

## CAUSES OF SINGLE PARENTING AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF TEENAGERS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES OF KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The love and warmth expected as a child grows is reduced due to single parenting which also affect the psychological and social behaviour of such child. It is on this premise that the study ascertained the association between single parenting and social behaviour of teenagers in rural communities of Kogi State, Nigeria. A four-stage sampling procedure was used to select 162 respondents comprising of teenagers and single parents. Structured questionnaires and interview schedule were used to collect data which were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Majority (74.7%) of the parents had been single for 10 years. Death of spouses (32.1%) and spousal separation (25.3%) were the major causes of single parenting. Major challenges faced by single parents included finance ( $\bar{x} = 1.64$ ) and dual parental responsibility ( $\bar{x} = 1.17$ ). The coping strategies included the use of children as domestic help ( $\bar{x} = 1.49$ ) and petty trading ( $\bar{x} = 1.06$ ). Teenagers had good peer relations ( $\bar{x}=3.61$ ), were self-compliant ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ), were defiant in nature ( $\bar{x}=3.11$ ) and were not antisocial in nature ( $\bar{x}=3.42$ ). Causes of single parenting showed a significant relationship ( $\chi^2=14.4$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) with the social behaviour of teenagers. The study concluded that single parenting and social behaviour of teenagers are interrelated. The study therefore recommends that government and non-governmental organisations should render financial assistance to single parents to ease their burdens and help ensure a sustainable society.

**Keywords:** Behaviour, spousal separation, single parenting, teenagers.

### INTRODUCTION

Single parenting, a practice of raising children without husband or wife, was formerly an unknown practice in the Nigerian society (Adelani, Joel, Sanusi, Kayode, Ayinla *et.al*, 2015). Single parenting can be defined as when one of two parents who are responsible for the nurturing and child rearing is not available, and the responsibilities meant for two people is now being carried out by one person (Azuka-Obieke, 2013). Socialisation of children is very important for the continuity of any culture and the family is said to be the primary agent of socialisation, especially for children (Stephen and Udis, 2016).

Parents are responsible to teach children about the norms and values of the society and are accountable for developing their psychological and emotional well-being (Soomar, 2019). Parents are to facilitate children in each stage of life and love them unconditionally. However, as a result of single parenting, this love and warmth seems to decrease and affect children's overall health status and upbringing (Thwala and Okeke, 2014).

According to Ortese, as cited by Shimfe and John (2020), children from single parent may not be well taken care of and may not be socialised or develop in the best possible way. This is due to the fact that the process of development or socialisation depends on both parent playing complementary roles in bringing up the child. Single parenting is considered an aberration as it lacks the capacity to produce a psychologically balanced offspring. Any laxity on the part of the parents in assisting and guiding the adolescents may result in academic backwardness and development of unwholesome behaviours. The foundation of what a person becomes in the society is laid in the home and at the

initial stage of life. Parents therefore have important roles to play in seeing that teenagers acquire the appropriate social and psychological balance (Shimfe and John, 2020). According to Falana, *et al.* (2012), an increase in single parenting in Nigeria have been associated with relationship breakdown/increasing rates of divorce, birth of child out of wedlock, being widowed and migration.

Generally, it is the responsibility of the parents to be responsible for the psychological and emotional welfare of the children, but as a result of the non-complementary roles of parents which stems from broken homes either as a result of death, divorce and separation, Stephens and Udis (2016) stressed that children from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviors which makes the child a misfit in the society. It is on this premise that the study examined single parenting and social behavior of teenagers in rural communities of Kogi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows: ascertain the causes of single parenting; describe the challenges faced by single parents; analyse coping strategies of single parents and identify the social behaviours of teenagers raised by single parents.

The hypothesis of the study state that there is no significant relationship between causes of single parenting and the social behaviour of teenagers.

### METHODOLOGY

Kogi State is one of the states in North central of Nigeria. Kogi State was created from the old Kwara and Benue States with intersecting point of longitude 70°49'N and latitude 60°44'E. It is made up of the Igala, Kabba (Okun), Ebira and Kogi division and shares boundaries with the Plateau, Niger and FCT to the north, Benue and Anambra

States to the east. On the west, it is bordered by Ondo, Kwara, Edo and Enugu State. It has a landmass of 29,833sqkm with a total population of 3,314,043. Kogi has three senatorial districts. Recently, there are more broken homes which has increased the number of single parents in Kogi State than there were before which comprises more of young couples (Shaibu, Momoh, Akoji and Amaha, 2022). area; Kogi east- (Igalas), Kogi west-(Okuns) and Kogi central- (Ebiras). The population of the study comprised teenagers and single parents among other people in the rural communities of Kogi State, Nigeria.

A four-stage sampling procedure was used in selecting respondents for the study. The first stage involved simple random sampling of 60% out of the three (3) senatorial districts leading to the selection of Kogi east and Kogi central senatorial districts with nine and seven Local Government Areas (LGA), respectively. The second stage involved

simple random selection of 28% of LGAs from the two senatorial districts with three and two LGAs, which gave Igalamela/Odolu, Ankpa, Dekina from Kogi east and Adavi and Ajaokuta from Kogi central. There are 38 and 12 secondary schools in Kogi east and Kogi central, respectively. The third stage involved simple random selection of 20% of schools, which gave eight and two schools, respectively and from the list of secondary schools obtained 1,085 and 310 students, respectively. The fourth stage involved 10% purposive sampling of teenagers living with their single parents. Responses from single parents to research instrument were based on questionnaire administration to their wards in school which was retrieved from the teenagers the following day at school, only 23 questionnaires were found useful as responses from single parents. In total, 139 teenagers and 23 single parents were sampled. This gave a sample size of 162 respondents that form the sample size for the study.

**Table 1: Sampling procedure**

50% Districts	No of LGA	28% of LGA	No of schools	20% of schools	No of students	10% of students
Kogi East	9	3	38	8	1085	108
Kogi Central	7	2	12	2	310	31
Total	16	5	50	10	1395	139

Source: Field survey 2022 sampling

**Measurement of variables**

Causes of single parenting: list of possible causes such as death of spouse, migration, unintended pregnancy, divorce, and spousal separation were provided. The causes were ranked using the percentage values in major to minor causes.

Challenges faced by single parenting: a list of possible challenges such as: emotional disorder, finance, cultural stigmatisation, re-marrying, dual parental responsibility, etc. were provided which was operationalised using three-point Likert-type scale of major challenge = 2, minor challenge = 1 and not a challenge = 0. The mean score was determined and used to rank the challenges.

Coping strategies adopted to cushion the challenges faced by single parents: A list of possible strategies such as child hawking, domestic help, flirtation by mothers, skill empowerment programs, skipping meals, etc were provided. Response options provided were always= 3, sometimes = 2 and never = 1. Weighted mean score was used to rank the most to the least adopted strategy.

The Dependent variable - social behaviour of teenagers: This was measured by adapting the Home and Community Social Behaviour Scales (HCSBS) by Silje and Terje (2016) which assesses social competence (peer relations and self-management/compliance) and antisocial behavior

(defiant/disruptive and antisocial/aggressive behaviour).

Response options for the listed statements were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) = 4, Undecided (U) =3, Disagree (D) =2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 for positively worded statements and in the reverse for negatively worded statements. Summation of total score was computed and the mean determined. The mean score was thereafter used as a benchmark to categorise responses into good/pro and bad/antisocial behaviour.

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyse the data of the study. The descriptive statistics included: frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics - Chi-square was used to determine the relationship between the variables.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 2 shows that 56.2% of the teenagers were male and 43.8% were female. Result also showed that majority (66.7%) of the parents that the teenagers were living with are female while 33.3% are male. This implies that women are more of single parent and are also more involved in the upbringing of their children than male in the study area. This is in line with the findings of Ntonde (2024) who noted that teenagers in the web of single parenthood majorly lived with their mothers. It was also found

that majority (74.7%) of the parents have been single parents for 1-10 years. Findings showed that 49.4% of the parents were into trading while 2.5% of them were artisans. This implies that most of the parents do not have a steady source of income as trading can have its downturn. The result corroborates that of Adelaní *et al.* (2015) where the authors noted same proportions of parents engaging in petty trading in Ibadan metropolis. Findings further show that the

average income of single parents per month was ₦22100±17974. This implies that finance is one of the major challenges single parents faced considering the present economic realities of Nigeria. This is in line with Harkness, Gregg and Fernandez-Salgado (2020) who noted that single parents are faced with a lot of challenges ranging from finance, feeding, clothing and medicals amongst others.

**Table 2: Socioeconomic characteristics of parents**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean ±SD
<b>Occupation of parents</b>			
Farming	45	27.8	
Business/Trading	80	49.4	
Civil service	33	20.4	
Artisan	4	2.5	
<b>Duration of single parenting (years)</b>			
1 – 5	58	35.8	
6 – 10	63	38.9	
11 – 15	35	21.6	
16 – 20	6	3.7	
<b>Average income of parent (₦-per month)</b>			22100±17974
1000 – 15000	79	48.8	
16000 – 30000	41	25.3	
31000 – 45000	18	11.1	
46000 – 60000	15	9.3	
61000 – 75000	9	5.6	

Source: Field survey, 2022

**Causes of single parenting**

Results in Table 3 show that death of spouse (32.1%) is the major cause of single parenting in the study area. Other causes as revealed in the table include spousal separation (25.3%), divorce (24.1%), unintended pregnancy (11.7%) and migration (6.8%). This indicates that death, spousal

separation and divorce of spouses contribute mainly to single parenting. The result agrees with Falana, *et al.* (2012), Harkness, Gregg and Fernandez-Salgado (2020) that increase in single parenting have been associated with relationship breakdown/increasing rates of divorce and birth of child out of wedlock.

**Table 3: Causes of single parenting**

S/N	Causes	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1	Death of spouse	52	32.1	1
2	Spousal separation	41	25.3	2
3	Divorce	39	24.1	3
4	Unintended pregnancy	19	11.7	4
5	Migration	11	6.8	5

Source: Field survey, 2022

**Challenges faced by single parents**

Result in Table 4 shows that finance ( $\bar{x} = 1.64$ ) and dual parental responsibility ( $\bar{x} = 1.17$ ) were the major challenges single parents faced in the study area. This indicates that when single parents are faced with these challenges, they are unable to perform their responsibilities as parents. This implies that teenagers whose parents have financial constraints could have poor education, being poorly fed and unable to buy things they desire and as such, their self-esteem could be low and they would tend to take things that are not theirs and also tell lies.

Dual-parental responsibility also affect teenager’s social behaviour as a single parent is not able to perform the role of both father and mother at the same time. This agrees with the functionalist theory which states that the society is a system which has parts, each functioning for the survival of the whole system and that the parts affect the effectiveness of the other sub-systems. It is also in line with the study of Harkness, Gregg and Fernandez-Salgado (2020) that single parents are faced with a lot of challenges ranging from finance and lone burden bearing.

**Table 4: Challenges faced by single parents**

Challenges	Major challenge		Minor challenge		Not challenge		a	Mean	SD	Rank
	F	%	F	%	F	%				
	Emotional disorder	40	24.7	78	48.1	44				
Finance	114	70.4	38	23.5	10	6.2	1.64	0.60	1	
Cultural stigmatization	27	16.7	62	38.3	73	45.1	0.72	0.73	4	
Re-marrying	33	20.4	39	24.1	90	55.6	0.65	0.80	5	
Dual-parental responsibility	66	40.7	57	35.2	39	24.1	1.17	0.79	2	

Source: Field survey, 2022

**Coping strategies of single parents**

Result in Table 5 show that use of children as domestic help ( $\bar{x} = 1.49$ ) and petty trading ( $\bar{x} = 1.06$ ) were the most frequently used coping strategies by single parents in the study area. Domestic help which is the mostly used coping strategy for the single parents can presumably be the cause of the increasing number of domestic helps in most homes in the cities. The use of these children as domestic helps invariably affects their psychological well-

being as well as their self-esteem. It can also expose them to items that entice them which they might be tempted to take without permission which promotes stealing. Petty trading, on the other hand, gives the single parent opportunity to earn extra income which is used to care for the children. Meanwhile, Aadil, Afnan, Aimon, Isahaque and Azlinda (2022) stated that support from family/friends and assistance from religious faith were the coping strategies used by single mothers in another study.

**Table 5: Coping strategies of single parents**

Coping strategies	Always		Sometimes		Never		Mean	SD
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
	Hawking by children	29	17.9	58	35.8	75		
Use of children as domestic help	103	63.6	36	22.2	23	14.2	1.49	0.73
Loan schemes	5	3.1	40	24.7	117	72.2	0.31	0.53
Skill empowerment programs	14	8.6	93	57.4	55	34.0	0.75	0.60
Flirtation by mothers	24	14.8	48	29.6	90	55.5	0.60	0.73
Skipping meals	22	13.6	76	46.9	64	39.5	0.74	0.68
Encouraging female to date older men for the purpose of making money (sugar daddy)	7	4.3	7	4.3	148	91.4	0.13	0.45
Assistance from religious bodies	22	13.6	66	40.7	74	45.7	0.68	0.70
Encouraging male children on quick money ventures (cyber fraud)	22	13.6	10	6.2	146	90.1	0.14	0.44
Petty trading	80	49.4	46	28.4	36	22.2	1.06	0.91

Source: Field survey, 2022

**Social behaviour of teenagers**

Result in Table 7 shows that teenagers have good peer relations ( $\bar{x}=3.61$ ). The finding implies that teenagers have good peer relations except that it contradicts their admittance to the fact that it is good to bully classmates. This agrees with the study of Ikediashi and Akande (2015) that people with antisocial personalities have a low tolerance for frustration, act on impulse, lose their temper quickly, are often bullies who fight, lie, cheat, steal and are truant from school. Also, teenagers agree to bullying of classmates which could be as a result of their family background where they see their older ones forcefully demanding respect. Teenagers who are easily influenced by what they see and hear, tend to imitate such character and display them in schools. Result on self-management/compliance show that teenagers are self-compliant ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ) but be afraid of the unknown ( $\bar{x} = 2.10$ ). The result implies that teenagers have a good self-

management/compliance strategy. Result on teenagers' defiant/disruptive nature revealed that the teenagers are defiant/disruptive in nature ( $\bar{x}=3.11$ ). The defiant nature of the teenagers could be because of locality/environment i.e. what they see around. This agrees with Chen (2012) who found that bullying was strongly associated with child demographics, family poverty and residence location of single parent homes. Result on teenager's aggressive/antisocial behaviour as revealed in Table 7 show that the teenagers are aggressive/antisocial in nature ( $\bar{x}=3.42$ ). It could be generally agreed that children tend to tell lies so as not to be punished but getting into fights, use of offensive language are common among children with single parents in the study area. This is in tandem with the study by Ikediashi and Akande (2015) that people with antisocial personalities have a low tolerance for frustration and are quick to lose their temper.

**Table 7: Social behaviour of teenagers**

Statements	SA F	%	A F	%	U F	%	D F	%	SD F	%	Mean	SD	AM
<b>Peer relations</b>													<b>3.61</b>
Peers who need help should not be helped	19	11.7	23	14.2	5	3.1	31	19.1	84	51.9	3.85	1.47	
It is good participate effectively in family or group activities	77	47.5	67	41.4	9	5.6	7	4.3	2	1.2	4.30	0.86	
I have poor relationship with peers	18	11.1	43	26.5	16	9.9	42	25.9	43	26.5	3.31	1.39	
I am good at initiating or joining conversations with peers	20	12.3	98	60.5	8	4.9	25	15.4	11	6.8	3.56	1.10	
Low self-esteem is good	23	14.2	29	17.9	15	9.3	30	18.5	65	40.1	3.27	1.39	
It is good to bully classmates	55	34.0	37	22.8	8	4.9	16	9.9	29	17.9	3.56	1.49	
It is good to be hot-tempered	33	20.4	25	15.4	8	4.9	59	36.4	37	22.8	3.44	1.52	
<b>Self-management/Compliance</b>													<b>3.52</b>
Family and community rules should not be followed	31	19.1	17	10.5	5	3.1	69	42.6	40	24.7	3.70	1.45	
It is bad to behave appropriately at school	18	11.1	23	14.2	6	3.7	76	46.9	39	24.1	3.78	1.48	
It is good to act without thinking	14	8.6	12	7.4	8	4.9	56	34.6	56	34.6	4.00	1.23	
It is good to do chores or tasks without help and on time	82	50.6	33	20.4	17	10.5	21	13.0	9	5.6	2.85	1.20	
I respond appropriately when corrected	92	56.8	45	27.8	11	6.8	11	6.8	3	1.9	4.31	0.99	
I am afraid of the unknown	67	41.4	57	35.2	8	4.9	5	3.1	25	15.4	2.10	1.14	
It is good to control temper when angry	59	36.4	57	35.2	29	17.9	9	5.6	8	4.9	3.93	1.10	
I have strong bond with my parent	31	19.1	49	30.2	45	27.8	17	10.5	20	12.3	3.33	1.25	
It is good to be self-dependent	38	23.5	72	44.4	14	8.6	31	19.1	7	4.3	3.64	1.16	
<b>Defiant/Disruptive</b>													<b>3.11</b>
Others should be blamed for my problems	37	22.8	45	27.8	16	9.9	42	25.9	22	13.6	3.20	1.40	
It is good to be disrespectful	17	10.5	10	6.2	10	6.2	86	53.1	39	24.1	4.07	1.25	
It is good to seek too much attention from adults	9	5.6	24	14.8	18	11.1	64	39.5	47	29.0	2.28	1.19	
It is bad to ignore parent's or guardian's directives	48	29.6	37	22.8	10	6.2	32	19.8	35	21.6	2.87	1.57	
I'm easily provoked by people around me	38	23.5	54	33.3	23	14.2	12	7.4	35	21.6	2.81	1.31	
I'm difficult to control	25	15.4	27	16.7	16	9.9	52	32.1	42	25.9	3.41	1.49	
<b>Antisocial/Aggressive</b>													<b>3.42</b>
I take things that are not mine	19	11.7	11	6.8	7	4.3	71	43.8	54	33.3	3.96	1.25	

Statements	SA		A		U		D		SD		Mean	SD	AM
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
It is okay to cheat in schoolwork or games	50	30.9	46	28.4	9	5.6	28	17.3	29	17.9	3.37	1.51	
I act better than others	61	37.7	49	30.2	28	17.3	9	5.6	15	9.3	2.22	1.14	
It is good to disrupt on-going activities	18	11.1	12	7.4	22	13.6	47	29.0	63	38.9	3.71	1.21	
It is good tell lies so as not be punished	51	31.5	48	29.6	11	6.8	24	14.8	28	17.3	3.43	1.49	
It is bad to threaten others	55	34.0	30	18.5	2	1.2	48	29.6	27	16.7	3.23	1.57	
It is good to swear or use offensive language	53	32.7	47	29.0	19	11.7	22	13.6	21	13.0	3.55	1.40	
It is good to get into fights	79	48.8	40	24.7	5	3.1	15	9.3	23	14.2	3.85	1.47	
<b>Grand mean</b>												<b>3.42</b>	

AM – Average mean

Source: Field survey, 2022

**Summary of mean value of social behaviour of teenagers**

Results of the social behaviour of teenagers on Table 7 show that the teenagers have good social behaviour as regard peer relations ( $\bar{x}$ =3.61), self-management/compliance ( $\bar{x}$ =3.52) and antisocial/aggressive ( $\bar{x}$ =3.42) behaviour but have bad social behaviour as regard defiant/disruptive ( $\bar{x}$ =3.11) tendency. This finding corroborates Uchenna (2013) who affirmed that children from single-parent homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviour and poor academic records. Ntonde (2024) also posited that parental separation

has been related to diverse negative outcomes of a child, including mental, physical, health and behavioural problems. This is also evident as Oyetakin (2014) noted that the prevailing antisocial behaviour such as examination malpractice, stealing, sexual abuse, lack of respect for common property, truancy, drug abuse among others are found in the behaviour of children from single homes. Also, it has been maintained that children from broken homes (single parents) become lawless because they are often denied protection and love that come from both parents.

**Table 7: Summary of mean value of social behaviour of teenagers**

Social behaviour	Mean	Category
Peer relations	3.61	Good
Self-management/compliance	3.52	Good
Defiant/disruptive	3.11	Bad
Antisocial/aggressive	3.42	Good
Grand mean	3.42	

Source: Field survey, 2022

**Test of relationship between causes of single parenting and the social behaviour of teenagers**

Result on Table 8 revealed that there was a significant relationship between causes of single parenting and social behaviour of teenagers ( $\chi^2=14.4$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). This implies that the social behaviour of teenagers can be influenced by the specific cause of being raised by a single parent, where a child whose mother is widowed can have a good social behaviour as compared to a child whose mother got pregnant out of wedlock. This disparity in the social behaviour could be because of the

psychological idea behind the cause of the single parenting. This is in line with the findings of Anyebe, *et al.* (2017) that in many societies, the phenomenon of single parenting is perceived differently depending on the gender and cause analyses where some societies discriminate against volunteered single parents but tend to be sympathetic to those occasioned by death of spouse. Mothers of children born out of wedlock appear to be more negatively perceived and are often placed in the most unfortunate position (Allers, 2016).

**Table 8: Relationship between causes of single parenting and the social behaviour of teenagers**

Variable	$\chi^2$	p-value	Decision
Causes of single parenting	14.4	0.01	Significant

$p \leq 0.05$ : Significant,  $p > 0.05$ : Not significant

Source: Field survey, 2022

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Death and spousal separation were the major causes of single parenting while financial and dual parental responsibilities were major challenges single parents faced. The study also emphasise that causes of single parenting influences social behaviour of teenagers. Conclusively, even though the study findings showed that teenagers have good peer relations, are self-compliant and were not antisocial in nature, they were however defiant in nature. Couples should endeavour to avoid spousal separation as this have a more negative effect on children as they grow. Non-governmental organisations should provide a platform for parents who are not living together either as a result of spousal separation, divorce or unwanted pregnancy to be actively involved in the lives of their children. To cushion the effect of financial burden faced by single parents, government and non-governmental organisations can render assistance to single parents by providing free or subsidised medical services or education for their children so as to achieve a sustainable society.

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