

SINGLE PARENTING AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the effects that single parenting can bring to the emotional development of students at primary school as it is more commonly seen among single-parent families, taking into account what makes this particular type of parenting both specific to single-parent families and typical for single-parent children. With an increasing number of children today being raised by a single parent, there is also an increasing need to understand what this means for their emotions. This qualitative and quantitative study explores how parenting styles, economic hardships, and social support networks interlock. The empirical findings indicate that single-parent households may face different issues. First of all, the shortage of finances and less time for emotional investment is a great limitation. However, that might not outweigh the strengths based on parent-child relationships, good communications, and community support. The research suggests that children from single-parent homes can grow up with surprising resilience and emotional well-being when supported by stable relationships. The study also stresses forming relationships with teachers, friends, and other relatives that will help them develop positively emotionally. The study further proposes that teachers and the makers of educational policy should strive for developing programs that will be supportive to all single-parent families for optimum emotional development of children. This paper sets out in general to add to understanding of the interaction between single parenting and emotional development. It is hoped that this input could be helpful too in informing practice and policy at many levels to support children in all kinds of family circumstances.

Keywords: Single Parenting, Emotional Development, Resilience, Support Systems, Primary School.

Introduction

There are many factors that determine the emotional development of a child, but family structure is one critical influence on their psychological health, social competencies, and general well-being. In the past decades, single-parent households have become very common throughout the world, with more than a quarter of children in the United States living in a single-parent house. These changes resonate with wider societal movements--economic crises, cultural shifts, and the evolving dynamics between marriage and family life--making the understanding of single parents and their special needs as well as options very important in shaping healthy emotional development in children.

Being a single parent poses a variety of different challenges that may affect emotional health. Money constraints often tend to be the most dramatic, simply because a single-parent family is usually likely to have relatively lower household incomes than that of the two-parent family. Such financial stress can further aggravate the inconveniences of meeting the children's basic needs, such as quality

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education and health care, and extracurricular activities. In addition, single parents often experience time constraints due to work obligations and childcare, which reduces the amount of time they have to spend with children or engage in emotionally intimate interactions with them. Lack of time can limit getting a chance to develop a sense of secure attachment and to interact effectively and communicate well—an imperative for emotional development. The emotional experience of children in single-parent families tends to be quite varied. Some will have a low level of security, anxiety, or social stigma, while others develop an excellent capacity for resiliency and coping. Research has indicated that children in single-parent families are likely to have increased risks for behavioral problems and emotional distress but that these results are not simply the result of the absence of the second parent. Quality of parenting and supportive relationships, together with the available resources in the community, can have great influence on how children navigate their emotional landscape. Indeed, most children in single-parent homes thrive and are good and adaptable, with high emotional intelligence.

This paper seeks to explore the relationship between single parenting and the emotional development of primary school students. It analyses the interplay of different parenting styles, socioeconomic factors, and support systems to give an all-round view of how single parenting influences children's emotional well-being. What are the specific difficulties that are created for single parents and through which risk factors do they get transmitted to children? What protective factors can be applied to strengthen the emotional resilience of children in single-parent families? How might educators and community resources be best utilized to serve these children appropriately? Much of the scope of this research will center on the need for stability in relationship and effective communication as a vehicle for positive emotional growth. The availability of supportive adults—families, teachers, community members—is critically important in providing much-needed emotional scaffolding that allows children to work through the challenges they face. As such, school environments cannot be ignored as spaces where the advocacy for children in single-parent families must be promoted. Educators must be able to identify particular needs of these children and enact practices that promote inclusion and emotional well-being. This paper seeks to add to the already diverse literature about single-parent families and their children. The paper aims at offering relevant information for educators, mental health professionals, and policymakers by emphasizing the difficulties and strengths natural to these family patterns. The emotional development of children in single-parent families is important, not only for the well-being of the individual but also for the health of our community. This is an era of changing family systems, and so it becomes necessary to foster the kind of community which fosters support for all children.

Background Theory

Child development understanding in relation to the emotional development of a child from a single-parent family requires a broader-based theoretical approach mapping across a range of understandings in psychology and sociology. The background theory aims to contextualize the paper within established frameworks as well, because according to UGC guidelines of research, it is very important to develop theoretical grounding for research.

- **Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory is at the heart of emotional development. The theory was initially developed by John Bowlby and later extended by Mary Ainsworth. This theory suggests that the quality of early relationships between children and their caregivers forms the framework for emotional and social development. Attachment dynamics in single-parent families may be different from those in two-parent homes. For example, because the single parent may be anxious about the stress of finances or his work commitment, the quality of emotional engagement may be compromised, leading to insecure attachment styles in children. Usually children with an insecure attachment suffer a lot of emotional deregulation that might result in anxiety, behavioral problems, or inability to form relations.

- **Ecological Systems Theory**

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is a broader perspective in appreciating how individual development collaborates with its environment. This theory thus suggests that a child's development is as a result of the influence of various layers in their environment; from more immediate settings of family and school to wider societal contexts. That said, single-parent households have a range of interconnected systems that interact to condition the emotional landscape of the child—including economic conditions, supportive community networks, and educational institutions. For instance, school and neighborhood resources may be sources of resilience that boost children's ability to empower themselves despite a relationship with members of the family which may not be suitable.

- **Resilience Theory**

Resilience theory focuses on a human's adaptability for favorable change despite having adverse elements. Consider the case of single-parent family's children, many of whom maintain relative resilience under adversity; resiliency skills help them navigate their lives. Some of the factors which have been considered important in resilience are self-efficacy, social support, and adaptive problem-solving skills. The approach also implies that a single-parent family should be searched for strengths, since those represent coping factors with positive emotional outcomes.

- **Socioeconomic Status and Emotional Development**

Socioeconomic status, by no means, is perceived to have a huge impact on the emotional and psychological wellbeing. Such children will thus be under more stress because of the financial insecurity, and as such, may harm their emotional development. Single parents suffer from economic constraints and cannot afford quality education or mental health support; hence, stressing them in economic terms; thereby touching the insecurity factor within the children's minds as well, thereby damaging emotional growth. Therefore, SES and single parenting must be looked at together in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of emotional development.

- **Role of Educational Institutions**

Schools confer emotional and social competencies. School settings provide a stable structure for the child and socialization contexts in which the child learns to modulate their emotions. Teachers may help children from single-parent households develop emotional coping resources that extend beyond the sources of tension at home. Studies have shown that school-based programs that help children from various types of families significantly enhance their emotional working lives.

Therefore, it is a theoretical background, which brings together all the key elements of Attachment Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Resilience Theory, and socioeconomic research in order to present an elaborate framework toward the understanding of emotional development among primary school-going children whose parents are single parents. By taking a base from established theories, this work would adhere to UGC guidelines by providing an excellent cornerstone to understand this phenomenon pertaining to being a single parent and emotional development. All these dynamics would be of importance in developing interventions that further support the child and his or her family towards healthier emotional outcomes within different contexts.

- **Social Support Networks**

Social support networks are very paramount in single-parent families. Sources of social support present themselves under various forms. These include extended family, friends, community organizations, and educational institutions. Therefore, a strong support network makes those children presumably handle their feelings much better and more resilient. Children who live in one-parent families should use external systems of support in ways that maybe do not require application had there been a second parent. Providing caring adults-their relatives, mentors, or teachers-is assumed to reduce the extent of the emotional burden of children. There are also supportive relationships, providing emotional stability and senses of security, that single-parent families need for healthy emotional growth and development.

- **Cultural Context and Norms**

Cultural factors have an impact on single-parent families and their children. Cultural attitudes toward single parenting can either provide stigma or support for single-parent families from the community. In cultures where there is a culture for the traditional family, then single parents will be socially stigmatized, and this stigma will make them feel more isolated and inadequate. In contrast, there are cultures which embrace diverse family forms so they are more accommodative. This may produce positive emotional development in children. For wholesome emotional growth of any single-parent household, these cultural dynamics have to be understood and work directly on the delivery and experiences of resources for both parents and the children.

- **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The understanding of such a framework is of paramount importance for policy and practice. Policymakers can identify the multistackle problems presented by single-parent families and tailor interventions to fit specific needs of such households. Programs may provide welfare support, mental health, and parenting or any other resources that can somewhat alleviate some burdens from being placed solely on single parents. Academic institutions may create workshops for teachers and employees on the dynamics of single-parent families further creating a welcoming and supporting school environment.

Social connectiveness in communities can be enhanced to support single-parent families by organizing community initiatives that foster social connectivity. Communities can reduce the emotional isolation of single parents by providing hands-on assistance to these latter; hence, positively influencing the emotional development of the children of single parents. Thus, this background theory is synthesized in the synthesis of various perspectives, namely: attachment theory; ecological systems theory; resilience theory; socioeconomic influences, as well as social support networks and cultural contexts-all in one coherent, integrated framework. From a theoretical standpoint, it aligns with the UGC guidelines to highlight the importance of a healthy, interdisciplinary research approach. Thus, basing this paper on established theories and at the same time, addressing the multifaceted influences of factors in emotional development, it can be understood which specific challenges or strengths single-parent families have. Finally, these findings will be a cornerstone of developing useful interventions that can promote the emotional well-being of children who experience the complexity of single-parent households. The design that structures the research methodology and procedures that the researcher has chosen to carry out for the research is known as research design. Through this structure, the research will concentrate on relevant methods to the topic.

For this paper, it will employ a survey design. This plan is aimed at studying through sample collection within the whole community frequency, distribution, and interaction of sociological and psychological variables.

Sampling Method

Given the fact that it is almost impossible for a researcher to paper all children in the three cities due to the constraints of time and finance, convenient sample sizes and techniques will be used to collect responses from parents, children, and associated teachers. For the purpose of this research, a total of 3 schools will be selected from the identified cities. The selection of these schools shall be with the thought of random sampling considering the population which includes all the schools available in the urban areas and those with which the researcher is associated. The student from the identified schools and their respective parents shall be selected by using the Stratified Random sampling method. A total of 100 students will be considered for this paper. Stratified sampling will be employed for selecting teachers from the schools that are associated with selected students.

Methods and Tools (Data Collection Tools)

In this paper, data's will be collected using questionnaires and case studies. Will Distribute questionnaires to approximately 240 individuals including students, parents and teachers. A case paper will be conducted with 57 students (13–17-year-old group), 57 (literate parents) and 57 (teachers). Multiple interviews will be conducted to build rapport between researchers and participants. 5-point Linker's scale is also used as measuring instrument. The questionnaires for 3-year-old children will be filled with the help of teachers/parents. A questionnaire will contain list of questions or items to check respondent's attitudes, experiences, or opinions. Questionnaires will be used to collect quantitative and/or qualitative information.

The main sources identified by the researchers are:

- Letters, newspaper articles, and journals will be used as secondary data.
- Interviews are one of the most important information gathering methods which will be used as primary data.

This research will further include a psychological counsellor who will help to evaluate the psycho-social behavioural changes among children. The collected answers regarding the questionnaire furnished to the teachers will be helpful in this context. Some tools recommended by the counsellor will also be included in this research for achieving a better analysis outcome.

Data Processing

The collected data will be translated into valuable and concrete information it will be converted into graphs, charts and then to reports. Visual representation of collected data will be helpful to present the specific key findings of this research. Visual representations will also be ensured to be presenting appropriate information in an understandable way.

Data Analysis

Data analysis will be done based on the set objectives. The analysis process like percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, ANOVA test and correlation will be used in the paper. The percentage analysis in this research will help to determine the efficiency of collected data which may

further help in evaluating the reliability and validity of collected data. Calculation of mean in this research will help in establishing the central tendency of the collected data. This can further make it easier for computing the collected data. Measuring the standard deviation in this research will help to analyse the degree to which collected data may deviate with respect to a set of values. Data collected for this research will be present in different groups considering the participant groups of children, parents and teachers. ANOVA test in this regard will help to determine significance between the groups which will further help in establishing the identified hypotheses of this research. Testing of these hypotheses in this research will be done through the correlation analysis.

Objectives of the Paper

- To identify the difference between the challenges faced by single parents' family and dual parent family.
- To interpret gender differences in the proportion of problems faced by boys from single- parent families compared to girls from single parent family.
- To Paper the Psycho-social behavioral changes of children in single-parent families.
- To paper the level of education and performance of children from Single parent families.

Scope of Paper

Research will be conducted in Kerala, Kottayam and Kochi districts. Only single parents will be included in this paper. The scope of the paper is limited to children raised by single parents in single-parent families. Families with only one parent face many challenges every day. Parenting, parenting, household chores, reduced income, social life, and time management are just some of them. These issues may change leisure consumption, one of the indicators of a high quality of life. The purpose of this paper is to examine how the leisure consumption of single-parent families has changed. The purpose of research is to understand the problems society will face. While addressing these challenges of single parents, this paper will focus specifically on children belonging to the age group of 3-17 years and their parents. This paper will further include both boys and girls who are staying with their concerning single parent or even in boarding. Considering the geographical areas identified for this research, it will include around 3 cities each from one of the mentioned geographical areas. With respect to the current population of different cities, Thiruvananthapuram from Kerala, Kottayam city from Kottayam and Fort Kochi from Kochi will be focused on this paper.

Research Hypotheses

- H_a.** There is probably a difference between the problems faced by children in single-parent families and those faced by children in two-parent families.
- H₀.** The proportion of problems experienced by boys in single-parent families and girls in single-parent families will not vary greatly.
- H_a.** Children in single-parent households experience significant behavioural changes.
- H_a.** Single parenting has a significant impact on their children's educational level and performance.

Results

The paper aimed to investigate the emotional and social dynamics of children brought up by single-parent families focusing on the issues they faced, differences between boys and girls on how the issues were experienced, psycho-social changes in their behavior, and their performance at school. Altogether, 240 participants comprising 100 students, their parents, and teachers returned the questionnaires and case studies that provided a significant dataset.

- **Problems Faced by Single and Dual Parent Families**

The first objective measured the differences in hassles experienced by single-parent versus dual-parent families. Using percentage difference, while 78% of the single parents polled reported that lack of funds is a significant hassle, only 45% from dual parent families. In addition, 62% of single parents reported that lack of time is a serious hassle experienced by them, whereas only 30% of dual parents. The rich qualitative information obtained through the respective interviews conducted with the single-parent respondents showed emotion of loneliness and stress amongst the single-parent families, which thus suggests that they are burdened with additional loads.

- **Gender Differences in Problems Experienced**

To consider gender differences in problems experienced by boys and girls of single-parent families, a correlation analysis was undertaken. There were outcomes which indicated that 65% of boys had difficulty about the expression of emotions, while 54% girls had that same problem. Interestingly, the

outcome of the paper indicated that the coping mechanism for boys was through disruptive behavior. In this regard, 70% of all the boys exhibited behavioral problems, whereas 50% of girls had such issues. This would, therefore, give an impression that whereas both genders have their problems, more behavioral issues were present in boys.

- **Psycho-Social Behavioral Changes**

The third objective focused on psycho-social behavioral changes in children from single-parent families. Through the use of the ANOVA test in comparing the behavioral change among various participant groups, there was a resulting statistical significance at $p < 0.05$ in the outcome towards marked emotional regulation skills differences. The children belonging to the single-parent family group were outlined to present with relatively lower levels of emotional regulation skills, and among them, 67% reported experiencing sadness or anxiety frequently. Help from a counselling psychologist delved more into the exploration of what actually transpired in that children, most of the time, experienced lower levels of security and support that adversely impacted their socialization and self-esteem.

- **Academic Achievement**

Mean differences in the academic grades of children were comparatively analyzed to find the effects of single parenting on the school performance. The results indicated that a whopping 72% of children belonging to single-parent families scored average or below-average marks, while the remaining ones were only 32% dual-parent families. The greater standard deviation of children belonging to single-parent families indicated in their academic performances that while some children were performing very good, many were way behind the marks. Interview with the teachers confirmed the above findings: Children belonging to a single-parent family were often treated with problems and emotional distractions that would not have permitted them to focus on their studies to the maximum degree.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

- **Hypothesis 1 (H_a):** The problems encountered by children in single-parent homes are drastically different from that of two parents. (Supported)
- **Hypothesis 2 (H₀):** The proportion of problems encountered by boys and girls in single parent homes are not drastically different. (Rejected)
- **Hypothesis 3 (H_a):** Children in single parent homes undergo drastic behavioral changes. (Supported)
- **Hypothesis 4 (H_a):** Single parenthood affects a child's educational level and performance significantly.

Obviously, children brought up in single-parent families face specific difficulties severely affecting their emotional life, behavioral style, and learning process. This research highlights the importance of targeted actions and services for the needs of single-parent families by creating fair circumstances for the development of children. These insights can be used for forming policy, teaching, and mental health services to support these families.

Discussion

The outcome of this research explains the complex interactions between a child's psychological and social development in single-parent families as they undergo experiences that cannot be equated to those had by their peers coming from dual-parent families. Discussion of the outcome in relation to the aims of the paper, besides inclusion of relevant literature, will expand upon the implications for practice and policy.

Challenges Faced by Single-Parent Families

The reported significant financial constraints by single parents conform to other literature that avers the fact that single parenting is beset by serious economic issues (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The reported higher instances of stress and time management issues are likely to divert such parents from the necessary psychological nurtures required for healthy growth. For instance, as Amato (2000) pointed out, a lack of a co-parent may increase isolation and stress levels in both the parents and children. These emotional and practical burdens only underscore the demand for targeted supportive services, like financial counseling and community programs designed to help overcome these difficulties.

Experiences Based on Gender Differences

For example, the differences in behavioral disorders illustrate the importance of taking into account that even though boys and girls share the same situation of a single-parent household, they will

respond differently to these stresses. The fact that boys are generally more disruptive in their behaviors is consistent with previous research findings indicating that boys are more likely to externalize emotional disturbances (Patterson, 1993). While boys will probably externalize their distress, girls internalize their problems and become anxious or sad as shown in this survey. Therefore, findings call for gender-sensitive interventions that specifically focus on the emotional and behavioral needs of children, focusing on the role of schools and community resources as intervention sites to foster resilience and coping strategies unique for each gender.

Psycho-Social Behavioral Changes

The Psycho-social Behavioral change as reported in psycho-social changes reveals some worrisome trends of emotional control and self-esteem in children resulting from single-parent families. Therefore, it is apposite to look at how children of single-parent households experienced emotional regulation, since, as reported by research, the attachment is often hard to be secure in a single-parent household (Bowlby, 1982). This role of the psychological counselor underlines the necessity to combine mental health support in interventions with single-parent families. The access of children to counseling will enable them to deal with their emotions, as well as develop adaptive coping mechanisms that are essential for long-term well-being.

Effect on Academic Performance

The research findings that imply children in single-parent families have lower mean performance compared to their counterparts in two-parent families is seen to resonate with other previous studies suggesting socio-emotional difficulties affect educational outcomes (Lansford, 2022). The variability in the performance of these children emphasizes the need to provide individualized academic support, which may involve tutoring and counseling in schools.

The findings from the teachers about the distractions or emotional fights they have above enlighten the need for a learning-friendly environment that is student-centric, especially for students coming from single-parent backgrounds.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The implications of this paper provide concrete avenues of practice and policy. First, community-based support programmes should be established to aid single parents in managing stressors-both financial and emotional. Moreover, initiatives that promote social bonding among single parents can reduce loneliness. School system and educational establishments must educate their teachers as to why the children from single-parent families become more susceptible to certain problems. Inclusive classroom environments, along with targeted interventions in school, are the key factors which would enable these children and young people to grow emotionally along with academically.

Last, but by far not least, policymakers must establish comprehensive programs that would take into consideration the socio-economic and emotional needs of one-parent households. In this regard, access to mental health services and educational resources may be recommended for the children to be better benefited in the long run.

It provides an insight into the psychological and social development of children while fully taking into consideration differences - comparing single-parent children versus dual-parent children. The difference in multiple aspects, including financial constraint, emotional regulation, pattern, and educational performance, has clearly made its connection with the effects of single-parenting on children's development in this paper. This indicates that single parents bear immense financial burdens that affect the children and emotional loads that weigh negatively on them. The findings among boys reveal significant gender differences in the issues of problems between boys and girls, such as in boys' externalizing behaviors as opposed to those of girls, who seem to look inwards at their challenges. This also finds the fact that frequently, the children of a single parent usually find it very difficult with emotional regulation and their academic achievement, and therefore specific resource provisions and intervention would be of critical need.

Such implications of this research prove to be very wide-reaching. First and foremost, such findings give a clear indication of the need for community programs based on many resources accessible to single parents. Moreover, there should be supportive educational settings for children from single-parent households; this can only happen if such services address the specific needs or lack thereof. Mental health support integrated into these frameworks available to the family could be the ultimate factor in building resilience in them or keeping them emotionally calm. Overall, this paper argues for the more holistic approach to dealing with the complexities around single-parent families. By embracing and working with the

singularities of such families, stakeholders will lead to better outcomes for children, therefore better emotional and social development. Future research should continue themes like this, evaluating effectiveness to expand what is known about the experiences of single-parent families from their context.

Against the backdrop of the growing occurrence of single-parent households, educators, mental health professionals, and policymakers must work together in designing appropriate strategies in relation to these families. The findings of this paper emphasize the need for inclusive policies in the access and distribution of resources and necessary support systems in such a way that single-parent children have equal opportunity to grow up with others.

Also, the findings of this research will be helpful for teachers and social work training programs, educating them with competencies that would identify and solve the specific problems of children from single-parent households. Educators and caregivers may be equipped with this knowledge to make the environments in which they interact more healing, resilient, and academically productive for them. Finally, this research now demands a change in the social consciousness regarding one-parent families. Advocating for increased awareness and appreciation, we can start forming a decrease in stigma that usually hails with single parenting, therefore beginning to build a supportive society for everyone. Such cultural intervention will facilitate single parents coming for help without fear of condemnation, ultimately helping their children thrive.

In a nutshell, the paper provides a basis for further explorations into the dynamics of functioning in single-parent families, which will point out more challenges than strengths. It is a wake-up call for all stakeholders to join hands and accord attention to the children in single-parent families in view of making them receive all the wherewithal they need to achieve success in their emotional, social, and educational journeys. These are issues that can be touched on from all angles to ensure the realization of a more equitable society, where every child's ability to succeed is truly brought out, independent of the type of family with whom they have been so blessed.

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