive responsibilities. The Philippines Statistic Survey (2017) shows that male participation rate in labor constitutes 77.6 % percent compared to women rate of 49.3% percent, showing a 28.3% gap between men-women participation in labor. Women in the Philippines work largely are clerical and support service and sales workers. A majority of men are employed in major industries, in economics, in technology, in which according to Philippine Statistic Survey (2017) approximately 3.5 million men occupied managerial positions than women. Women work in private households approximately 1.7 million while men based on Philippine Statistic Survey (2017) only constitute about 345 thousand approximately. From this report, women seem to be disadvantaged in relation to both type of job and income.

Based on the interviews, the single mothers have limited financial support from external parties, notably the state and the absence of child support from the fathers. According to the UN on Women (2019) single mother's household are much more likely to live in poverty due to the lack of social protection coverage and childcare support. Anne claimed that she has been denied social benefit for single mothers just because her husband is just living nearby their community. The rest of the single mothers claimed to not be aware of the benefits and don't have any knowledge and connection to whom they should approach, what organization or institution of state they should go for. This single mother's situation remains precarious as they have no saving and social protection. However, none of these single mothers complained of being refused help by their ex-husband. It seems that they consider being refused help by their ex-husband totally normal because the men or the father as relegated being the head of the family which connotes being the primary provider of the family isn't part of these single mothers "family" anymore.

The lack of state support for single mothers and lack of intervention on non-payment of child support by ex-husband/ fathers means that the governments played little role in underpinning the economic and practical responsibilities of parenthood. It could have been because most single mothers are living with their extended family (parent house), as mentioned by some of the single mother respondent, that makes these women undercounted as a family in an extended family. Since most household surveys are designed using the head of the household as the anchor to define all family ties, a spot that implicitly relegates men as the household head. Therefore, in a large household, such as extended families, overshadowed the visibility of single mothers, making it difficult to identify them. So, when these single mothers live with their extended family (parent or relatives), they can almost never be identified as a single mother in an extended household. As a result, when redesigning family policies and social policies, the needs of these single mothers are completely ignored (Un on Women, 2019). Therefore, the blindness to these women's social policy is detrimental to the capacity and economy of single mothers who are single handedly raising their children. In CEDAW's (2016) concluding observation to Philippines, the committee notes with concerns that the discriminatory gender stereotypes, and lack of adequate support systems all pose barriers to justice and to effective remedies for women, in particular those facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as women in poverty.

The journey of these single mothers being economically disadvantaged deprive them of securing the fullness of life, as intended in God's care of all creation (WCC, 2019). According to Schmidt (2010, p. 10) poverty deprives a person of the possibility of living a life valued in crucial respects. People living in poverty might view themselves as excluded in a sense of having the feeling of left out and unwelcome. Due to the reason that they are economically unable to display the kind of life expected, as they are living below the poverty line. Thus, there is a sense of shame inflicted on these persons since they might feel inadequacy to live up the kind of life expected being imposed by society. According to Schmidt

(2010, p. 11) people living in poverty confined to powerlessness and lack of subjectivity. The journey of the single mothers echoed the feeling of being helpless and the sense of being powerless for dealing alone those finances, childcare and household responsibilities. As Anne mentioned:

> *being like a balloon, gradually the wind disappears and falls on the ground and that it's difficult to be alone with 4 children and at the same time working…particularly when you are sick and no one to ask for help. I cried in one corner.*

The gender roles and responsibilities relegated to women has seen to have a negative impact on these single mothers' economic capacity. The unjust traditions and practices, culture and norms create a distinct division of labor between women and men, thus, impedes single mothers from accessing better employment. Therefore, education plays a significant role in bringing changes in these gendered norms of society that have a significant impact on women's work status. Very often women with low education have been often engaged in low paid work while women with higher education are often engaged with work that has sustainable income.

The CEDAW Committee (2015, p. 7) on his concluding remark to the Philippines, urged the state to eliminate horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labor market, including adopting special measures to promote access for women to employment. In the paragraph 26 of the Beijing Declaration of the Platform for Action, urged the governments to express their determination to, inter alia, "promote women economics independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures" (Economic and Social Council, 2006).

6.1.3 Mother-child relationship challenges

Due to the lack of support for these single mothers, these women tend to take multiple jobs and some of them seek jobs outside the country as Beth and Carwina claimed to be working as domestic helpers. Though their work outside the country contributes a sustainable life to them, nevertheless these women faced challenges and difficulties. As Beth mentioned:

> *Life as a mother is very difficult; "difficult" because I am working far from my daughter. I can't be with her especially when she is sick, and I am not with her".*

These women needed to work to provide the basic needs of their children, it limited their time and bonds with their children, thus in turn, reflected some issues particularly on care and relationships between the mother and children. In this study, it is found that these single mothers claimed of experiencing a mother-child relationship conflict, weaken the mother-child bond, as well as it weaken their sense of identity as a mother to their child due to the feeling of guilt being away from their children and not being able to

perform their duties as a mother to their children as well as having difficulties in disciplining her children. As Jenny mentioned:

> *I thought that it is difficult to be a mother every time I see them quarreling and if they say or utter hateful words. Sigh…it is very difficult to discipline them. It is the most difficult part of being a mother"* (Jenny).

The role of the mother has been shown to be highly important in peer relationship, influencing and assisting social and emotional development across the life course of the child (Misca & Smith, 2014 p. 158). Some studies argued that the absence of a father is potentially a threat to a child's psychological (May 2011). Children from single- mother households are potentially at the risk of having behavioral problems during childhood and with their emotional wellbeing. The children's well-being encompasses the quality of relationship, the idea that mother and father are equally important in shaping child development. Based on the interviews with single mothers, the father doesn't share responsibilities with their children in terms of childcare. Care is not only a women's issue; it is a family issue.

The unpaid work or the domestic work within the household is indispensable to the well-being of all family members particularly in children's wellbeing. Pattanaik & Singh (2020) argued that unpaid domestic work is an important aspect of productive activities and an indispensable factor contributes to the well-being of the household particularly on child wellbeing and economy of the family.

Most women unpaid work is characterized as invisible, informal and unrecognized in the economy as well as in the society. The lack of recognition increases hierarchy in gender relations and gender inequalities in the family as well as in the economy (Pattanaik & Singh, 2020). Considering that unpaid domestic household work constitutes a form of "work". The government assistance would conceivably go or find some way to compensate the unpaid work of women; by giving value and making visible the contribution of women in the household recognizing their effort as "work".

It has been argued that the state's responsibility to its citizens can be founded in its commitment to human rights. Therefore, social and economic rights are one fundamental responsibility of the states. This includes a responsibility to protect and promote the wellbeing of all these women and their children to enjoy both their rights and perform responsibilities without worries.

6.1.4 Health and well-being challenges

Based on the interviews, the single mothers are prone to experience stress due to their multiple tasking and burden.

A life as a mother is a bit hard, sometimes stressful, moody and needs to sacrifice everything. It's a bit hard especially now that I am back in the Philippines and don't have much savings (Carwina).

According to Bachelet (2011) an executive director of UN on Women, in her speech during her visit in Asuncion Paraguay, addressed that health is one of the most important areas in which women encounter risks that are different from those faced by men. Single mothers who have been burdened with huge responsibilities as earner-carer, while at the same time experiencing low economic conditions have been susceptible to health issues. According to WHO (2008) women constitute more than 70% of the world's poor, single mothers are the largest group of people living in poverty and are at risk of poor physical and mental health.

The single mothers interviewed attested of experiencing psychosocial impacts that give association on a state resemble depression, stress, guilt and denial, physically sick, and being irritable and angry towards their ex-husband. These factors are strongly related with socio-economic, an overloaded burden and environmental challenges that these single mothers' challenges impinge upon their disproportionate share, rights and responsibilities. Nicholson et al (2014, p. 169) asserted that when the demands on mother's time increase, personal and self-care time is sacrificed, thus detriment to the physical and psychosocial health of these women. Since responsibility for domestic and child-rearing activities lies alone on a single mother, adding another responsibility to provide food on the table causes so much stress on their part. WHO (1993) noted that the pervasiveness of stress is greatly associated with the high level of emotional care undertaken by women. The stress for single mothers extends beyond financial problems to include a variety of stressors associated with the demands and pressures of parenting alone. Being a single mother with sole day-to-day responsibility for raising a young child is a situation that threatens the mother's well-being.

Based on the interview with the single mothers, most of these women are experiencing emotional states that resemble depression, as Anne mentioned of being in a miserable state and feeling down after separation of marriage. According to Astbury (2001) depression is not only the most frequently encountered women mental health problem but ranks as the most important women's mental health problem overall. Based upon the interviews the depression of single mothers has been in relation to their low economic capacity. As these mothers who have been relying on single income, supporting all the needs of their children financially with low income create an emotional state that resembles depression as they could not provide as well as economically unable to meet the kind of life that is socially expected imposed by society. Astbury (2001) pointed out that low income mothers, especially single mothers, have significantly higher levels of depression than the general population.

Women's health according to Bachelet (2011) is lagged far behind, both in terms of the treatment of illness and in professional prevention and attention. The situation of these women, particularly single mothers, is not the result of not knowing what to do or how to treat these women but because there is not much done to end gender inequalities. The sociocultural, economic and institutional factors reflect the social inequality that affects women and both its causes and consequences have their roots in the cycle of poverty and the persistence of marginality (Bachelet, 2011). The subordination of women, their low economic level are all factors that interconnect, reinforce each other and impact on their ability to make decisions with regards to their own health. Health is essential to the overall development of women and of the society. Health is considered as investment that enhances productivity and development of societies (Bachelet, 2011).

6.2 How the Church may empower single mothers?

In the following I will discuss if or how the church may empower these single mothers. As I investigate the themes in the Chapter 5, these following themes came as an important aspect to understand the role or possible role of church in empowering single mothers in the Philippines

Diakonia is conceived as care for fellow human beings, and its development of community and providing help for and looking up to those who are in need, vulnerable and being marginalized (Angell,2014, p. 57). According to Nordstokke (2010) diakonia involves a call to action as a response to challenges of human suffering, injustice and care for creation. The church as a diaconal agent meets the needs of people in many ways and varied ways. More so the church must be concerned about ensuring that the needs of the person is fulfilled and better able to manage on their own as a result. Abdullah et al (2017) stated that single mothers are the most difficult personal and emotional experiences that humans can experience; thus, the church should respond to these critical issues of life (3.2). Since all are created in the image of God then it suggests that all have gifts and abilities, irrespective of their social situation and as such all should be enabled to live out their God-given capabilities (Nordstokke, 2009). Empowerment is the process that facilitates these capabilities to enable a person to help to become subject of their own lives rather than being subjected to the others who are oppressed and discriminated against as objects. Dietrich (2014, p. 21) emphasizes empowerment is a process that helps people gain control of various aspects of their lives and enable them to participate in community with dignity.

It should however remember that in the process of empowerment people, it involve power relation, the church as diaconal agents should constantly be aware of the imbalance of power in relations between helpers and those helped and dealt with the power established critically (Nordstokke, 2009, pp. 46) since diaconal act includes power. As one New Testament scholar Gerd Theissen stated that "Helping is always an asymmetric relation. The helper has more power than the one that needs help, otherwise he

couldn't help (Dietrich, 2014, p. 20). Therefore, the church as diaconal agents should be careful concerning the possibilities and danger of misuse of power as a means of disregarding the autonomy of the other person. Through empowerment allows persons to reclaim its power over their lives as they exercise their rights in community and society as persons with dignity and self-worth.

The Church based on the interviews in one way looks at every person who came to church as one group who are in need spiritually for the gospel. With this regard, the church meets the needs of these single mothers in terms of spiritual aspect. However, based on the interviews, the single mothers have more than needs than just hearing the gospel. There are varied ways of diaconal perspectives of the church that can meet the needs and empower these single mothers.

 The church as part of the society where often people relied heavily at their difficult times; played a decisive role in empowering these single mothers. Based on the interviews these women relied heavily on the Church at times of their difficulties. Anne mentioned the church serves as her comfort home and open goes to church most in her troubled times, serve as their stronger partner to raise her children properly and even enrolled her children in a church-based school. According to Nason-Clarke et al (2018) states that often the church is the first place that individuals turn to for help because of certain trust in keeping with the role that religion plays in the lives of individuals. The stories of the single mothers tell us something about how these women live in a church universe, in which the church plays a decisive role in their life, not just at a surface level, but as part of their daily existence that people live in and relate to. For these women the church can provide a new way of understanding reality and alternative for action in situations that are experienced as challenging and critical.

6.2.1 Church-culture challenges and empowerment through advocacy

Based on the interview, the church leaders claimed leadership roles as well as equal treatment without biases as a way of transforming and empowering single mothers.

> *My personal experience in caring for single Parents was truly short lived…..I mean, the Sister of our former Outreach Minister in one of our area of Ministry was a single mother….And one of the basic approach I personally applied was to treat her without biases or the same like we all members of the church family….I saying that, we have extended to her all ministry of service to her like we do* to others (Church leader).

However, leadership actions on the case of these women are not actually meeting the needs of the single mothers. It should be accompanied by sharing concrete objectives that improve women's lives. LWF states that "true empowerment" equips an individual or a group of people with the necessary skills for transforming their lives (Nordstokke, 2013). Based upon the interviews, the single mothers are being deprived to secure the fullness of life due to poverty. These women are marginalized and discriminated

against for social protection and in family relations as intended by God's care of all creation because of the socialization roles attached to them.

Yet, even if the church leaders claimed equal treatment to women, it seems that the church has not questioned the male domination culture within the community. Though leadership roles might attribute to the single mothers to reclaim their self-confidence, it does not challenge society's patriarchal structure. Women works are limited because the first position is still held by a man, the pastor. This bears out the idea that the church is embracing the existing gender patriarchal structure. Skjortnes even argues that some churches are still "cementing existing gender patterns" (Rakotoarison, 2016, pp. 158). The church based from the interviews has not been engaged extensively in actions or strategies to influence change on norms and culture that seem to be harmful in individuals' lives, particularly on women. Seemingly, the church has seen the situation of the single mothers being normal within the society.

Therefore, the church itself embraces the normalization relegated to women being the primary carer and the subordination of women within the society. The church tends to support rather than challenge the socialization roles of women as seen to be harmful to their lives. The church exists within the community which is influenced by the society and cultural norms; and that the paternalistic and discriminatory within the church is coming as well in the society. The society is paternalistic and discriminatory; as the church exists within the society; the paternalistic and discriminatory practices also exist within the church. The WCC (2017, pp. 64) even acknowledges that "many religious traditions", including Christian, still express paternalistic and discriminatory practices as regards women's role and rights". Very often the church thinks of itself as the only one, but the church should see itself as part of the society and that the society has a lot of societal problems which as well exist within the church context.

As I mentioned earlier, empowerment allows a person to reclaim its power over their lives as they exercise their rights in community and society as persons with dignity and self-worth. This idea is important as these women are often felt powerless due to their own circumstances. The powerlessness and helplessness of these women often due to the socialization role attached to them being a woman in a patriarchal society-being subordinated as well as being responsible to care givers and domestic households.

In the process of empowerment, the church may not be able to promote change if the church itself continually embraces the cultural norms that undergird inequalities on women. Therefore, there is needed to critically examine its own beliefs and structures. The services of the church must be extended to all and should openly challenge the structures that hinder women from attaining the dignity that was theirs, equal to men at creation. The church can facilitate and adapt gender equality consciousness within the church ministries and among members- men and women. In the process of change and empowerment both genders should be both on board and made for mutual agreement. The transformation should not

only be individualized to women but also on the part of men. There must be a change of what is perceive roles to both men and women that undergird discrimination and inequalities within the church and society.

Every human being holds the right to live in dignity and in freedom, and to be subjects in their own lives. Therefore, it is incumbent to the task of the Church to help these women to restore their dignity and self-worth through advocacy, programs and initiatives that enable these women to claim their inherent dignity and to be subject to their own lives. The church as part of the society, can play a decisive role in advocating change in structural and norms that undergird inequalities on women. As stated by WCC (2017), the church's diakonia cannot be limited to the comfort zone of ecclesial or institutional structures but must be public, include advocacy and take bold action in favor of the excluded. The PCEC affirms that the church must translate faith into action (2.3). Indeed, the church needs to be involved and engage in unmasking any societal issues such as injustice, through advocacy that promotes just system. equal rights and participation of women within the society. An advocacy that transforms burden and responsibilities both inside and outside the house and addresses multiple burdens of women. This will not be achieved on a whim but will require hardworking and perseverance and consistent reflection and evaluation on the part of the church context. The Church in their role ought to be advocates for women who feel powerless and discriminated against to voice their concerns. The Church can be their voices and enable these single mothers to give them voices as they can engage, perform equally in labor and enjoy their rights equally in society.

This is in accordance to the societal transformation of the Evangelical Church that works hand in hand with the PHILRAD and has been committed in societal transformation in holistic ministries for women, poor and needy, to enable them to become all God intends them to be (2.3). Envisioning to see these women in every sector of society, exercising their God-given gifts and abilities, making impact on their respective spheres of influence on society.

6.2.2 Church traditional approach and empowerment through cooperation and collaboration to welfare and other institutions/organization

In the interviews with the Church leader, there is no mentioning any collaboration and engagement of any programs of being connected to any organization specified with a single mother.

> *I personally don't know any. If I will have an opportunity or if God will lead me and the Ministry to know of such Organizations that cares for single parent or single mothers and will have an open opportunity to partner with them.....We would definitely love to be part of it to extend their services or Ministry to our Church Families and their Contacts* (Church leader).

This is maybe because as the church leader mentioned based on his own observation had not seen the needs of single mothers. The lack of collaboration and engagement of the church bear an idea that there is no actual action taken as to how the church caters to the needs of women, particularly the single mother. These observations bear the idea that the church has engaged in a traditional way of meeting the needs of the people in terms of spirituality by preaching the gospel. However, based on the interview with the single mothers, these women needed more than just hearing the gospel. These women have been struggling financially. They have been overburdened by responsibilities due to the social role assumption relegated to women. They have been denied on their own social rights in protection and benefits due to lack of information and access. These conditions of single mothers call for urgent help not only on spiritual aspects but more so on their actual needs.

As I noted from the background context, the government has programs relating to single mothers such as financial assistance to those single mothers with child dependents. However, it is evident from the claims of the single mothers that they have been discriminated against in this said assistance partly because of their lack of access and information. This emphasis some gaps in the system that need to be bridged and the matter of lack of awareness reinforces the need for some urgent step in this matter. The church needs to expand their services to these single mothers, acting as their hands to reach the rightful benefits for these women. It is within this matter that the church can serve as the bridged between the needs of single mothers to the state's programs.

In the process of change and empowerment, the church when seeking to cater to the needs of single mothers and women in general, local churches will need to be attentive and participate to the various policies and programs by the government as well as international bodies and ensure that the policies and programs initiated are fully implemented and reinforced. The lack of participation or recognizing the needs of people means the Church loses its nature as a caring agent of humanity. According to Myer (2011, p. 128) if Christians cannot develop a truly Christian theology of political engagement on behalf of the excluded, then they will have nothing to offer to those oppressed, discriminated, marginalized in a critical area. However, the church leader mentioned being open to any opportunities given to care for a single mother. According to WCC (2017, p. 88) the local churches should recognize their distinct role and potential and look for opportunities of connection and of uniting effort, towards different agencies.

The Evangelical church as I noted in the background context (2.3), pointed out being a conscience and "salt" and the "light" of the states and to participate in the national building and issues. The Church can serve as the go-between for these single mothers with the government agencies by helping them to know or be aware of their rights to claim social protection and assistance from the states. The Church can help to guide and assist these single mothers by filling the form for application for social benefits to welfare states. Regarding child support, the church can help single mothers by referring to public lawyers in

order to gain knowledge about their rights and help to demand child support and responsibilities on their common children from their ex-husband.

The transformation not only means changing the existing structural system and policies, but also a space to open new initiatives, policies and programs that can facilitate and contribute to the transformation process. The church can collaborate and cooperate with programs of the states such as livelihood programs and educational training that enhance the skill of the single mothers to be equipped for better employment. This is critical to the needs of the single mothers who have been in economic disadvantage. In affirmation of what the Evangelical church minister seeks to help the poor and needy to become economically self-reliant and rightly related with God through Jesus Christ (2.3). The Church as part of God's mission is called out to meet the needs of people and to uplift the dignity and self-worth of those who are being discriminated against, being oppressed and marginalized.

6.2.3 Reconciliation: Health and wellness

As I noted earlier, single mothers are susceptible to health issues such as physical illness and psychosocial illness because of their multiple bulk of responsibilities weighing on their shoulder. According to the WCC document of Ecumenical Diakonia (2017, p. 67) at least 10% percent of the worlds' population suffer mental health issues. In the interviews, there was no specific mention of addressing the health aspect on part of the church. However, it could have been implied in the ministry and holistic evangelism aspect of the church as a way of dealing with health issues in general. Interestingly, the church highlighted a verse from Matthew 11:28-31 when asked about what the bible says about single mothers, a verse of encouragement and emotional healing; for those who are carrying an overload task, those who are tired and worried. Though the church leader didn't explicitly elaborate, he is concerned that being a single mother is not easy, that it is full of tiredness, worried, and overloaded tasks, prone to emotional distress and physical illness. The Evangelical Church as part of their missionary endeavor, indicates their commitment to meet the needs of Filipino women through encouragement and engaging in sport commission as part of their mission to catalyze church health where everyone is welcome to be involved in this said program (2.3).

In the interviews with the church leaders, the church has not been engaged in a counseling approach though he mentioned outreach ministry and prayer intercession. It is within this fellowship that the church meets the needs of the entire person by offering holistic ministry and engaging single mothers to take part in outreach ministry and outpouring of their burden by prayer intercession. This outreach ministry and prayer intercession as one ministry of the Church is seen as encountering in a holistic way to meet the needs and suffering of people in and outside the church. However, it seems to me that this approach doesn't have the possibility of going deep into individual suffering and listening to the emotional conflicts and feelings of these single mothers. These observations bear out the idea that the

Church played a little role with regards to addressing mental health illness. It also shows that the Church has been exclusive; exclusive in a way that its focus alone on the wellbeing of the church. According to Dietrich (2014, p. 16) everybody's life is to some degree interwoven with other people's lives. The Church's mandate to participate in God's mission cannot be restricted to the wellbeing of the church but rather should move outside their comfort zones and respond to the need of single mothers and all people of God, to lift up a sign of hope and healing.

The stories of the single mothers tell us that these individuals need mutual care particularly in addressing their health issues. Mutual care is to be offered to everybody and is part of the basic condition of human beings, irrespective of one's background, gender or identity (Dietrich, 2014, p. 31).Thus, it is incumbent to the task of the church to take part in the burden of these single mothers as one people of God. The church is not only an institution with sacred scriptures, sacramental structures, canon law, liturgical norms and moral imperatives, though all this is important, but it is also as expression of the love of God that is open to the vulnerabilities (Mungure, 2014, p. 55).

Based on the interviews, it found out that ministries such as women groups help single mothers as they face their own struggles and troubles. This is in accordance to the claim of one respondent (Jenny) who has been part of women groups that claims that it helps her a lot emotionally. However, there is no mention made by the church's being engaged in any ministry commission for women. It bears out the observation that the Church seemed to have less attention given to women and in some instances not given full attention. This is partly because the Church leaders claim that he doesn't see the needs for specific ministry for these single mothers. The Church as a caring ministry can facilitate reconciliation and fellowship that can help single mothers to cope up and rebuild themselves towards healing. This provides hope for the single mothers which enables them to be positive and able to forgive and regain their own self-efficacy as human beings.

According to WCC (2017, p. 65) health is a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being in harmony with each other and with God. Health is not just a matter of diagnosis and giving treatment rather an issue of well-being and everyone has the right to enjoy the gifts of being. The Sustainable Development Goal No.3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Therefore, the Church as a caring ministry obliges to participate and engage in activities that seek to provide medical care through counseling and provides space of care and accompaniment to this single mother who is suffering with health issues. The Evangelical churches of the Philippines urged every local church to include the matter of health in their church activities (2.3).In this study the church could facilitate networking in relation to health networks such as referring these women to professional counselors or psychiatrists if the health issues seem to need attention for professional skills. The church could build awareness and competence to this suffering person through encouragement and fellowship such as women's group.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.0 Chapter Introduction

This study sought to ascertain what are the challenges of the single mothers and how the church in the Philippines were doing to meet the needs of single mothers as well as empower single mothers. The concluding remark will summarize what this study revealed and some possible recommendations in helping to empower single mothers in the Philippines.

7.1 Conclusion

Based on my discussion, it found out that the cultural traditions and social norms that continually exist in the Philippines are seen to be the perpetuating factors to the suffering and struggles of the single mothers. The cultural norm and practices have seen to be continually discriminating and undergird inequalities to the daily life journey of Philippines single mothers. The socialization role imposed on these women made them suffer from double burden, thus in turn reflected in their proneness to poverty, conflict relationship between the mother and children and at risk in health issues. The sociocultural, economic and institutional factors reflect the social inequality that affects single mothers and both its causes and consequences have their roots in the cycle of poverty and the persistence of marginality towards women.

My discussion reveals that the church seems to be copying how society treats single mothers in the Philippines. The discussion found out that the paternalistic and discriminatory practices influenced by the society are existing within the church, deterring the church to fully meet the needs of the single mothers. Though the church has been practicing equality (e.g. leadership role and equal treatment) on single mothers, has not much yet done as to how the church cater the needs of the single mothers, since the subordination and exclusion on women is still exist within the church causing the church not to see on their eye the struggles of the single mothers.

The church has primarily been working through traditional ways (e.g. preaching the gospel) as responding to the needs of the single mothers in the Philippines and currently there are no other approaches and guides being explored by the church on how to empower single mothers. In addition, the study found out that there is no collaboration between the faith-based institutions, primarily the church and the public states in response to the needs of single mothers.

This master thesis, therefore, maintains the premise that the suffering of the single mother can be met in the Philippines if the cultural and norms prescription attaches to women in a patriarchal society is being stemmed within the society and in the church. The church has played a major role in the life of single

mothers but has seemingly failed to adequately fulfill its role as an agent of empowering single mothers to lessen up the burden of single mothers. What is clear in this study, the need to call for change to what exactly gender roles entail and mean in more positive and fulfilling ways that embraces the equality and dignity of each human being created in likeness and image of God. If the Philippines society is to make any meaningful progress in achieving gender equality and empowerment, there will be a need for multidisciplinary, collaboration and advocacy approaches to meet the struggles and burden of these women, which must include the church as part of the society.

7.2 Recommendation

Based on the study, there is an urgent need for intervention and prevention initiatives, programs and policies for both the church, and public bodies for response and meet the needs of single mothers in the Philippines.

The church needs to engage, collaborate and participate with other institutions/ organizations and with the state programs, policies and initiatives that already exist such as livelihood programs and educational training for women. The church should serve as a building bridge for these women who are suffering health issues and lack of information and access to social welfare and health service. The church should eradicate and reevaluate its own structural beliefs that detriment to the wellbeing of women such as paternalistic and discriminatory practices. The Church should create ministries such as women's groups that enable these women to share their own experiences and life journey. Develop programs applicable to the needs of women and train specialized counseling to support single mothers emotionally. Be more proactive and be a prophetic voice for those who are voiceless, weak and discriminated against by advocating the change in social norms and culture, values and structures that embrace equality and empowerment of women.

With regards to the public sector or the government, there is a need to collaborate with faith-based organizations such as churches to help meet the needs of women particularly single mothers such as dialogue. Engage and change social structures that promote gender inequality and include both women and men on discussion about gender roles. Reconstruct law and policies that support and favor more on men with regards to patriarchal and decision making. Provide strategies of dissemination of programs and benefits for single mothers. Reconstruct and reexamine criteria on policies welfare programs for single mothers. Provide law and policies acknowledging and giving value to unpaid care of women as work. Create more opportunity to work labor participation on women with equal pay. Create more awareness on equally shared responsibilities in the household for both men and women. Engage both men and women in a discussion about gender roles and women and girl's equality and empowerment. Provide more enhancing skills programs for women such as livelihood programs and any other practical programs that can be used to enhance women particularly single mothers economic.

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Appendix i: Interview guides

i.   **Questions to single mother**

1.How many children do you have?

2.How old are they?

3.Where is your children's father?

4.How long were you together for?

5.How often does he see your children?

6.How long have you been a single mother?

7.What do you do for work?

8.Tell me about the support you get? From state welfare? From the father of your children?

9.How often do you get support from family and friends?

10.Can you describe your typical weekday?

11.How is life as a mother?

12.Tell me about some experiences when you loved being a mother?

13.Are there experiences when you felt it was difficult to be a mother? Would you tell me about some of these experiences?

ii.   **Question to church leader (Evangelical Church)**

1.What is about you Church?

2.How many members do you have?

3.How many single mothers' members do you have?

4.Tell me about the ministry or activities do you have at church? Would you tell me any ministry for women or for single mothers in your church?

5. In your interpretation, what does the bible say about a single mother?

6.Have you ever heard a sermon or bible study that directly addressed single mothers?

7.Are you aware of institutions and organizations that offer support and care to single mothers?

8. Tell me about your participation with other institutions or organization programs?

8.Tell me about your experiences in your work in empowering single mothers?

Appendix ii.

NSD's assessment

 Print
Project title
"Exploring the challenges of single mothers in the Philippines: Empowerments as diaconal task of Evangelical church in the Philippines".

Reference number
440231

Registered
09.01.2020 av Maribeth Bain - maribethcarambas30@gmail.com
Data controller (institution responsible for the project)
VID vitenskapelige høgskole / Fakultet for teologi, diakoni og ledelsesfag / Fakultet for teologi, diakoni og ledelsesfag Oslo

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)
Sissel M. Finholt-Pedersen, s.finholt.pedersen@gmail.com, tlf: 90988434

Type of project
Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student
Maribeth Bain, maribethcarambas30@gmail.com, tlf: 45403514

Project period
01.01.2020 - 20.12.2020

Status
30.06.2020 - Assessed

Appendix iii. Informational Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project entitled?
"Single mother and Gender: The Evangelical church as instrument of empowerment".

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore the challenges and the experiences of a single motherhood in the Philippines and the role of churches in empowering them

Purpose of the project
This research project is based on the fast-growing phenomenon of single motherhood in the Philippines with brief glimpse of their challenges and experiences living as single mothers. The main indication of this project is to generalize the different challenges of being a single mother and the empowering aspect of the church. This study aims to answer the question "What are the challenges of single motherhood in the Philippines and how does the Evangelical church respond to empower the single motherhood?". The research explores the challenges and experiences of single mothers, looking at those who provide care and support and more importantly an overview of how the church can be an instrument in empowering single mothers.

The research employs qualitative research through interviews. The aims of the interview are to explore the experiences and challenges of single mothers as well as what the church is doing in providing care and support, especially empowering them.

Why are you being asked to participate?
Your support to this study will help shed light on and might bring future improvement for single mothers. Output of this study is designing and /or enhancing appropriate programs and services geared for single mothers in general, and to the Filipino single mothers. The study will focus on the contributions of churches for these groups.

What does participation involve for you?
This study is conducted for a master thesis requirement under VID Vitenskapelige Høgskole in Oslo, Norway. It is approved to be undertaken by the Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Social Science Data Services. The interview will only take one hour and a half at your most convenient time and place and will be audio-recorded. Language to be used will be Tagalog. You do not have to answer any question that you feel not comfortable with.
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose not to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. Both the interview and personal information will be deleted.
Thus, the interview can then not be used. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.
The process of your personal data is based on your consent. All the information is made to be anonymous.
After transcribing the interview, the researcher will let you read the transcriptions to affirm or make corrections with reference to the accuracy of what you might say.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
All information gathered will be treated with utmost anonymity and confidentiality. Only the researcher will have access to the information and details that appear during interviews. The files will be stored in her encrypted USB flash drive as a secured coded file. The files will be deleted after transcription. After the completion of the project will delete transcriptions and field notes in June 2020.
Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
  -access the personal data that is being processed about you
  -request that your personal data is deleted
  -request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
  -receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
  -send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority
regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with VID Vitenskapelige Høgskole, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:
  ● VID Vitenskapelige Høgskole through Maribeth Bain at +47 45403514 or her supervisor associate professor Sissel M. Finholt-Pedersen at s.finholt.pedersen@gmail.com
  ● The Data Protection Officer of VID Specialized University, Nancy Yue Liu at Nancy.Yue.Liu@diakonhjemmet.no
  ● NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Sincerely yours,

Maribeth C. Bain
Researcher and master student

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 20 June 2020

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix iv.

Research Consent Form Signed by the Participants

Dear Participant,

My name is Maribeth Carambas Bain, a master's student in Diakonia and Christian Social Practice at VID Specialized University in Oslo, Norway. In partial fulfillment of my study, I am required to write a thesis paper on a specific subject; which in this case is "The role of the Church in empowering single motherhood in the Philippines". To accomplish this task, I am required to carry out research through the form of interviews with the key persons. It is that you are being invited to agree to participate by answering some questions.

If you agree, please be advised that the information you provided will be held in the strictest confidence and will not be shared in any other forums. Additionally, I will also with your permission, record the interviews to ensure the most accurate representation of our conversation. Please note that you can opt not to take part or withdraw at any point during the process. All the data will only be use for the purpose of writing the thesis.

For any further questions/clarification about the research please contact me on my mobile number +47 45403514 or by email: maribethcarambas30@gmail.com or contact Mrs. Sissel Merete Finholt-Pedersen my supervisor at email: s.finholt.pedersen@gmail.com

Kindly, indicate your consent by signing below.

I have read and agree to the above request.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you.