

Organization of monomarental families in informal markets: A case study in the city of Trujillo, Perú

Organización de familias monomarentales en mercados informales: Un estudio de caso en la ciudad de Trujillo, Perú

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to share reflections on a study that focused on women who independently head their households within the commercial context of the Trujillo market. **Methodology:** A qualitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional approach was used, involving in-depth interviews conducted with a sample of 200 women managing single-mother households. **Results:** The findings revealed that 84.86% of the women had well-defined tasks, 80.25% struggled to fully meet their needs, 69.72% assumed clearly defined roles, 64.08% felt capable of supporting their households on their own, 57.75% found it challenging to lead a household independently, and 47.89% reported that consistently supporting their children with academic tasks was difficult. Additionally, the results showed that single-mother families experienced changes and transformations in the traditional structural image of the family model, as well as in value-based, attitudinal, and work performance aspects that sustain the family. **Conclusions:** The study highlighted the importance of the determination and resilience of these micro-entrepreneurial women, motivated by their commitment to supporting both their families and themselves.

Key words: Family Environment; Role of The Family; Family Unit; Kinship.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación fue compartir reflexiones sobre un estudio que tuvo como sujetos de análisis a mujeres que lideraban sus hogares solas en el contexto comercial del mercado de Trujillo. **Metodología:** Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, no experimental y transversal, mediante entrevistas a profundidad aplicadas a una muestra de 200 mujeres que conducían hogares monomarentales. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos revelaron que el 84.86% de las mujeres tenían tareas definidas, el 80.25% cubría sus necesidades de manera limitada, el 69.72% desempeñaba roles definidos, el 64.08% sentía que podía solventar su hogar de manera independiente, el 57.75% consideraba difícil el papel de liderar el hogar sola y el 47.89% señaló que acompañar a los hijos en las tareas académicas siempre resultaba complicado. Además, los resultados mostraron que las familias monomarentales experimentaban cambios y transformaciones en la imagen tradicional estructural del modelo familiar, así como en los aspectos valorativos, actitudinales y en el desempeño laboral que sustentaba a la familia. **Conclusiones:** Se destacó la importancia de la determinación y el coraje de estas mujeres microemprendedoras, motivadas por el sostenimiento tanto de sus hogares como de sí mismas.

Palabras clave: Medio familiar; papel de la familia; unidad familiar; parentesco.

INTRODUCTION

The family is the first social system, which is linked by blood and emotional ties that become a psychological and social support in each of the members that compose it. The family as the main system was a model of integral development, and even women only expected to develop within it. It is in charge of guaranteeing the integral development of individuals, becoming the main place for socialization and physical relationship among its members and which, in turn, can foster situations of exclusion, depending on its own characteristics (Serrano, 2021).

The family living space has been conceived as a bio-psycho-social territory marked by particular and unique meanings that are expressed in thoughts, feelings and actions of the family place, and that allow evidencing the belonging and identity to the family nucleus. Each family has its own history, is in constant change, develops in a particular context, which influences the social development of its members, transmits culture from generation to generation, has its own rules and limits, has situations of change, conflicts and/or crisis (Cigoli & Gozzoli, 2003).

Families are studied from different fields of action, understanding that it is not only enough to understand the family as consisting of a man and a woman, as a duality, but that there are forms of family organization and ways of relating to each other. There are new processes of family organization that have caused processes of contraction and expansion of family groups (Vera Vergara *et al.*, 2020), being one of them the monomarental families and are led by a woman. The most traditional conceptualization of the family is that it is an organization that is the product of social dynamics and that is in constant transformation, determining the configuration of individuals in a particular socio-historical context from which it emerges and is transformed into different types of families.

At the end of the 20th century, families with a structure other than nuclear or extended were considered atypical and in some cases were labeled as dysfunctional, because they did not present conditions for the proper upbringing of children. It is only in the 21st century that family diversity is accepted and the transformations that give rise to new internal models in each

family unit are internalized, which changed the functioning and therefore the psychosocial adjustment of each member (Barrón, 2002).

The concept of monomarental families has sociological heritage (Avilés, 2012; Samaranch & Di Nella, 2011) and has existed over time, but it was not recognized and accepted as it is now; existing children out of wedlock, separations occurred for various reasons, the diversity of social problems and highlighted the mothers who when facing all this ended up psychologically ill or unbalanced.

Everything that happens within the family is reflected in the person and their way of acting, presenting singularities typical of a certain group, of a cultural context, and tends to be classified according to structure and functions, emphasizing in this study the single-parent. On the other hand, the social organization of the family is recognized, with different moments in its development, impacted by situations of change, as in some cases where families were nuclear or extended and became single-parent or other types, intensifying tensions, conflicts and/or crises (Aguilar-Díaz *et al.*, 2021).

This research has the approach of Minuchin (1969), where it is pointed out that the family structure is partially fixed and stable for the fulfillment of tasks and for protection from the outside, it must be adapted to the stages of evolutionary development and to the needs of each member. It is pointed out that each family is unique and that it is regulated by norms established among its members, which in turn have limits and serve as a reference for the actions of each of the members.

Each family has a life and social development cycle starting from the structure, the conformation of the members, the establishment as the nucleus of the society and the particularities that cause and generate discussions and aggressions of all kinds, aggravating and deepening the crisis of the social system (Gonzalez-Quñones & Restrepo-Chavarriaga, 2010). Each family dynamic has its own objectives, goals, it is unique, unequalled, different and reinforces the way of life of each of the members, norms and rules are set, making ways of life and individualization improve coexistence and facing social, economic, labor, educational, cultural and other problems (Avilés, 2015).

Monomarental families have social, cultural, political, economic and emotional effects, which arise among a conciliation of the work and personal worlds, organization of spaces within the home, recreation, sports, their problems and their impact on political incidence; which allows reflection on these family contexts, their transformations and understanding their demands (Suárez Bimbatti, 2021).

The present study asks the following question: How are monomarental families organized in a market in Trujillo? And as hypothesis: Monomarental families present structural, value, attitudinal and functional changes; they have generated new consumption patterns through the opportunity of transformation in the role of care, family support; new spending strategies from economic independence, new changes of resources in the process of accompaniment and responsibility with the children, being the objectives: To analyze the organization of monomarental families, to describe the changes of monomarental families in structure, value, attitude and function.

METHODOLOGY

The research was descriptive, non-experimental, with a transversal design and qualitative approach, based on the organization of monomarental families, taking into account the objective of analyzing, describing and knowing the families in the structural, evaluative, attitudinal and functional aspects; starting from the experiences and insights, developing the inductive - deductive, analytical - synthetic and statistical methods of the Social Sciences.

The study consisted of in-depth interviews, applied to a sample of 200 women from a Trujillo market in the district of Trujillo, Peru. The study was carried out over a year of research, with an average of 20 interviews per month; The inclusion criteria were: women heads of household of monomarental families, ranging in age from 21 to 53 years, 30% of whom live with their extended family: parents, siblings and a relative who helps with the work with the children. These women are 50% single mothers, 30% are separated, 10% are widowed and the remaining 10% are women who decided to raise their children alone, for personal valuation and to revalue the role of women.

An in-depth interview was applied, previously after having given informed consent on a voluntary basis, taking measures to preserve privacy, as well as the data were anonymized, ensuring that participants could not be identified (Del Percio, 2020).

An in-depth interview was conducted with the key informants in order to transcribe the testimonies, product of the interview and then codify it, and perform the analysis and ideographic assessment of each of the items considered; which was used through dialogue, with their interview guide and record, using the categories of a family from the structural, evaluative and functional; in turn, the survey was used, which was extracted from the operability matrix of variables and the questionnaire instrument with closed questions was used. A bibliographic review was carried out at international, national and local level in university repositories, databases and digital platforms, reviewing indexed books with peer review, scientific articles and research.

The ethical considerations taken into account when applying the data collection instruments were respect, confidentiality, and the individuality of each of the respondents and interviewees. Likewise, the informed consent form was signed before the application of the questionnaire, which was anonymous, and the information was processed with initials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Monomarental families have as heads of the family women who assume the role of a courageous woman and this has caused changes in the family dynamics in the structural, value-based, attitudinal and functional aspects, highlighting socioeconomic inequality, especially when talking about single parenthood or single motherhood in which exclusion, instability and the state of vulnerability are highlighted, highlighting the changes in lifestyles and the opportunities of the environment that is presented to them (Santibañez *et al.*, 2018).

This is complemented by Hutasoit & Brahmana (2021), who point out that the impact of single mothers on the family environment emphasizes

the diverse responsibilities that these women must assume, not only in terms of economic provision, but also in the emotional and educational spheres of their children. It focuses on how single mothers, often facing socioeconomic and cultural challenges, manage to balance their multiple roles, maintaining family stability and fostering an environment conducive to the growth of their children.

In the qualitative data, it should be noted that every change and transformation that the family undergoes is part of the same society, causing social dynamics to have challenges in their actions, which causes families to have an integral vision of each member and their context, expressed in the interrelation of individual, family, social and cultural processes. It is necessary to emphasize that social norms including experiences are analyzed and the importance of education and constant adaptation to social changes is highlighted, emphasizing that, despite the difficulties, many single mothers manage to provide a stable and enriching family environment for the growth of their children.

Structurally, it is observed that mothers lead the household, presenting daily difficulties that lead to organizing and managing the domestic unit and trying to reconcile work, family and personal life; mothers often have little flexibility at work, their schedules and work calendars are often different from those of their children. Functionally, they perform the functions of father and mother, facing all the economic expenses, the overload of activities with the care and protection of the children and the work center in turn. In terms of value, society has a macho bias, and they are often excluded and present difficulties for the integration of its members.

It is appreciated that the family is considered as a collective subject, being the vital-space for the care and protection of its members, although it does not always provide security due to the conditions in which it is structured (Páez-Martínez, 2017), which means that when it is single-parent the mother has the role of providing security and protection by doing it alone. In this regard, we find the study by Martínez & Rodríguez (2024), which points out that there are strategies used by single mothers to manage the double burden of work and household chores, which is exacerbated in a context of economic and social

uncertainty. These results reveal that, although remote work and flexible work schedules offered new opportunities for many single mothers, these options were not equally accessible to all, since most of them are informal, limiting their possibilities for economic recovery and affecting their emotional wellbeing, thus exacerbating and demonstrating the importance of the support measures they need to get ahead.

Gómez & Pérez (2022), also focus on analyzing the implementation of social policies on family that have been implemented in Europe and Latin America and show how a group of vulnerable mothers, because they are alone, face economic and social challenges and how they achieve economic, social and emotional well-being, identifying processes that occur in health, education and economic support, noting that there is integration, access to services and support measures, and evidence of support networks. However, there are still barriers to gender equality. Dor's study also highlights the psychological and emotional advantages that many single mothers experience by raising their children in an environment that reflects their personal values and desires. Despite the difficulties, many women report a high degree of satisfaction in their roles as single mothers and especially in running their household.

The research highlights the importance of resilience and community support, suggesting that, with the right resources, single mothers can not only meet their challenges, but also thrive in their life choices. This invites a reassessment of societal perceptions of single motherhood and its impact on child development (Dor, 2021).

Figure 1.
Transformation in the role of caregiving and family support

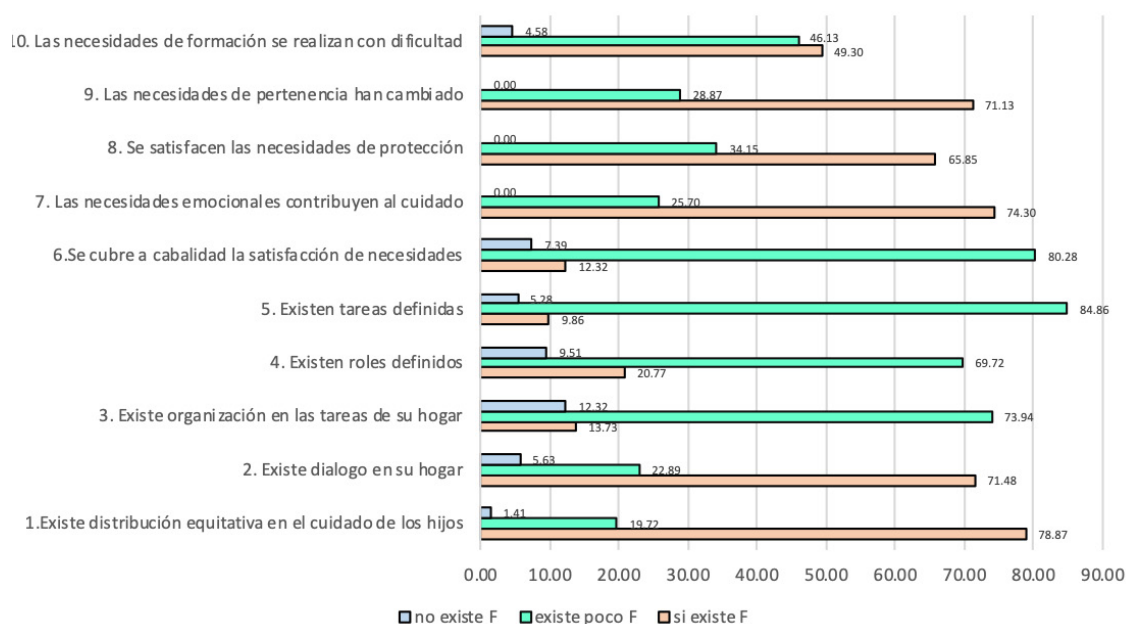


Figure 1 shows the transformation that occurs in monomarental families in the care and support of the household, emphasizing that 78.87% indicate that there is an equitable distribution, 71.48% indicate that there is dialogue, but the contradiction is that the highest percentage (73.94%) emphasizes the lack of organization. At the same time, 69.72% of the respondents stated that there are few defined roles, 84.86% stated that there are few defined tasks, 80.28% stated that the satisfaction of needs is poorly met, 74.30% stated that there are always emotional needs that contribute to care, 65.85% stated that protection needs are always expressed, 71.13% stated that the needs of belonging have changed and 49.30% stated that education needs are fulfilled with care.

All of the above shows that there have been structural changes, highlighting the fact that mothers lead the household and present daily difficulties involved in organizing and managing the domestic unit and trying to reconcile work, family and personal life with family care and support, but emphasizes that some substantial perennial changes were noted with the option that they do exist and in others, changes that were few and, in some cases, did not exist at all.

Another of the changes that were generated are the consumption patterns, so the change arose

when adapting to new patterns of acquisition of goods and services generating a new family with economic independence and strategies to get ahead. This is highlighted by the attitudinal aspect, where the mothers of monomarental families have double work (at home and outside work as economic support), presenting little flexibility in their work schedules, which is aggravated when the work schedules are different from those of their children, having a significant task and added to the only economic income in the home coming from the mother.

Families have changed their forms of consumption, due to the new organization they have in their families, modifying their structures, discourses, practices and traditional values, which oscillate between the modern and which according to Dreisziger (2019) is a new way of understanding the demands of modern society. In previous decades, monomarental families were prejudiced about incomplete families led by women, now they are a choice of women who do not wish to join any man.

Other authors, such as Khan *et al.* (2022) also examine the challenges faced by single mothers in the socio-cultural context of rural areas, revealing that these women face a series of difficulties ranging from social stigmatization to lack of access to economic and educational

resources. This research is intertwined with the results that have been evidenced by coinciding cultural norms and social expectations held by each family.

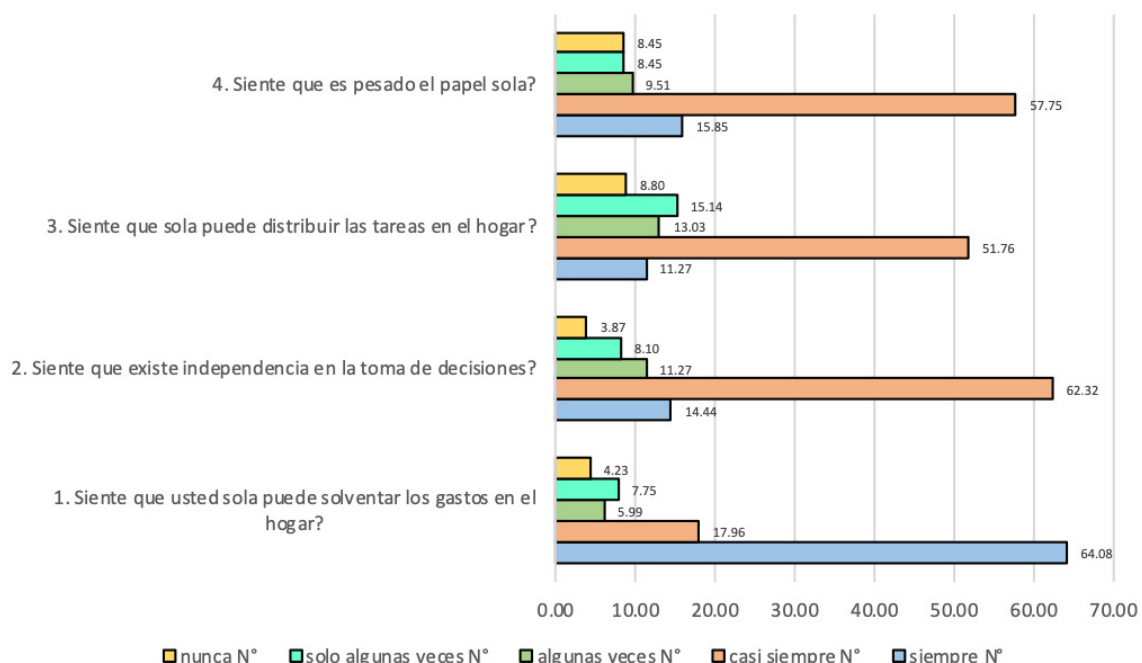
The role of the mother within monomarental families is brought to the foreground, as pointed out by Bowen, where the family is a system full of changes, conditioned to the forces of the context providing balance in the actions it develops, but it is where the role of father and mother is emphasized. This is reinforced by the article by López & García (2021), which emphasizes the study of mental health, including social support, economic situation and family responsibilities, due to the role they play in their homes.

It reinforces those single mothers experience high levels of stress, especially related to economic burden and difficulties in balancing work and childcare; identifying protective factors, such as social support from family and friends, which partially mitigated the negative effects of stress. The psychological well-being of mothers improved in those cases where there were strong support networks and where mothers managed to find a balance between their work and family responsibilities, highlighting the importance of developing interventions aimed at reducing stress and improving resilience in this group of women, especially in contexts of social and economic vulnerability.

In the authors' study, Karunanayake *et al.* (2021) examine how socioeconomic context and family dynamics influence women's psychological well-being. The results indicate that although they face significant difficulties, such as financial burden and lack of emotional support, many of them also experience deep personal satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment in their role as mothers as well as highlight the importance of having support networks and community resources to mitigate the stress associated with single motherhood.

It is important to emphasize that there is research that highlights the role of single mothers and fathers, such as Shorey & Pereira (2022), highlighting the parenting of single parents, identifying common patterns, challenges and parenting strategies focusing on social stigmas and traditional gender expectations. Many single parents manage to provide a loving and stable environment for their children, dealing with additional pressures related to work-family balance and lack of social or emotional support. In turn, there is a transformation in their parental identity, adopting broader and more multifaceted roles that include economic provision and active participation in the emotional and educational care of their children, adapting to the changing socioeconomic and cultural context.

Figure 2.
Consumption patterns of monomarental families



In this way, Figure 2 shows the results regarding spending strategies, with 64.08% indicating that they always feel they can pay the bills at home alone, 6.32% indicating that they are almost always independent in decision-making, 51.76% indicating that they almost always feel that they can distribute household chores alone, and 57.75% indicating that they almost always feel that the role of the household is heavy. What is observed is closely related to the changes in the resources involved in the process of accompaniment and responsibility towards the children, especially if they were accustomed to being in a nuclear or extended family, causing social instability.

It is necessary to highlight the organization of the monomarental family, where it is the mother who leads the household, which must achieve the acceptance of the members to a type of family different from the traditional one, to know what each member feels assuming maternal and paternal roles, to generate reciprocity, to cooperate, to share activities generating solidarity to gain trust among them and to redouble the sense of belonging.

In terms of value, emphasis is placed on the predominantly male-dominated society, which often excludes women because of the way they are formed, presenting difficulties for the integration of its members in the different spaces they occupy in general; and in terms of attitudes, having to face the family situation in terms of power, rules, limits and dealing with everything that comes their way, highlighting the role of the caring mother who can handle anything, relating to the accompaniment and responsibility with the children.

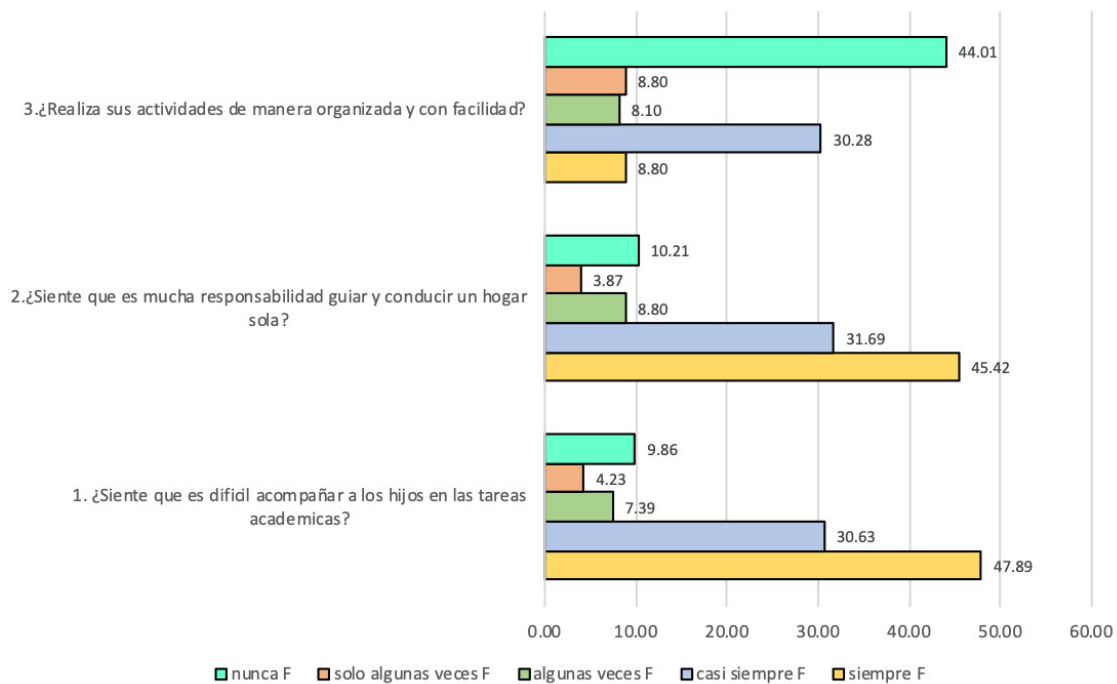
It is important to point out that the valuation of monomarental families is presented in two ways, one valuing the role of women linked to the organization and distribution of power in the family, social mandates, and forms of relationships, and the other marginalizing the woman who leads a household, understanding that she is left alone and will not be able to handle the responsibility of running the household (Cigoli & Gozzoli, 2003).

In the same vein, Susan Harkness (2022) examines how childbearing and divorce events affect the economic situation of single mothers, arguing that the birth of children and the dissolution of marriages contribute significantly to the accumulation of economic disadvantage. These experiences not only impact single mothers' immediate economic income, but also increase their long-term poverty risk, creating a cycle that is difficult to break.

Harkness (2022) suggests that, to mitigate the negative effects of childbearing and divorce on the family economy and to get in front of monomarental families, it is crucial to implement interventions that provide financial support and access to social services. This could help reduce the economic vulnerability of single mothers and improve their quality of life and that of their children, and would highlight the importance of the socioeconomic context in developing effective support strategies for their own families, in which mutual support plays a key role.

It is important to highlight the resilience and strength of women who, despite adversity, find ways to adapt and overcome obstacles, having a profound vision of the realities faced by single mothers and the need for a change in social perceptions in society and in support structures to improve their quality of life and that of their children. The mothers face within their process, strategies that single mothers use to get ahead, including support networks that often are not from families, but support networks among women, where they practice forms of informal economy or form associations of micro-enterprises, including the search for employment by weaving nets.

Figure 3.
Accompaniment and responsibility towards children



What is indicated as a priority, evidences and is related to the data in Figure 3 where the results on the accompaniment and responsibility with the children are shown, with 47.89% indicating that they always feel it is difficult to accompany their children in academic tasks, 45.42% indicating that they always feel it is a lot of responsibility to guide and lead a household alone, 44.01% indicating that they never carry out activities in an organized manner and with ease.

The accompaniment and responsibility for the care of the children is given in the process of growth and learning, changing when it is given by the father and mother together, and different when it is given only by the mother, making the responsibility to move the family forward more difficult. This shows that the organization, guidance, management and accompaniment of the children is a constant process, but when the families are monomarental families it becomes more difficult.

Within the research on the topic in the article by Rees *et al.* (2023), which addresses the socioeconomic challenges faced by single parents and how these can impact family well-being, they highlight significant financial limitations, which can affect their ability to provide a stable and enriching environment for

their children, highlighting the importance of policies that support these parents, including access to financial resources, education and health services, to promote an environment that fosters resilience and the comprehensive development of the family, there being a need to build community support networks and encourage participation in programs that strengthen parenting and professional skills.

Contribution to knowledge

The study on monomarental families can contribute to the knowledge of family dynamics and structure, allowing a holistic understanding of the social reality. In addition, it suggests to professionals working with families to improve their interventions, making it possible to propose policies and network strategies that meet their needs, strengthen them and contribute to their well-being and development in society. Likewise, this study will make a significant contribution in the field of families, directing attention to this issue.

Limitations

One limitation identified is related to the work schedules of the women who lead the households. These women, being busy 95% of the morning, made it necessary to adjust the times to conduct the interviews at appropriate moments.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study highlight several characteristics and challenges associated with female-headed monomarental families. In the first place, it is evident that these women assume the main role in the guidance, counseling and care of their children. Thirty-five percent of them receive support from their families of origin, who contribute financially, offer housing, collaborate in caregiving tasks and provide emotional support.

In addition, these families have experienced a significant transformation in traditional roles, especially in terms of power, leadership, communication and economic independence. These women, as leaders of their households, demonstrate a remarkable ability to cope with day-to-day demands and move their families forward.

The responsibility that falls upon them is manifested in both the public and private spheres. They must divide their time between household chores and generating income, which often results in an overload of activities and physical and emotional exhaustion.

Likewise, these women face a high degree of involvement in various areas, including housework, income provision, participation in school activities for their children and their comprehensive care. However, these responsibilities are limited by factors such as financial constraints, insecurity and uncertainty.

Finally, the reorganization of these families generates emotional and social risks that affect their dynamics and limit their ability to recover spaces at the individual, family and social levels. These challenges underscore the need to support female-headed monomarental families through policies and strategies that strengthen their well-being and integral development.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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