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STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF SINGLE MOTHERS IN HELSINKI



ABSTRACT

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Single parent family is one of the existing forms of families in Finland. In Uusimaa region the proportion of single parent family is about 23 percent and 80 percent is headed by single mothers. Viewing this fact, this study was undertaken to know the strengths, challenges and experiences of single mothers in Helsinki. Qualitative research was carried out using a semi-structured interview method to collect the information. Five single mothers living in Helsinki were selected with the help of work-life partner (Pienperheyhdistys ry) and interviewed for this thesis. Information collected from the interviews was analyzed under six different themes. The result shows that there are both strengths and challenges of single mothers.

The main challenges faced by single mothers are difficulties in managing timetables for their work, children and household activities, and lack of timely information about the support and services for single mothers. Easier in decision making, a good bond between mothers and children, and the opportunity to become a role model for their children are some of the positive things or strengths of single mothers.

Based on the experience of the single mothers interviewed for this thesis, it is concluded that single-parent families are also a complete family or as good as a family with two parents. A little more effort from themselves and some support from governmental and non-governmental organizations to minimize their workload and loneliness would help them to feel like a complete family.

Keywords: family, single parent, single mother, strength, challenge, social capital

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1 INTRODUCTION

In Finland, about 13 percent of families are single parent families which is one percent more than the previous year (Statistics Finland 2019). More than 80% of single-parent families in Finland are headed by mothers (Monimuotoiset perheet 2019). As in other developed countries, single parenting has been accepted in Finland. There are a lot of literature, about the effects of single parenthood on children and the parents but is still a need to carry out a research in terms of strengths and challenges of Finnish single mothers faced during their parenthood.

Generally, the family is a group of people who have biological, emotional or legal ties to each other. The definition of the family has evolved from a large extended family to smaller units, the nuclear family, smaller single-parent families, Blended families, rainbow families, families without children. The family was formerly seen as an institution, but today the family is focused on an intimate relationship between two people. (Sauvola 2001, referring to Jallinoja 2000.) Finland is well known for its social security. Finland has one of the advanced welfare systems in the world, built to guarantee dignity and a decent life for all living in Finland. Social insurance (e.g. pensions, sickness and unemployment benefits, workers ' compensation), welfare (e.g. family support, childcare, disability services) and comprehensive health programs are the primary examples of the welfare system. Child welfare is the biggest concern in Finland. (Expat Finland 2019.)

Ekpenyong Nkereuwem Stephen and Lawrence Udisi (2016), reported that the problems faced by a single parent are similar to the problems faced by two parent's family, but these issues seem to be more difficult to bear and control when there is only one person at home. The research needs to be carried out to assess the strengths and difficulties of single mothers in the Finnish context and to find more ways to improve the welfare of both parents and children.

This is a qualitative research-oriented thesis that mainly aims to know how single mothers in Helsinki experience parenthood and the strengths and challenges of single mothers during their parenthood. The research questions for this research are:

- How do single mothers experience single parenthood?
- What are the strengths faced by single mothers in Helsinki?
- What are the challenges faced by single mothers in Helsinki?

Many organizations and projects are working for the welfare of single parent families in Finland like The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL), Väestöliitto, Pienperheyhdistys, Yhden Vanhemman Perheiden Liitto ry, Hope, Duo Project, etc. Among them, Single parent family Association (Pienperheyhdistys ry) is one which is included in my study as a work life partner. In this thesis, data was collected through face to face semi-structured interviews with 5 single mothers living in Helsinki. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed data were analyzed using a thematic analysis.

The whole thesis is divided into 9 chapters. Following the introduction of the thesis in chapter 1, chapter 2 depicts valuable background information on the status of different family types in Finland with some statistical data. Different reasons for being single parents and different supports to single mothers in Finland will be described in the same chapter. Chapter 3 will emphasize previous researches on the challenges and strengths of single mothers by different researchers. Along with this, I will list out some previous researches carried out in Finland in the related topics. Chapter 4 I will try to explore some legislation related to a single parent in Finland. In chapter 5 I will describe the work-life partner I selected and involved in my thesis. In chapter 6 I will explain the research methodology used in the thesis process such as methods used for data collection, data analysis, research ethics, and limitations. Chapter 7 will focus on the key findings of the research. Chapter 8 will be about discussion and conclusion. And the last one chapter 9 I will discuss my professional development during the research process.

2 BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I will discuss family and its types in the Finnish context. In its subchapter, I will further explore the definition of a single-parent family, reasons being a single parent family and government and non-government support to single parent families.

2.1 Family: Definition and Types

There is not just one definition of the family but several. Generally speaking, the family is a group of people connected to one another by blood or by law, living together or associating with one another for the shared purpose of providing food, shelter and child support. (Wilson 1985.) Family is the most commonly established social group in a combination of parentage, partnership (including marriage) and co-residence. Family is seen as the basic unit of social organization. (McCarthy et al. 2012, 8, referring to Calhoun 2002.)

The structure of the family continues to change, and sociologists may define several forms of family that exist in society. The family is not a fixed entity, it evolves and develops as the members of the family experience the various stages of their lives. The types of the family often differ according to the traditions and culture of particular communities. Family styles and types vary over the life cycle, so that people only live in such families at different stages of their lives, either as children or as parents. There have been a lot of changes in family demography since 1970. Cohabitation, marriage, childbearing and divorce are on the rise. The essence of people's family and household relationships is also changing. (Allan 2001.)

Nowadays in Finland family is usually the nuclear family that means a family with parents and children. Before the second world war there used to be an extended family that includes parents' grandparents and other relatives. (Kokkonen 2009, referring to Ollikainen 2003.) There have been many changes in society since the Second World War. The population has increased, more

people have begun to move to cities, and the size of the family has decreased. The number of single-parent families has risen and both parents have started working. Most of the children have gone to day-care and school, and the grandparents have moved to elderly care homes. (Kokkonen 2009.) According to Kontturi (2003), all this led to a situation where “home was no longer the key element that tied a family together”. Since the 1960s, the bond between family and relatives has become weaker. Nonetheless, it is common for people to have close relationships with their parents and grandparents. (Kokkonen 2009.)

Family structures depend on the place or culture. Families can be classified into different dimensions such as according to marriage type (monogamous, polygamous), by location (patrilocal, matrilocal, and avunculocal), by authority (patriarchy, matriarchy), and by kin composition (nuclear, joint, extended). (Sharma 2013.) In Finland, there are many types of families and all of them are unique. Many families are diverse in many ways. What unites these families is that their own family does not seem to fit the general assumptions of the surrounding community or society. (THL 2019.)

According to statistics Finland (2018), the family consists of married or cohabiting couples and their children living together; either of the parents and his/her children living together or married or cohabiting couples living together without children.

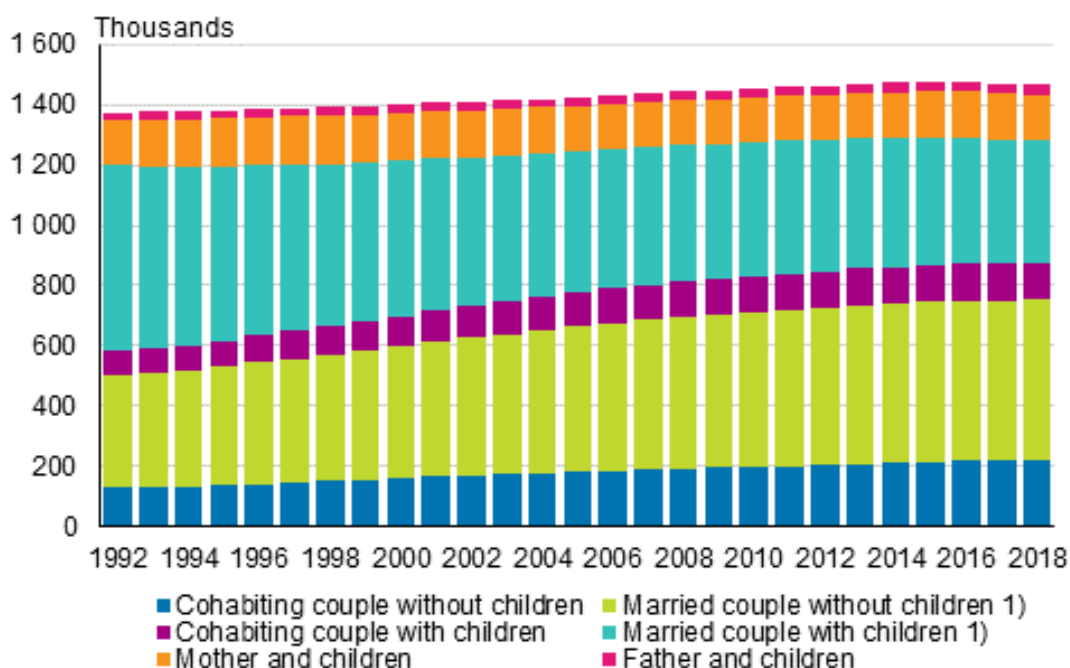


Figure 1: Families by type in 1992-2018 (Statistics Finland 2019)

When we look at the statistical data on Finnish family types and their proportion, we find 6 different types of families in Finland based on parenthood. According to Statistics Finland (2019), the most common family type in Finland is a married couple without children, making up 36 percent. In Finland, there is 13 percent of one-parent families, which is the same as in the previous year. In 2018, 1,191,297 persons were living alone, which is 28,989 more than in 2017. Families with mothers and children are almost constant during the last 26 years (1992-2018) whose share was 19 percent. The number of families with a father and children is still very low, 3 percent.

Working as professionals with children and families is challenging. To work as a social work professional in the field of family welfare in Finland, we should first have knowledge of family diversity in Finland.

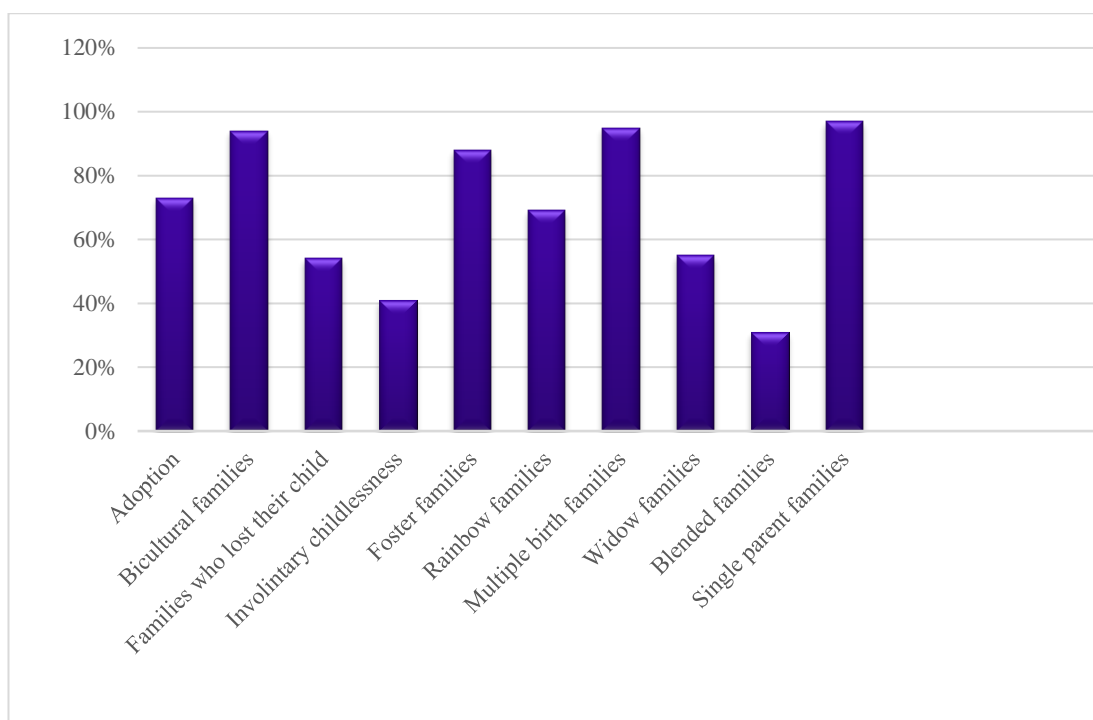


Figure 2: Family types encountered by professionals in family services in Finland (Monimuotoiset perheet 2019).

As mentioned earlier, types of a family can vary according to place, culture or composition. Figure 2 shows that there are 10 different types of families encountered by professionals working in family service sectors in Finland. It also shows their access to professionals. Among them, single parent families, multiple birth families, and bicultural families have the most access to the services which is 97%, 95%, and 94% respectively.

Adoptive families are those families who have at least one adopted child or one adopted parent. Adoption is placing one person to another family who promises to be their forever. (Adoption.org 2019.) Biocultural families are families including parents who are born in two different countries and having the different cultural backgrounds and, native language. More than 65,000 bicultural couples and families live in Finland among them half of the families have children. Involuntary childlessness is very common in Finland as every fifth couple faces this problem. Involuntary childless are the family who wants a baby but remain infertile. The foster family is a family that offers a home to children in need of temporary placement, as specified by the child welfare

services. Foster children are supposed to receive all the basic care needed in the community in which the foster family lives. (Monimuotoiset perheet 2019.)

Rainbow families are families of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Families with twins or triplets are multiple birth families. Widow family is a family where women have lost their spouse. In Finland, about 4,500 people of working age lost their partner and 2,500 minors lose a parent. A blended family is a union of two adults, at least one of them has been married or cohabited in a common-law marriage. A blended family also consists of child/children who already existed when a new marriage was created, or a couple moved in together. (Monimuotoiset perheet 2019.)

2.2 Single Parent Family

This thesis especially focuses on single parent families with a mother and the children therefore in this chapter we will have a closer look at single parent families. A single-parent family is a family where the main responsibility of childcare and decision is on one parent. In single-parent families, the parent may have full custody, joint custody, alternating weeks with the child, or maybe a single person who is pregnant. In Finland, more than one-fifth of all families are single-parent families and every third child lives in a single-parent household for some time in their lives. (Monimuotoiset perheet 2019.)

According to Statistics Finland (2015), In comparison to different regions of Finland, the number of one-parent families is highest in Päijät-Häme (23.5%) and Uusimaa (22.9%). Whereas Ostrobothnia has the lowest number of single parent families which is 14%.

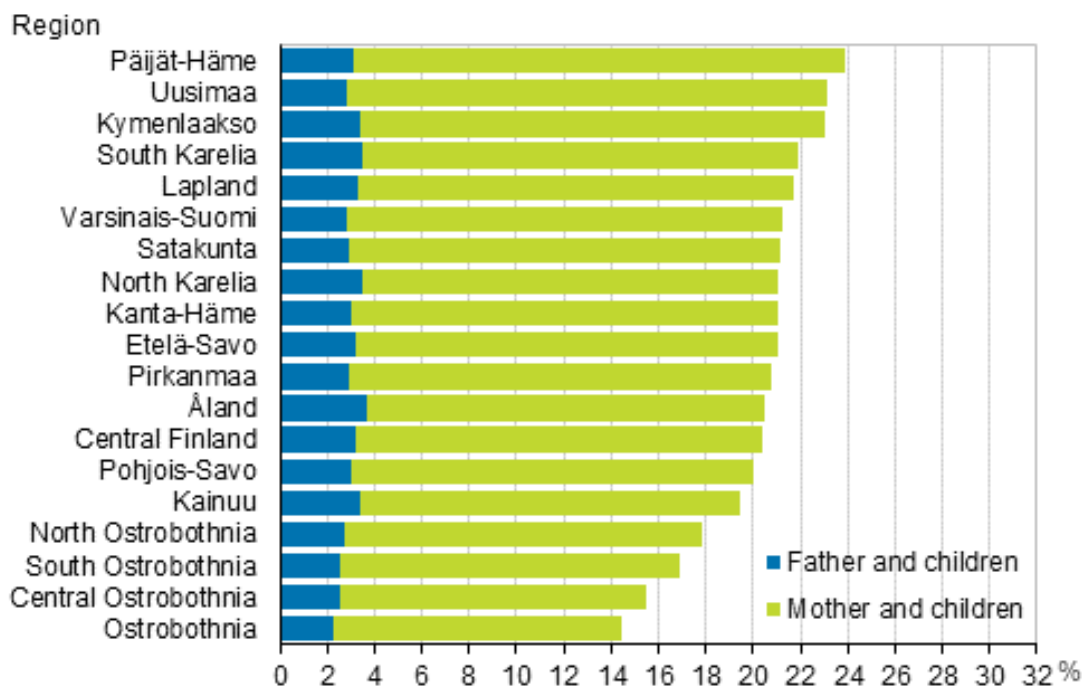


Figure 3: Proportion of single-parent families of all families with underage children by region in 2015 (Statistics Finland 2019).

In figure 2 we can see that the proportion of families of mothers and children is considerably higher (14-22 percent) than the proportion of families consisting of a father and children (2-4 percent). So, single mothers are chosen for the study. While talking about the municipality of Mainland Finland, the proportion of one-parent families with children is highest in Helsinki (i.e.28%). The share of one-parent families was 27 percent in Mariehamn.

“Single-parenthood is not necessarily a problem or misfortune; it may be a solution and may provide a calmer and safer environment for the children in comparison to their previous family situation.” (Monimuotoiset perheet 2019).

Globally, one-quarter to one-third of all families are headed by single mothers. Developed countries, in particular, are experiencing an increase in single-parent families and divorce. Single parenthood may have many problems affecting children, but the causes may lie elsewhere. We know that single mothers may vary concerning their age, social and economic status, and educational level, and it may be the other factors that affect the mother’s ability to parent effectively. (Yarber & Annice et al. 2010.)

On the one hand, becoming a single parent can be a hard and stressful time in one's life. It is difficult to raise children on their own without the support of the partner as a single parent; it seems more difficult to manage everyday things in life, such as work and home harmony, kids at different schools, cooking and chores. It can be hard to face these circumstances on its own, and it can be very frustrating.

2.3 Reasons for Being Single Parent

There are various reasons for being a single parent such as they may have been in a relationship that they left, or their partner might have passed away.

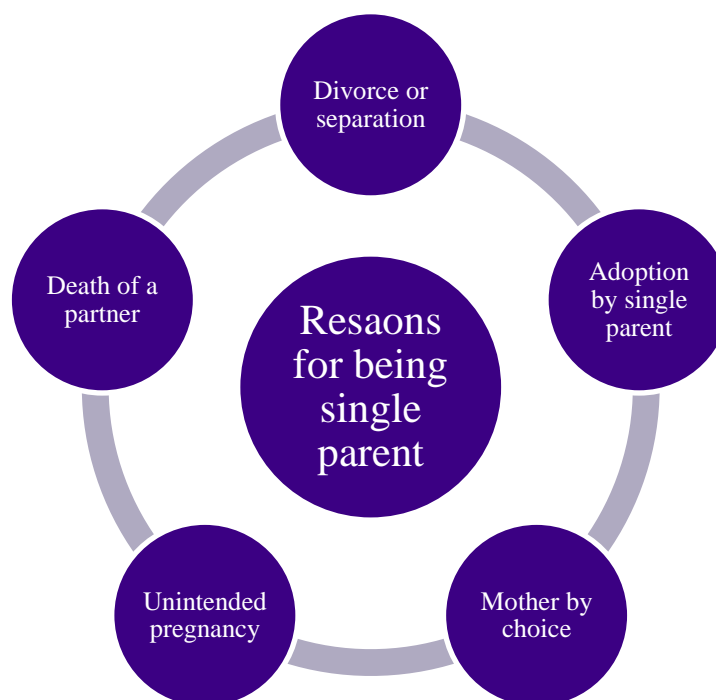


Figure 4: Reasons for being a single parent

According to figure 3, mainly there are five reasons behind the single parent. Divorce or separation is one of the reasons being single parents. Nowadays, divorce has become more normative and is accepted. Peoples thinking towards divorce have changed. According to a recent report on attitudes towards modern family's people are accepting divorce rather than embracing these changes. Nearly 60 % of single parents are due to divorce or separation. (Dowd1997.) Divorce does not happen in once; it includes a series of events. It includes many pre-separation complex steps. Divorce is good for the dysfunctional family, but it is more traumatic for most family members and can affect the social and emotional well-being of children. (Parke 2013, referring to Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen 2002.)

Divorce is a legal form that follows separation. When the relationship between both the parents became weak, separation occurs. Strong et al (2002), concluded that one couple out of every six partnerships were likely to have separated for at least two days. The changes that occur during separation are important because the feelings of an individual are strongest at this level. During the time of separation, men and women react differently. According to Statistics Finland (2017), about 38% of women's first marriage end in divorce. It is on the same level from 2005 to 2016 which is between 38 to 40 percent.

Death of a parent or spouse is also one of the facts of being single parents. Less than 7% of single parent's family is due to the death of one parent (Dowd 1997). The family is called single parent family if another member of the family did not get married after his or her partner died. In 2005, the father or mother of a total of 2,600 children died in Finland. (YVPL (n.d.).

Unintended pregnancy can be a reason of contraceptive failure or ignorance. Over three-quarters of births to women under age 20 were unintended. Many women terminate unintended pregnancies. (Erdmans & Black 2015.) Those pregnancies that were not terminated may lead to single parenting.

If the child is adopted by a single person then it can be one of the reasons for single parenthood. Adoptions have taken place in different ways throughout history. In adoption, children end up being brought up by people other than

their parents. (Javier, Rafael Art 2007.) According to the US Census Bureau (2009), nearly one-third of adoptions from foster care were completed by unmarried people. This included adoptions by 1,400 single men and more than 13,000 single women. According to Statistics Finland (2018), there were 396 adoptions in Finland in 2017. Which includes 292 domestic and 104 international adoptions. In 2017, the number of adoptions was 41 higher than in 2016.

Mother by choice is another reason for women to be a single parent. Single mother by choice is a single woman who decides to become a mother, knowing that she will be the sole parent of her child. Single women can become a mother through artificial insemination, adoption, in-vitro fertilization, or other means (Parents n.d.). According to The National Institute for Health and Welfare (2012), single mothers by choice gave birth to 157 children, which is 60% more than 2006. The estimated number of single mothers by choice is between 87 and 185 per year. This leads to an overall increase in the total number of single mothers by choice family each year. According to the Family Federation of Finland 1 out of 4 inseminating treatments are made for single mother by choice. (Golash & Turkulainen 2018, Referring to Savon Sanomat 2016.)

2.4 Support to Single Mothers in Finland

In Finland, Kela (the social insurance institution of Finland) provides financial support to families with children in many ways, starting from expecting a baby. With the aid of Kela, parents can be with their children in the first months of their maternity life. Later, Kela supports the care of the child and the cost of having a child. (Kela, n.d.)

Kela provides some more benefits for some types of families such as multiple-birth families, rainbow families, stepfamilies, single parent families. Kela's benefits to families with children are maternity grant, maternity, special maternity, paternity and parental allowance child benefit, childcare allowances, assistance for ill and disabled children.

In the case of a single mother raising the child, she will get an additional 54 working days of parental benefits. It is also available to single mothers after adoption. Special additional benefits to single parent families are child maintenance allowance, survivors' pensions, single-parent supplement to the child benefit. (Kela, n.d.)

2.4.1 Child Maintenance Allowance

In Finland children usually stay with one parent, if the parents get separated. The other parent, who is liable for the maintenance of the children, pays child support for them. Sometimes the parent liable for maintenance does not pay child support, or there are no liable parents. In such a case Kela can pay child maintenance allowance to the parent in whose custody the child is.

Kela pays child maintenance allowance if, the parent liable for child support has not paid it. Due to the financial circumstances of the parent liable for child support, child support is smaller than the child maintenance allowance. If a child is adopted by a single person. The fatherhood of a child born out of wedlock has not been confirmed. Paternity has been confirmed, but at the same time, it was not possible to confirm child support. The child maintenance allowance is €155.17 per month for each child. It is free from tax.

According to data, at the end of 2013, 101,400 children received maintenance support. Which is 2% more than in 2012. The number of children receiving maintenance allowance has increased every year. Kela has been providing maintenance support since 2009. In 2013, 9.4% of all persons aged 0-17 received maintenance support. (YVPL n.d.)

2.4.2 Survivors' Pension

In Finland, someone who has lost a family member may apply for survivors' pension from Kela. It can be got in the form of a spouse's pension or an orphan's pension. A person's authorized pension provider is also responsible for paying survivor pension. Spouse pension can be applied following month of partner's death until the age of 65. Payment will be stopped when the alive partner reaches 65. Children can get orphans pension until the age of 18. If the children continue studying after 18, they can get the pension until age 21.

2.4.3 Single-Parent' Supplement to the Child Benefit

Every parent living in Finland gets child benefits of 94.88 euros per month for the first child whereas 104.84, and 133.79 respectively to a second and third child. A single parent can get an additional €53.30 for each child in the child benefit amount. We can apply the single-parent supplement if we are not married or living together or if you are legally separated from a spouse. Even the joint custody parent can apply for the supplement. It is granted from the beginning of the month following the change in family circumstances. (Kela n.d.)

As we know that loneliness is one of the challenges of a single mothers and they often feel relief from the stress of daily life just by talking to another adult. There are some services provided by the city of Helsinki to meet and receive assistance.

There are many playgrounds where different activities are provided through instructor where the families get natural opportunities to meet other families. Temporary day-care and club activities helped parents have time for themselves. Social care work for families with children consists of support, instruction, and counselling to children under school age and young pupils in a variety of situations throughout their lives. (City of Helsinki n.d.)

2.4.4 Support from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

There are many non-governmental organizations in Helsinki that work with families and children, providing assistance, advice and peer support concerning various situations in life.

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) have Family Cafés in the Helsinki region. MLL arranges Support Persons for Families with Children and Communal Grandparenting activities. Other activities done by MLL are Friend to an immigrant mother and short-term child support help.

Väestöliitto (The Family Federation of Finland) maintains the comprehensive Hyvä kysymys website. This website provides plenty of instructions, tips and peer support for families in the form of online discussions and chats. Pienperheyhdistys (The Single Parents' Association) provides support and assistance to single parents by organizing Buddies for Kids activities. Yhden Vanhemman Perheiden Liitto ry (The League of Single Parent Families) also provides support for single parents. Hope – (Yhdessä ja Yhteisesti ry) offers help to low-income families with children facing an acute crisis, and children who have been taken into custody. We can also donate clothes that are in good condition and suitable for the season.

Duo Project or the Familia ry helps to support intercultural families and Parasta Lapsille ry organizes multicultural camps for families. The Helsinki NMKY offers many types of activities for families. These include Father-child activities and mid-morning groups. HelsinkiMissio provides support in situations where you feel too alone to cope with your children. At HelsinkiMissio, we can find peer support and people to talk to help you deal with everyday activities. The organization provides mentors who support families, organizes group activities for families with children and provide families with people they can talk to. (City of Helsinki n.d.)

3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In this chapter, I will discuss challenges and strengths of single parents according to different researchers. Furthermore, I will also mention some of the related researches carried out in Helsinki.

3.1 Challenges of Single Mothers

According to my knowledge and experience, we cannot be the best parent in all cases because of different factors, problems and challenges. Our style of parenting, attitude, perseverance, and support system plays a vital role in minimizing the challenges of single parenthood.

Financial problems could be the most common problem which single parents experience. This is especially the case for single parents with little or no education and no marketable skills. Even after income redistribution single parent households face substantially higher poverty risk compared to couple parent households even among those who are employed. (Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis 2015.) Most single parents should work long hours to fulfill the financial needs of the family. According to Statistics Finland (2019), single parent families have a low-income rate of 20.1%. This is nearly triple to two parent's family size (7.0 percent). The family's low-income level is the highest for children under the age of school. In the family, a higher number of children also increases the risk of poverty. According to THL's income support statistics (2019), 23.4 percent of single-parent families receive income support.

Many socialization theories believe that lack of one parent is linked to the child's commitment to the family, making it more difficult to transfer values. Others claim that the lack of one parent changes the decision-making processes of the family and removes parental control over the actions of children. (McLanahan n.d.) Compared to couples, single parents have limited resources and time to complete their work because of responsibilities towards raising the children. Limited time is the most common barrier for employment and managing other day to day activities while raising children. As for child welfare

rules and regulations, single parents must provide every necessary thing for their children's well-being and they are responsible for bringing up their children as they have the main custody of them.

According to Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009), the majority of the single mother felt lonely, helpless, hopeless, lack of identity, and lack of confidence. Our way of parenting is affected when there are many responsibilities in our life. Our long hours of working may affect our parenting quality. Some single mothers found it hard to maintain discipline among the children due to the absence of male members. (Kotwal and Prabhakar.)

If the reason for single parenting is divorce our children can also suffer from adjustment problems or may feel ashamed. Most children experience parental divorce stressful and display disruptions in emotional, social and cognitive development (Sauvola 2001.) If the partner stops looking out the kids as he used to do before, the children may badly suffer a lot of disappointment. Children with single parents may suffer from self-esteem problems. If children did not get more attention or did not get enough affection, due to a busy schedule they may lose expectations in their relationships later in life. They may have comparisons. Being a single mother means that there is no one to share the good and bad experiences. Even if we are not looking for any partner, we may feel that we are the only ones to take care of everything. When we are the only caregiver to our children, we will not have time and the opportunity to go out and socialize with others which will make us feel extremely lonely. (Raja 2019.)

The hardest part of being a single mother is to allocate time and focus on self-care. Many single working mothers feel tired trying to hold jobs and see that their children attend extra-curricular activities. One of the challenges most of the single parent face is loneliness. There is no one to share their difficulties and their joys as well. If the parent is single because of spouse's death or any tragedy, it can be even harder for the parent to bear all sorts of responsibilities. Single mothers may feel loneliness, traumatic and depression and may feel difficult to handle the responsibility of childcare and to establish a routine for her children. (Kotwal & Prabhakar 2009)

Both single parents, as well as children, face adjustment difficulties. Children whose parents are cohabiting, divorced, remarried or gay or lesbian, as well as kids who are adopted, effect on the perception of child adaptation in various family systems. (Abela & Walker 2013.) There may be a sense of loss, poverty and continuous exposure to parental arguments. While the parent's sense of loss is due to the missing spouse. It could be tougher for children at a young age. The change in parenting status is a difficult change for children to accept. The stability of the new environment is influential on child adjustment and well-being. (Abela & Walker 2013.) It is even harder to balance work and parenting for single working mothers. A single mother should care for the kids and provide for them all on her own. To be able to provide for the children she often has no choice but has to put in extra working hours. The burden of domestic work is a challenging aspect of family life for both single parents and their children. The responsibility for domestic and child-rearing duties lies with one adult rather than two adults in single-parent households. They may miss some necessary things. (Abela & Walker 2013.)

3.2 Strengths of Single Mothers

Most times, challenges of single parent households are quite apparent; economic troubles and abandonment related trust issues. But there are also positive effects or advantages on raising a child as a single parent. Studies have established good parent-child interaction, a community support network, and a high level of adolescent independence as the advantages of single parent homes. (Barajas 2011.)

Self-reliance is one of the strengths of single mothers. In a single parent family decision are more easily made because they are yours and yours alone. They have the advantage of making all the final decisions, whether on finance, schooling or indulging their adoptive child in whatever they feel is necessary whether that is extra therapy, dance classes or football match. (Morris 2016.)

The absence of one parent may strengthen the bonding between parents and children. Spending more time with children as a single caregiver creates a

unique bond. In divorce case bonding can be with custodial parents (one who has sole physical custody of the child) and also non-custodial parents who play a significant role in their child's lives. A child's connection with parent will not end, but it continues and grows even after they turn 18. (Malachi 2017.)

Single parent families usually have a strong sense of community as they have many supporters. As we already mentioned the phrase "it takes a village to raise a child," it works with single parent families as well. Single parents who do not live with other family members try participating in community groups like single parent support groups which help to build a strong sense of community. (Malachi 2017.)

Children in the single parent families should contribute to family activities to complete family system. In a single parent family, children can learn to understand the value of their effort and enjoy their work. Kids may become more responsible as single parents have a hectic schedule. When their parents aren't there, they will do the job themselves and may learn to share the responsibilities. We should help children to recognize the efforts they put in and should praise them for what they have done. (Thomas 2019.)

In comparison children in a single parent family are matured before than the children in two-parent family. When children find their parents working hard, and it can motivate them to help or work with them. Children with single parents can learn to manage their disappointments in life. As a single parent, they make sure to use the best method to have loving, caring, dependable, and good kids. (Lore central 2019.) Some children have to play the absent parent's position and assume greater responsibilities than they should. They may be mature or have properly disciplined. Such demands and strong adaptations allow them to mature, but it can also be a disadvantage. (Riccelen 2018.)

Single parent in the family can be a role model for their children. Children raised in single-parent families will understand their role in the lives of their families. It helps them prepare themselves for their future. It is a good approach that can help prepare them for the real world. Children learn how to align their needs with the family's needs. (Malachi 2017.)

In single parent family, parents are already separated or there is only one adult which will reduce the parental conflict. Most single parents split because of an ongoing dispute, the issues of mom and dad can be the most harmful for the children. Less argument makes the environment less stressful and reduces the anxiety of both parents and children. If the parent is abusive or the relationship is dysfunctional, it will affect the child's behaviours and future. If there are no arguments or conflicts, the child can feel safer in his or her living environment. (Malachi 2017.)

3.3 Similar researches to this thesis

There are some related researches done in single mothers in Helsinki. These researches particularly cover the issues like challenges of single mothers, support for them, and effects on parents and children. There are very limited academic researches carried out about the strengths of single parent families.

There is one academic publication by Deepti Golash and Tiia Turkulainen (2018) entitled *Challenges and Resources of Single Mothers by Choice in Helsinki*. The main aim of this research was to determine the challenges faced by single mothers by choice in the Helsinki metropolitan area and in turn identify the available resources for single mother by choice. The key findings of the study were: lack of information and advertising about available services and Lack of consistency in information delivery by the maternity clinics and lack of peer support during pregnancy were the main challenges faced by single mother by choice in Helsinki. (Golash & Turkulainen 2018.)

Another is a product-based thesis done by Ilona Mäkeläinen in 2017. *Immigrant and Foreigner Single Mothers in Helsinki* is the thesis in the form of video. The researcher prepared two videos in which the first video is for the advertisement of the Single Parent Association and the peer support group they have for immigrant and foreigner single mothers. The second video serves as an informative video about the life of an immigrant or foreigner single mother looks like considering different aspects of well-being. Thus, the aim of the product and the project were to develop the multicultural work at the association.

These videos were successful in fulfilling the aim of the thesis (Mäkeläinen 2017.)

There have been other different researches somehow related to single parenthood by different researchers such as Changes and Challenges of Parenthood after Divorce by Tiina Kokkonen in 2009; Predisposing Factors of Family Conflict and Elements for Comfortable Family Life by Komal Poudel in 2010; The Association Between Single-parent Family Background and Physical Morbidity, Mortality, and Criminal Behaviour in Adulthood by Sauvola, Anu in 2001.

4 LEGISLATION AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Around 1950, most of the single parents were widows. Divorce rates are rising after 1970. The Day Care Act of Finland which came into force in 1973 encourages single mothers to get employment opportunities by leaving their kids to day-care centres. However, as the current maintenance allowance is quite low, single parents have to work.

The Child Support Law was started in 1976. The Law on Child Custody and Access Rights came into force in 1984, which allowed for joint custody even though the parents had not been living together at the time of birth. Joint care could also continue after the parents separated. The child's parents must agree on the custody of the children. In Finland, joint custody is the very common agreement which is 93 percent of all custody agreement. In Joint custody, both parents should decide on important issues concerning the child. A child, who is in joint custody, cannot be taken abroad without the consent of the other parent. If a passport is applied for the child, the other parent must also sign the passport application. (THL 2019.)

In 1978 adoptive mothers are given rights to maternity allowance, which helped the living of single mother adoption. Child home care allowance for parents of small children was introduced in 1984. In 2006 act on assisted fertility treatment is passed through which single women can choose to become a mother by their choice. (Child and family policies Finland 2013.)

In 1987, a new Marriage Law was enacted, making divorce an application and no longer had to find the culprit (THL 2019). Act to amend the Act of Registered Partnerships 250/2016): From 1st March 2002 the possibility to register partnerships was started in Finland and ended on the last day of February 2017. From the beginning of March 2017, same-sex couples can register into marriage. (156/2015) but the same sex-couple can register their partnership since 1st March 2002. (Statistics Finland 2018.)

5 WORK-LIFE PARTNER

Work-life partner of this thesis is Pienperheyhdistys ry (Single Parents Association). Founded in 1968, "The Single Parents' Association is a non-religious, non-political organization working to improve the status of children and provide equal opportunities for them. It is also a member of the Finnish Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters". Some of the activities provided by Pienperheyhdistys ry are family cafes, peer support, camps, outings and other events where the single mother can discuss and share everyday challenges, get new ideas, and make new friends. (Pienperheyhdistys ry 2019.)

Single Parent Association advertised about this thesis in their webpage as well as other social media before finding the interviewees. All the ethical considerations needed for the research were done such as signed the agreement paper from work-life partner, submitted thesis plan and research agreement. Along with helping to find interviewees supervisor from work-life partner provided feedbacks and suggestions regarding the thesis plan. Single mothers living in Helsinki are the main target group of this thesis who were involved as a participant of the interview and helped in answering my queries.

As already stated, this organization is working to improve the status of children and a single mother. Responded by the single mothers, they are quite satisfied with the service and support getting from Pienperheyhdistys. From this thesis work-life partner can get more information about the challenges and strengths of single mothers in Helsinki so that they can organize different activities which can minimize the challenges and increase the strengths of single mother.

6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the particular method or technique used to classify, identify, process and analyze information about a subject. The chapter on Research Methodology allows the reader to objectively determine the general validity and accuracy of a study in a research paper. (Libguide n.d.) In this chapter, I will give further information about the research method and research approach, methods of data collection, selection of the sample, the research process, the type of data analysis, ethical considerations and the research limitations of this research.

6.1 Methodological Approach

This thesis includes a qualitative approach of research. According to Kothari (2004), a qualitative analysis methodology includes the subjective assessment of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour. Qualitative approaches provide a broad and effective approach to enhancing study and practice in community-based research and action (Glenwick & Jason 2016).

Single mothers living in Helsinki are the study population of this thesis as the study aims to collect information about single mothers living in Helsinki. This thesis follows an individual face to face interview method with five single mothers living in Helsinki. According to Kvale (1996), the interview is essentially a two-person exchange of views on a topic of mutual interest, not a one-way discussion. While researching individual personal life, face to face interviews will be more confidential and easier to gain trust from the interviewee. (Brinkmann 2013.)

Single Parent Association advertised the research on its web page and other social media (appendix 1). Four single mothers contacted me through email, and we fixed the schedule for the interview whereas I used the snowball sampling technique to find one more interviewee. Snowball sampling also known as chain sampling or referral, where research participants recruit other

participants for a study. It is often used when participants are hard to find. (Stephanie 2017.)

Mainly primary data was collected by face-to-face semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer may prepare a list of questions but does not necessarily ask them all but use them to guide the conversation. In some cases, the interviewer will prepare only a list of general topics that can be called an interview guide. (Doyle 2019.)

Some sets of open-ended questions were prepared whereas some questions are added during the interview according to the interviewee's answers. It took about one hour for each interview. The prepared questions were based on the general characteristics of the interviewees and the six themes. The general characteristics were age, education, occupation, number and gender of the children, and the history of their relations. Similarly, the themes were bringing up children, economy, social network, social support, level of satisfaction, perception of mother and children on single parenting, and social capital. (Appendix 2). At last, I asked them about how they feel about the interview and if they have any suggestions for me about the thesis.

Regarding the general characteristics of the interviewees, all the interviewees were between 40 to 50 years, educated and professionals. All together they have 7 children. The general information of the interviewees about their children and the reason for single mothers is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: General Information of the interviewee

Interviewee	No of children	Reason for being single
First	1	Mother by choice
Second	2	1 From divorce 1 from unintended pregnancy
Third	1	Separation
Fourth	1	Separation
Fifth	2	Twins from the death of a partner

As stated in table 1, among five single mothers, one is a mother by choice. She had planned to become a mother through fertility treatment with donor sperm, but the child's father accepted to give his sperm for fertility treatment. She has one child. The second interviewee had two partners; one divorced and another separated from living relation. She has one child from each partner. The third and fourth interviewee is a single mother after separation from living relation and they have 1 child each. And the last one is a widow single mother with twins.

6.2 Data Analysis Method

The main source of data for analysis was the interview. After taking proper consent with the interviewee the interview was recorded. All the interviews were transcribed, and the thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data. The thematic analysis shows the general objective of the study, explains the philosophical and theoretical interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation, offers a summary of the related literature on the subject of the research, and formulate specific research questions for the investigation. (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015.)

Thematic analysis is a data analysis technique that is widely used across all qualitative models (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015). According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are six-phase of thematic analysis, which is the basic framework of this research.

Familiarisation is the first step of the thematic analysis which is common to all forms of qualitative analysis. In this phase data is transcribed if necessary, reading the data and noting the initial ideas are done. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017.) In this research, I listened to all the audio record that was taken during the interview and transcribed them. To become more familiar with the data I read those transcribed data and make an idea for further steps.

The next step is coding in which an interesting feature of the data is organized systemically. It reduces bigger data into small meaningful data. I organized the data in a systemic way that is according to the prepared research questions and themes. I highlighted the most important themes in the interview which are related to the research questions.

Searching for themes is the further step: after the coding in which codes are examined and fit them together into the theme. In this stage, I separated the transcribed data according to the themes relevant to the research questions. The interview was based on six themes which was already prepared before interview and the response of interviewees was mainly within the themes. So, there was no need to change the themes for analysis of data. I separated those coded documents into these themes.

Reviewing themes is the fourth stage in which we review, modify and develop the preliminary themes identified. We read the data associated with each theme and considered whether the data support it or not. I checked the themes in relation to both the coded extracts and the full data set. I checked either data and the theme are related or not.

Stage fifth is defining and naming the theme which aims to "identify the essence of what each theme" (Braun & Clarke 2006). In this theme, we should be able to define the relationship between the themes. I wrote a detailed analysis of each theme and try to find out the relationship between each theme. After all the final stage is writing up in which I put all the extracted data together and compare those findings in relation to existing literature. After all the phases of data analysis, we should finalize and share the findings which is the dissemination of findings. This is also called publishing and presenting our research. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017).

6.3 Research Ethics

Ethics are a tool to prevent mistakes and to engage in good practice in research and development (Competences not graduates 2016). According to National Advisory Board on Research Ethics Helsinki 2009, While doing thesis work one should follow the ethical principles set up by the ministry of education and culture and obey with the guidelines prepared by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics entitled "Good scientific practice and procedures for handling misconduct and fraud in science" (2002). (Tenk n.d.)

Ethics means finding answers about right and wrong and good and bad in the research process (Comstock 2012, 1). Research should be part of the interest of both researchers as well as work-life partner. We should be aware of personal intuition. We should write our findings without bias or without mixing our personal feelings. We should have proof of what we have written in the thesis. We should justify decisions or findings with proof. We should avoid misconduct in our thesis. Misconduct is defined as: "fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results." (Comstock 2012.)

Fabrication is making up fake data or results and recording or reporting them. Falsification is omitting data or results or modification of research material, equipment or processes, in such a way that the research is not accurately represented.

Plagiarism is the appropriation or stealing of another person's ideas, thoughts, processes, results, or words and representation in own original work without giving appropriate credit. (Resources for Research Ethics Education 2016).

Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (1998), explains that the role of ethics in maintaining integrity throughout all the various stages of the research process begins with the formulation of the research question and focus. Before proceeding into the thesis, I had a proper agreement from work-life partner. To make this agreement I submitted a research plan with a clear aim and objective of the research. I also submitted a research permit from our institution.

As this is qualitative research on consisting of interviews as the primary method of information collection, we should have informed consent (McGarry & Mannik 2017). Informed consent was taken with the interviewee before taking the interview. I described the purpose of research and what I expected from them beforehand. I was available to answer any queries that the participants had. A matter of privacy and confidentiality was explained to the interviewee while taking consent.

6.4 Limitations and Further Research

Every study has some limitations which may affect the finding of the study. In this research, there were no resource constraints but finding single mothers from different backgrounds was not attained which is explained as follows:

Difficulties to find interviewees is one of the main challenges I faced during the thesis process. Work-life partner advertised about my thesis in May 2019, but it took more than 4 months to find 5 interviewees. I even needed to use the snowball technique to find the interviewee. The language barrier could be one of the reasons behind this.

The second limitation of this process is the same type of interviewees. All the interviewees are Finnish, educated and working women. If I had found some immigrants or not working women interviewees, my research findings could be different.

Lack of previous research in the strength of single mothers is another limitation of this research. While searching for different kinds of literatures related to this topic, I found more research on challenges rather than strengths or benefits. Most of the researches are focussed on the problems or negative side of single parent families.

As mentioned earlier, all the interviewees were a single mother from a Finnish background. In spite of being a Finnish woman, they lack information about the support and services for single parents. I want to know the same things

about immigrant single moms. Are they familiar with these supports? In Finland, there are also many single fathers so there could be further research on strengths and challenges faced by single fathers in Helsinki.

As this is qualitative research, the findings are merely a collection of personal opinions of the respondents. There are no any tests and measures used to establish the validity and reliability of this thesis as used in quantitative research (Noble and Smith 2015). However, an attempt has been made to increase the credibility of this thesis by clearly and accurately presenting participants' perspectives.

7 RESULTS

Based on the interviews conducted with five single mothers living in Helsinki, it is found that there are both challenges as well as strength being a single mother. The results are based on six themes included in the questionnaire. (Appendix 2).

7.1 Bringing up Children

In the Nordic countries, the family policy has, to a large extent, based on helping parents to balance childcare and working life by offering childcare and parental leave opportunities. (Forssén, Haataja, & Hakovirta 2005) According to interviewees, bringing up children is not so much difficult for them. In comparing to other countries, the official support and services system such as Day-Care Act has helped a single mother to be involved in full-time work. Interviewees responded that maternity leave has made them easy to rear their kids during the first year. When talking about custody, all of the interviewees have sole custody. In the case of widow and two children from the separated couple and children from unintended pregnancy, they are not meeting their father at all. It is difficult for mothers to manage household things and they can not get some personal space. In the case of a divorced single mother, they have an agreement of meeting once in two weeks along with the social worker, but the father is not following it. The child of a single mother by choice is visiting her father once a week. She has some free time when her child is at father's place.

After my son started päiväkoti (daycare) he used to sleep longer in päiväkoti, so he slept late and wake up early. If I have to do any household work, then I need to wake up a bit earlier than him. Sometimes I do not have time to do household shopping, so I go shopping while returning from office. (First interviewee)

As all of the interviewees are working mothers, it is difficult for them to leave children at home alone when they have to travel from their work. Friends and family members are great support for them while traveling. Sometimes It is

also difficult for them when they need to take their kids to check up, some extra activities outside school.

7.2 Economy

Yarber, Annice et al. (2010), mentioned that single mothers who have good social status (employment) can balance the negative effect of the loss of father. Their children will do as well as two-biological-parent families.

Among 5 interviewees, one of them has shared a child's expenses with her ex-partner. It means she is getting maintenance allowance from the child's father but through ulosottovirasto (Finland enforcement) after all the legal procedure and decision from the court. Mother by choice spends all the expenses by herself as she has not applied for maintenance allowance. Widow family gets maintenance allowance along with the father's pension. The divorced single mother is getting maintenance allowance from Kela as she has sole custody and her ex-husband refused to pay for the maintenance. In the case of mother by unintended pregnancy, as the father is from another country and she has to follow different legal procedures, so she had not registered his name as her daughters' father.

As mentioned earlier single mothers with little or no education and no marketable skills will have a financial problem. All my interviewees are educated and working mothers, they have not faced so many financial troubles. As a single parent, they will also have the choice to decide how to spend the money on children and them. They can plan their finances and understand when to spend a little more and when to cut. (Raja 2019.)

As I have a good salary and have my own house, I even did not apply or search for any support or benefits. (Fourth interviewee)
My kids get survivor's pension along with maintenance allowance, so I do not have a financial problem. (Fifth interviewee)

7.3 Social Network and Support

Cheliotis (2010), defines a social network as the network formed by social ties that can be both personal or community, online or offline and are likely to know each other. All of the interviewees have a good network of friends and relatives which makes them easy for living. Their friends and family members are also supporting for taking care of their children.

Most of my interviewees have not got any extra support from the government or other support organizations except basic services and allowances. One of the interviewees said that she heard about the support provided by social workers and contacted them. She got a babysitting service for two days and after that, they did not contact her. Another mother got some vouchers to pay for babysitting for a few months when her baby was 6-7 months.

My wellbeing could be much higher if I could have got some support from the government when my baby was small. (Second interviewee)

In the case of sole custody where the baby does not visit his\her father, it is difficult for mothers to have some free time. When I talked about different support and services provided by the city of Helsinki and different organizations, they told me that they have not got proper information about these services. One of the mothers has taken psychological counselling for some sessions but she did not get any financial support for that and she paid herself.

I have never asked or got information about the services. Due to separation anxiety and difficulty to handle small twin babies, I had depression, but I did not get any support from the government or any other organizations. (Fifth interviewee)

As all of them are working mothers, they do not have time to visit different peer support activities or other organizations. Some of them have been to some peer support groups and some camps organized by the Single Parent

Association. They feel some activities were good enough, but they do not have time to continue those. Some interviewees told that they feel they are not in the same situation as other single mothers. So, they are not able to mix up with the group. Their family and friend's network are the biggest strength for all of them.

Finland has many single parent families, but structure and support are not sufficient for them. (Third interviewee)

7.4 Level of Satisfaction

All the interviewees said that they are quite satisfied with their decision and their life though they have some difficulties.

The biggest challenge for a single mother is to manage a timetable. It is quite difficult to balance work with children's schedules. Sometimes it is difficult with logistic things, paying bills, and trying to fix things.

It would not be possible to manage a timetable without the help of family and friends. (All interviewee)

Playing, doing their hobbies, talking with friends, visiting, and traveling are some of the coping mechanisms they are adopting in their life to reduce the stress. As explained in chapter 3.2, all the interviewees feel that in spite of many difficulties there are many strengths as being a single mother such as decision making and a strong bond between mother and children. According to raja (2019), As a single parent, the entire authority of making the decisions will rest on mother They do not need to wait for anyone for making decisions, so they are the fastest in decision making.

I can take the decision myself. I did not need to check other's schedules to make any plans, so I am the fastest to make a decision when we plan something among my friend circle. (Fifth interviewee)

They do not have any risk factors in their life. They are the only adult in the house, so they talk more with them which makes children close to them. According to Motapanyane (2016), family and community networks play a vital role in the development of survival and well-being of single mothers.

As I have sufficient money and my brothers and sisters are near me to help if needed, so I did not feel any disadvantages as being a single mother. (Third interviewee)

The main thing that motivates single mothers in their life is their children's happiness. They want to be able to develop for own self. They want to be a role model for their kids. They want to teach their kids that the role of the mother is not limited only at home. The biggest struggle they felt when the children were small was loneliness.

7.5 Perception of mother and children on single parenting

Interviewees were asked how their children perceive about their family and how the single mothers themselves perceive about single parenting. Being a single parent is not a taboo anymore in Finland. There is more openness to divorce. Being a single parent is better than being in a dysfunctional family.

Too much value to try to be in marriage gives a toxic environment for children to grow and on oneself. As a parent, we should construct a safe place for children. (Second interviewee)

As a single mother, they make sure that their children are not missing anything in their life. To minimize the feelings of the absence of their father some of them used to send their kids to friend's homes with a male adult.

One of them started a craft club where all the mothers from the neighbourhood come together so it was easier for her to make friends when the child was small.

As I am a working mother and am also busy at home, it may have some impact on my kids. Nowadays he helps me in everyday work, so it is much easier than before when the child was small. (Fourth interviewee)

For some mothers, they feel like they could have a better career if they could do some other jobs. As they are the only to look after the kids, they cannot do night shifts and traveling job. They have to choose a daytime job. The best thing is that they feel a child comes first then work. According to interviewee, they feel that their children perceive their family as a complete family. They have tried their best to fulfill the demands of their children so that they are not missing anything in their life. According to Lindholm (2017), Children's from single mother have seen mothers working hard to manage job and family with limited resources. They have seen their mother's tireless dedication which makes them appreciate and help them in their activities.

My daughter used to say that I am too busy every time, I worked too much but nowadays she is used to with the schedule. (Second interviewee)

7.6 Social Capital

Social Capital refers to resources that emerge from an individual or a group through the creation of a network of social ties. Usually associated with intangible resources that are symbolic of social cohesion (e.g. trust, reciprocity, mutual support (Cheliotis 2010.)) Social capital includes "trust, feelings of belonging and being valued (e.g. shared values) and networks of quality interactions, with a particular emphasis on bridging and linking (Dóra 2010). When I asked them about their identity, they feel that their identity changed a lot after being a single parent.

My friend's circle has been changed after I became a single mother. Some of them do not invite me to some of their functions or some trips they are going with couple family. Now a days I

have some new friends like my neighbours, my sons' friends' parents. Sometimes I invite them to my house for coffee and help them to take care of their kids so that they also help me sometimes when I am in need. (Second interviewee)

It is said that loneliness is one of the main challenges faced by single mothers as there is no other adult to share their problems of life (Raja 2019).

I perceive myself as a strong person who can handle many things on my own. About social identity, people see me as a strong person who doesn't hide the reality. (First interviewee)

I am an independent person by nature. I have been single for many years before marriage and it took me years to realize the situation. Since the last 3 years, I felt like this is my complete family. Now I can not imagine life without my children. (Fifth interviewee)

In Finland, most of the mothers go to work when the children are 1 year. They also went to work after the baby was 12 or 13 months. They are also doing as mothers of a couple families do. So, working as a single mother is normal. The principles of the society in terms of child-rearing often impact the livelihood of mothers (Forssén, Haataja, & Hakovirta 2005). The Only problem they face is that they have to keep their children for longer hours in day-care. They have only a few hours in the evening with the Children.

It is easy to be a working single mother if we have a flexible job and supportive co-workers. My kids think I worked a lot, but I have managed every schedule with them. It may be going to football with them, talking with them or playing with them. (Fifth interviewee)

8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Single parent family is a family that includes only one parent and children. As mentioned earlier there is a rapid increase in single mother families. Some argue that the single parent family has adverse effects on children, communities, and society. A single parent family is just an alternative form of family. These days, it's very common for kids to be in a single-parent family. Single parent family is common because of the high divorce rate and contradictions in marriage. Society used to believe that single-parent families only have a negative impact on children. It is a matter of fact that it has some advantages.

According to the research findings of Annice, Yarber, et al. (2010), the socio-economic status of single parent families depends on the employment position of that parent. Negative effects of single mother families for children can be minimized by sufficient job opportunities and proper social networks for single mothers. As there are two sides on a coin, in single parenthood challenges are very real but there are rewards too. "We can make a difference and be a successful single parent" (Child development 2019).

According to Foster (2016), single mothers are the doctor, teacher, nurse, maid, cook, referee, hero, provider, defender, protector, true superwoman. Single mothers should be proud of themselves. Single mothers need to know that they're not alone and that, just by being part of the family, they're doing a great job and helping their children become responsible adults. Parents and children experience some tough changes during the transition from the traditional family to a single parent family. The drawbacks can be balanced and overcome with the advantages.

To conclude single-parent families are also a complete family or as good as a normal family; they may just require a little more effort. Although a single mother has some challenges there is better bonding between members and a good sense of responsibilities. The main problem faced by single mothers living in Helsinki is difficult to manage the timetable of kids with their work-life, but they have been quite successful in managing the time. Talking about the

access of single mothers to information sources, supports and services, there should be a proper network so that single mothers could get the right information, supports and services when they are on need.

9 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During 3.5 years of bachelor's study, I have done different assignments, reports, projects and research which helped me to learn and experience many things. This is my first academic research experience which adds a lot in my learning process and develops my professional skills such as proper communication, decision making, time management. In the process of research starting from developing idea paper until the publication of the thesis, I learn about different processes to do the research work. I gained more technical knowledge about research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and different ethical considerations during the thesis process.

There have been many challenges during the thesis process from the very beginning. Choosing the relevant topic, searching work-life partner related to topics, finding the appropriate literature, decision making in every process, finding the interviewees and conducting interviews, presenting thesis into some conclusions and appropriate translation of the conclusions are some of the challenges I faced during my thesis. These challenges have helped me to expose various difficult situations and develop some kind of professionalism in me.

Through this research, I learned more about family structure in Finland and single parent family in Finland and their challenges and strengths being a single mother. After this research I am a bit clear that single parenthood is not a misfortune anymore, a single parent family is better than a dysfunctional family. As I have improved myself a lot after carrying out this research, I think it has helped me both academically and professionally. Now I think I am eligible for some professional work in the area of social welfare for single mothers and children as well as for further study, Master's degree, in social service.

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APPENDIX 1. ADVERTISEMENT IN WEBPAGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Are you a single mother? Please participate in a research!

Sonu Dawadi is studying Social Services at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (DIAK) and doing her final thesis on "*How single mothers experience parenthood in Helsinki/Espoo/Vantaa and what are the strengths and challenges faced by single mothers*". She is doing a qualitative research-oriented thesis and is looking for single mothers to interview in English. Thesis questions are about: bringing up children, economy, social network, social support, level of satisfaction, felt effect on parent or children, and social capital.

Pienperheyhdistys ry is Sonu's work life partner, which is why we are helping her to look for interviewees. If you are interested in talking about your experiences (in English), please schedule an interview time with Sonu. Interviews are held after 23 June, mostly at Pienperheyhdistys, Hämeentie 64, but if this location is not convenient for you, you can suggest another location to Sonu. Interview takes about an hour or so, and you can take your child/children with you.

Interview bookings and more info: Sonu Dawadi, sonu.dawadi@student.diak.fi

APPENDIX 2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General characteristics

Age:

No of Children:

Age and gender of children:

Year of Marriage or living together:

Year of divorce or separated:

How was your relationship with your ex-partner, spouse or husband in the beginning?

How did you arrive to this decision?

Is there something else you want to talk about?

How did you experience this interview?

Bringing up children

How did you arrive to this decision?

What kind of custody you have?

How is the child meeting both parents?

Economy

How are the children's expenses divided?

Are you getting any services and support from Government? If yes What?

Which services were most helpful?

Social network and Social support

Are you getting any services and support from Government? If yes What?

Which services were most helpful?

Level of satisfaction

Do you think you need more services? What?

What is missing in your life?

What are your coping mechanisms?

What is your favourite part about being a single mother?

What is your biggest struggle with being a single mother?

What motivates you in your everyday activities?

Perception of mother and children on single parenting

How do you feel or experienced as single mother?

How is the child meeting both parents?

What kind of custody you have?

Social capital

How has single motherhood effected your interpersonal identity and social identity?

How is being a working single mother affecting your relationship