

Single Parenting in a Changing Environment and its Effect on the Education of Children in Migili Community, Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

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Abstract

The study assessed the influence of Single Parenting in a changing environment on Children's Education in Migili Community, Obi local Government area of Nasarawa State. Single parenting is a very critical social issue that can have significant effects on a child's academic success. Four specific objectives guided the study. Survey research design was employed. The population for the study was 254. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques was used to select 20 parents and 30 students from JSS students in a community school. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Mean and standard deviation was used in analysing the data. Findings shows that death of partner, divorce, domestic violence are the causes of single parenting in Migili community with a grand mean of 3.38. Aggressive behaviour, emotional trauma, poor academic performance is reported as the causes of single parenting on children's education with a grand mean of 2.97. Financial strain, lack of child support is some of the challenges faced by single parents with a grand mean of 2.88. Also, financial empowerment, skill acquisition, counselling services is the possible solution and coping strategies identified with a grand mean of 3.14. conclusively, single parenting has a significant influence on a child's education. Therefore, it was recommended that Government and Non-governmental organization should visit Migili community and offer support towards children's education.

Keywords: Single parenting, Nurturance and discipline, Cultural apprentice, Social Support System

Introduction

The family unit is heterosexual, living together and determined by biological ties. This reflects the ways in which families experience relatedness, which increasingly includes non-biologically related individuals and a focus being placed on the practical contribution made by different individuals to family life and caring responsibilities through the roles performed and tasks undertaken (Walsh & Mason, 2018). Family is defined as two or more persons who love and care for each other and share resources, responsibility for decisions, values and

goals and have a commitment to one another over time. (American Association of family & Consumer Sciences, AAFC,2020). Families provide emotional, physical, and economic aid to members. It is characterized by intimacy, intensity, continuity and commitment among the members (Association for Children and Family, ACF,2000).

Family background is key to a student's life in and outside of school. It is the most important influence on student's learning and includes factors such as socio-economic status, two

parents versus single parent households, divorce, parenting practice and aspirations. (Hill & Tyson, 2019). The environment at home is a primary socialization agent and influences child's interest in school, and aspiration for the future. The parents are mainly responsible for the educational and career development of children, but divorce and separation of various kinds resulting from death may leave the roles in the hands of a single parent (Hetherington, 2022).

Single parenting refers to a family structure in which one parent is responsible for raising children without the direct support of a partner. This arrangement can result from divorce, separation, the choice to have a child alone, or the death of a partner. According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2021), single parenting is a situation in which a "single adult is raising one or more children without the presence of a partner," highlighting that these families often face unique challenges, including financial strain, time constraints, and the need for strong social support networks. Amato (2021), emphasize that while single parents face more challenges than two-parent households, the outcomes for children in single-parent families can be positive if the parent provides emotional warmth, stability and adequate resources. The idea that single parents are disadvantaged by default has been challenged, with a growing recognition of resilience and adaptability in single-parent families. Single parenting is a critical social issue that can have significant effects on a child's academic success. Children who are raised in a single-family home are likely to be at risk of not reaching their full potential. Such students within Migili educational system encounter many challenges in their family lives and may carry these

challenges into the classroom. The family structure, ideally, provides a sense of security and stability that is necessary for children. When there is a breakdown in the family structure, it may have tremendous impact on the children, including their ability to function ordinarily or achieve academically (Rumberger, 2021). In these situations, children no longer have two parents to depend on. Consequently, the children rely on one parent to meet most, if not all their needs. With limited finances, time and availability, parents are less likely to provide the needed support for the children.

Landown and Ziba (2022) define children as "cultural apprentices," emphasizing that children's learning and development are deeply influenced by their social environments and interactions with caregivers, peers, and communities. Parenting refers to the activities, responsibilities and practices involved in raising children, including nurturing, providing for, educating and guiding the children through their development. American Psychological Association (APA), focus on parenting as a multifaceted process that includes both "nurturance" (emotional support and attachment) and "discipline" (guidance on behaviour and boundaries). Parenting is recognized as both a role and a set of practices that influence the child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. In a more contemporary context, parenting is not just about caregiving but also about "co-constructing the child's sense of self" (Gergen *et al.*, 2024), meaning that the relationship between parent and child is interactive and reciprocal.

Single parenting is on the increase in both developed and developing countries, (Centre for Marriage and Families, 2020). About 85% of single parent families are headed by women and

almost half of these households are living below poverty line, this affects children's participation in education due to economic hardship that their families face. Marsigilo and Amato (2021) claimed that the absence of a male adult is detrimental to a child's development, which may explain the disproportionate pathologies found among the children of single parent households. The presence of both mother and father contributes to the health development of a child which is very important in the education of the children hence the absence of an adult male in the house seems to be a disadvantage for children. Chiu (2023) argue that children in developed countries like the United States of America face the challenge of having lower academic achievement. These children score lower because they have fewer intangible resources (such as parent time and cultural communication) which are important to children.

In developing countries, the challenges that are facing children found in single parent are not different from those in developed countries. Salami and Alawode (2022) revealed that, Nigerian children raised by single parents have poorer academic achievement, high rate of absentees, lower self-esteem and lower tolerance. In South Africa, Wilcox, Lippman and Whitney (2019) explain that many children in South Africa are reared by single parents for example only 36% of children live with both parents, this differs with Egypt where 91% live with both parents. UNESCO Institute for statistics (2006) conducted a study in Colombia, Egypt, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Peru. The study involved a sample of 86,727 secondary school children and it was about whether living with parents has effect on education of secondary school students. The result were poor attendance and lower academic grades for single parent students though children raised by single mothers succeeded

academically compared to those raised by single fathers. It as a result of this that the researcher dim it fit to examine Single Parenting and its effect on the Education of children in Migili Community, Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Single parenting is a very critical social issue that can have significant effects on children academic success. Children who are raised in a single-family home are likely to be at risk of not reaching their full potential. Such students within Migili educational system encounter many challenges in their family lives and may carry these challenges into the classroom. In many situations, children raised within a single parent household rely on one parent to meet most, if not all their needs. With limited finances, time and availability, parents are less likely to provide the needed adequate support. In the present economic difficulties in Nigeria, it is difficult in most cases to meet the basic needs of the family even with both parents working and earning a monthly wage. In addition, the society has evolved into critical social dynamics, where young people seem to face issues of anxiety and depression resulting from unmet needs. The society suffers the consequences of such dysfunctionality. This study looks at the overall effect of single parenting on the education of children in Migili Community, Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine Single Parenting and its effect on the education of children in Migili Community, Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State,

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the causes of single-parenting in Migili Community in

- Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.
2. Determine the influence of single parenting on children education in Migili Community Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.
3. Identified challenges faced by the single parent in Migili Community Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.
4. Determine coping strategies to the challenges identified.

Methodology

Research Design

the study adopted the descriptive survey research design in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. It can be generalizable and is considered appropriate for this study

Area of Study

The study was conducted in Migili Community in Obi Local Government Area in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is in the town of Obi.

Population of the Study

The population for the study is single parents and students of junior secondary in Migili community school totaling two

hundred and fifty- four thousand (254).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was 50 respondents which comprises of 20 parents and 30 students. simple random techniques were adopted to select 30 students from JSS. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 20 single parents that have children in the community school and was present on the day of the interview

Method of Data Collection

Data collection was employed through the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire was drafted to suit the purpose of the research, the questionnaire was titled 'Single Parenting on Children's Education Questionnaire (SPCE)

Data Analysis Techniques

The raw data collected from the primary source was analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation.

Results

Findings from Table 1 reveals the causes of single parenting in Migili community in Obi local Government Area in Nasarawa State. The findings show that all the items were considered as the causes of single parenting with a Grand mean of 3.38 The item that was rated highest was death of partner ($\bar{X}$ 3.90) and the item that was rated lowest was divorce (3.10) and separation (3.10).

Table 1: Causes of Single Parenting in Migili Community in Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

S/N	Items	Mean $\bar{X}$	Standard Deviation
1	Death of partner	3.90	.30779
2	Divorce	3.10	.30779
3	Separation	3.10	.30779
4	Unplanned pregnancy	3.55	.51042
5	Domestic violence	3.50	.51299
6	Financial difficulties	3.20	.69585
7	Family interference	3.35	.67082
	Grand mean	3.38	0.47

Findings from Table 2 reveals the influence of single parenting in Migili community in Obi local Government Area in Nasarawa State. The findings show that all the items were considered as the influences of single parenting on

children's education with a grand mean of 2.97 except with item absence from school ($\bar{x}$ 2.00), bullying of the child at school (2.15) and limited time for care(2.45) that was disagreed upon as an influence on child's education.

Table 2: Influence of Single Parenting on Children's Education in Migili Community in Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

S/N	Items	Mean $\bar{X}$	Std.dev
1	Emotional trauma	4.00	.00000
2	Poor academic performance at school	3.25	.78640
3	Psychological problem	2.85	.58714
4	Absence from school	2.00	.72548
5	Relying on peers	3.00	.00000
6	Keeping to himself/herself	2.80	.41039
7	Aggressive behavior	4.70	8.59682
8	Bullying of the child at school	2.15	.58714
9	Limited time for care	2.45	.68633
10	Teachers' interference toward study	2.80	.61559
11	Depression	2.75	.78640
12	Helping homework by parent	3.00	.00000
	Grand mean	2.97	1.148

Findings from Table 3 reveals the challenges faced by single parent in Migili community in Obi local Government Area in Nasarawa State. The findings show that all the items were considered as the

challenges faced by single parent with a grand mean of 2.88. The item that was rated highest was financial strain ($\bar{x}$ 3.85) and the item that was disagreed upon is limited time for personal care (2.00).

Table 3: Challenges faced by Single Parents in Migili Community in Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State?

	Items	Mean $\bar{X}$	Std.dev
1	Financial strain	3.85	.36635
2	Emotional stress	3.10	.85224
3	Lack of child care support	2.60	.68056
4	Limited time for personal care	2.00	.85840
	Grand mean	2.88	0.68

Findings from Table 4 reveals the possible solutions to the challenges identified by single parent in Migili community in Obi local Government Area in Nasarawa State. The findings show that all the items were considered as the coping strategies/

possible solution to some challenges identified by single parent with a grand mean of 2.88 except with the item seeking support from family and friends ($\bar{x}$ 2.40) and community support (2.15) that was disagreed upon.

Table 4: Coping Strategies to the Challenge Identified in Migili Community in Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

S/N	Items	Mean $\bar{X}$	Std.dev
1	Financial assistance	3.25	.44426
2	Educational support for children	3.55	.51042
3	Seeking support from family and friends	2.40	1.04630
4	Joining community groups	3.10	.55251
5	Parenting classes	3.05	.60481
6	Counselling services	3.30	.47016
7	Community support	2.15	.81273
8	Skill acquisition	3.55	.51042
9	Entrepreneurship	3.15	.36635
10	Empowerment	3.95	.22361
	Grand mean	3.14	0.55

Discussions

The findings in Table 1 shows that all the items were considered as the causes of single parenting with a Grand mean of 3.38. This is in agreement with the findings of Sinisar and Tammpuu (2018) who stated that single parenthood occurs as result of death of one parent where another parent remains to raise children alone. Premarital sex being among the causes of single parent families is also common among young people. According to Akinade, (2022) divorce can cause the increase of single parent families. Hill and Tyson (2019) state that separation and divorce are common phenomena in the community and represent a major life stressor for individuals with potentially strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of the family especially children.

Findings in Table 2 reveals emotional trauma, poor academic performance, psychological problem, absence from school, relying on peers, keeping to oneself, aggressive behavior, bullying, limited time for care, depression as influence of single parenting on child's education. Generally single parent children experience negative influence in their development as far as their education is concerned. Some of the

influences are economic hardship, lack of guidance and counselling, lack of parental care, poor academic outcomes, poverty, early marriage, high rate of school dropout, absenteeism and indiscipline in schools.

Findings in Table 3 reveals challenges experienced by single parent such as financial strain, emotional stress, loneliness, limited time for personal care and lack of child care support. One of the most significant challenges that single-parent face is financial instability. Single-parent households often rely on a single income, which may be insufficient to cover the costs of living, including housing, food, clothing, and education-related expenses. Davis-Kean (2024) show that financial strain can result in lower academic achievement, as children from low-income families may have fewer resources for tutoring, extracurricular activities, or access to educational materials. Financial constraints can also lead to greater stress on the student, further impeding their academic performance, (Hatcher et al. ,2023).

Findings in Table 4 shows financial empowerment, community support, skill acquisition, entrepreneurship, parenting classes, are coping strategies for single parents. Protective factors, such as strong

relationships with teachers, involvement in extracurricular activities and access to community resources, can help mitigate the negative effects of growing up in a single-parent household. Additionally, Masten, (2021) revealed that developing time management skills, emotional regulation and self-advocacy, can help students navigate the challenges of growing in a single parent family. According to Lopez (2024), emotional stability and a strong support network are key factors in helping single-parent succeed despite facing challenges.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Children who are raised in a single-family home are likely to be at risk of not reaching their full potential. Such students within Migili educational system encounter many challenges in their family lives and may carry these challenges into the classroom. The family structure, ideally, provides a sense of security and stability that is necessary for children. When there is a breakdown in the family structure, it may have tremendous impact on the children, including their ability to function academically. If the family is provided with the necessary support system, the challenges of single parenting can be overcome. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government and Non-Government Organization in Nasarawa State should offer support towards distressed children especially in the area of education.
2. Migili community schools should constantly organize sensitization lectures for children on coping strategies, developing life skills needed for survival and changing behavior. These will ameliorate the effects of single parents' effects on

children.

3. Home Economics extension agents can create the avenues where students can learn saleable skills that is economically viable for both students and parents

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