



# STUDY ON IMPACT OF SINGLE PARENTING ON THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD

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## ABSTRACT

The most fundamental unit of society is the family. The perspectives of both parents give the child a lens through which to perceive the world and a foundation on which to build his or her own identity. In contrast, a single parent in a family is responsible for all parental authority. As a result, the researchers have examined how it affects a child's physical, mental, moral, and social development. A survey had been conducted by using convenience and stratified sampling method to collect primary data through which the findings were drawn. The researcher discovered that, in comparison to dual parent families, single parenting has detrimental effects on children based on the responses of the respondents from single parent families. Lack of assistance from extended families, a lack of quality time spent with parents, and communication issues may be to blame.

## INTRODUCTION

A family is the most microscopic and fundamental part of a society. It has a significant impact on the child's physical, mental, moral, and social development and is the first socializing agent the infant interacts with. The child's education and upbringing in accordance with societal standards and values is the family's primary duty. It has been noted that a person's early years in the home establish the foundation for who they will become in society. In these formative years, adults have the ability to influence a child's mind in a particular way. For the youngster, the family acts as a source of first impressions and references. He or she gains knowledge of life outside from the family and uses those experiences as a roadmap for future attempts.

In a child's developmental years, these memories and encounters serve as lessons, and both parents' viewpoints provide the child with the lens through which to view the world and the platform upon which to construct his or her own identity. So, whether directly or indirectly, having both parents around improves a child's fundamental

mental development and cognitive abilities. These are the fundamental abilities which everyone needs in order to function in daily life. An example of this is seen when a child makes a mistake in school and the teacher's scolding begins by asking if manners were not taught to the child by his or her parents. Moral values, ethical values, as well as a role model or example of a society, are provided and taught to a child at these early ages. Consequently, a full family is similar to a summary of the society.

However, there are some situations in families where a single parent shoulders the responsibility of absolute parenting. These include separations of all kinds, including divorce, denied paternity, and death of either spouse. The breakdown of family structures, which has a negative impact on children's development in particular, is still a problem for society. An in-depth investigation of the phenomenon was therefore required in light of the fast-expanding single parent population and its effects on the children raised in such families.

The study is conducted in two different aspects-

1. Issues that children in single-parent families face as a result of divorce.
2. Issues that children in single-parent families face when either spouse passes away.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Erikson's (1902-1994)** theory of development, which considers development across the lifespan and divides the phases of maturity into those experienced by young adults, middle-aged adults, and older people, was chosen for the study because many developmental theories only cover up to adulthood. Erikson's theory is referred to as "psychosocial development" since it integrates personal, emotional, and social development rather than concentrating on one component of human evolution.

**Bandura (1977)** proposes that people occasionally imitate the behavior of others by representing it in their minds. For instance, a young kid may see his father's aggressive outbursts and hostile interactions with others. When the young boy is observed interacting with his peers, his manner of engagement is highly aggressive, displaying the same traits as his father's actions. The social learning theory by Bandura, which sees behavior as a learnt process, is appropriate for our study. It is rooted in the belief that children pick up manners from watching their parents or other significant others behaving in a particular manner.

**(Blackwell, 2009; Hilton, Desrochers, & Devall, 2001; Hilton & Devall, 1998; Jackson, Preston, & Franke, 2010)** Their studies have consistently shown that children raised by a single parent demonstrate much more negative behaviors than children raised in dual-parent homes.

The researcher discovered that single parenting had detrimental consequences on kids based on the responses of respondents from single parent families. In general, children encounter issues or difficulties in a similar manner to adults. But the difficulties they deal with are corresponding with their age. These issues include social, psychological, educational, behavioral, and other issues. However, compared to children raised in dual parent families, children in single parent families encounter a much greater number of issues. This reflects the conclusions of **Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2004)**, who conducted a related study on the wellbeing of the child in the absence of one parent. The outcome of the study of **Ekpenyong** Children raised by one biological

parent do worse on a variety of social and economic indicators than children raised by both biological parents, according to **Nkereuwem Stephen & Lawrence Udisi's 2016** study.

The results of **Nancy's study in 2001** and a previous study by **Price and McKenry in 1998** found that the impacts of divorce or being a single parent are more severe for males than for girls and that the trauma of divorce or single parenting is worse for young children at the time of separation.

**Hetherington (1972)** has discussed the various ways in which divorce affects children. The absence of the father is directly related to some divorce-related problems. Girls have less opportunity to learn how to deal with men when their fathers are not around. However, other effects of divorce depend on the attitudes and emotions of the mother.

Due to parental death, single parent families have traditionally existed. In actuality, the death of a parent was a major factor in single parenting; (**Amato .P. and Keith .B. 2000**). According to him, around one-fourth of all people born at the turn of the nineteenth century lost a parent before they turned fifteen.

Children from intact homes will be taken care of and will have a better socialization experience, according to empirical research. This is because raising such children requires both parents to perform complementary roles, which will undoubtedly have a favorable effect on the children during their school years. However, children from single-parent households are more likely to experience limitations and denials of various chances and rights, which will have a detrimental psycho-social influence on them during their school years. (**AzukaObieke Uchenna, 2013**)

Changes in behavior and academic performance might occasionally occur together with indicators of poor psychosocial wellbeing while parents are absent. However, there are disparities in the findings of studies on how children perform after a parent dies, which has prompted efforts to pinpoint variables that mitigate the effects of parental loss (**Sandler et al. 2003**).

(**Yusuf, Fahrudin, Budiman, Fahrudin, Fahrudin. 2020**) The research conducted by these researchers mainly focused on single parenting resulting from divorces. They observed that children who witness aggressive divorce of their parents develop various psychological insecurities. They become over dependent and suspicious of their remaining parent and demand undivided attention and stability in daily life. Schooling and social interactions are also hindered as observed through this research. Adolescents who witness their parent's separation develop fear of abandonment, rejection, loss of love from non-custodial parent. These effects persist in future lives of such adolescents.

This study mentions about social intervention of therapists, counselors and psychologists and how they guide single parents and the children to a certain extent. These therapists further help such cases to better adjust with others. The study further points out how these therapists only help their clients to understand themselves better and resolve their disputes with as little bitterness as possible. This research was based off the various other researches conducted before and hence it discussed the overall points from all those studies and added the element of social intervention which formed the main resolution factor for the negative impact of single parenting.

(Chapani B. 2021) This study mainly focused on understanding the impact of single parenting on adolescents' social development. It adopted quantitative research methods and the survey was conducted in Wise Owl High School. Information was collected from parents, adolescents, teachers through questionnaire. The findings of the research concluded that single parenting negatively impacted the social development of adolescents. The conclusion is justified by the findings that social skill development is achieved through complementary roles played by both parents, it develops a child psychosocially through a good environment and builds a positive self-image and identity among adolescents.

The research also sheds light on how overprotection can be a result of single parenting. Absence of either parent is detrimental, as a child loses a role model of either gender. It is also noted how there is a positive impact wherein the single parent contributes in making the child more responsible for their own actions. Apart from that, the study also highlights how children of single parents seek validation from unreliable sources such as social media. Such children lack the ability to control emotions rationally and are unable to resolve conflicts and misunderstandings leading to more of such occurrences. Furthermore, this research offers some recommendations for parents as well as for school to aptly tackle and neutralize the damaging repercussions of single parenting.

### **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

Indian thoughts have always been more influenced by the west. Single parenting is one of the trends that is getting momentum quickly. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze whether it has a predominantly favorable, neutral, or adverse influence. Despite an increase in single parent families, the existence of single parent children is still being questioned in society. A child who is raised in a single-parent family encounters numerous hurdles in social situations. Therefore, the children are more stressed, which either directly or indirectly affects their overall development. So, the need to study this phenomenon is also parallelly increasing; the various social, as well as cultural practices that have negative or possibly neutral effects need to be kept in check. The topic is need of an hour as it has the impact of these trends on the impressionable youth is also a reason to study the impact of single parenting on child's development.

**Social Relevance-** This particular topic has monumental social relevance as it is one of the rapidly spreading trends among today's youth which considers Single Parenting to be just another futuristic western trend to be followed but it doesn't comprehend the fact that their children today, will be Pillars of the Nation tomorrow.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To understand the impact of single parenting on the children.
2. To analyze and scrutinize the effects on the children in single parent families and dual parent families.
3. To study and analyze the past theories and their outcomes in the light of the same.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Sampling Unit:** The sample unit is teenagers and college going students.

**Sampling Size:** The size of the sample is 138 respondents.

**Sampling Technique:** Primary data has been collected using convenience and stratified sampling. The researcher produced a list of questions, which they distributed to various individuals in order to gather information.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The limitations of the study are as follows: -

1. The survey is limited to those in their teens and older. The researchers also desired to hear the opinions of primary school-aged children but were unable to do so due to time constraints.
2. In addition, the research is restricted to individuals whose single parenting began during the first 20 years of their life.
3. The researchers believed it was unfair to compare the parenting styles of male and female parents as parenting is an abstract relationship which is the ultimate form of love and affection for ones' own child.
4. Owing to time restrictions, the influence of siblings on parental assistance is not considered as the past researches indicated that it is relatively negligible. (Mabuza, N; Thwala, SK; Okeke, CIO)
5. Due to additional time, budgetary, and geographic limitations, it was not feasible to interview children from various regions of the country, hence the study did not cover a wide area.

This reduced the likelihood of drawing broad conclusions about how single parenting affects children's psychosocial development.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Primary data** – Firsthand information was collected from 138 respondents out of which 50 children were from dual parent families whereas 88 were from single parent families. Further, the children from single parent families were subdivided into single parent due to divorce (38 respondents) and due to death of one parent (50 respondents).

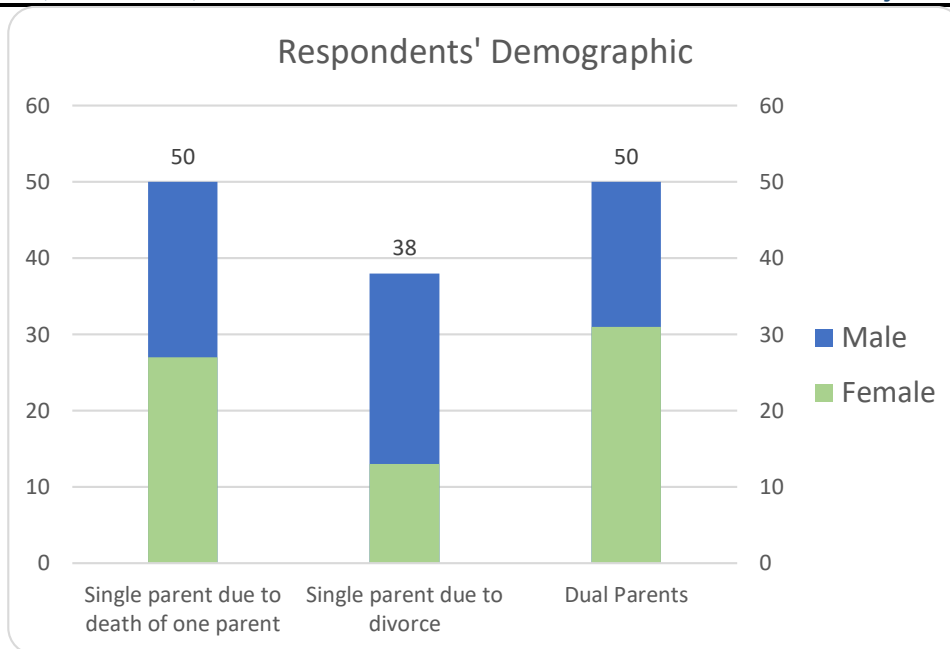
**Secondary data** - Secondary information needed for the study and research paper has been gathered through the internet, journals, articles, and previous research papers.

## **DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

### **Respondent's Demographic**

	Single parent due to death of one parent	Single parent due to divorce	Dual parents
Male	23 (46%)	25 (66%)	19 (38%)
Female	27 (54%)	13 (34%)	31 (62%)
Total	50	38	50

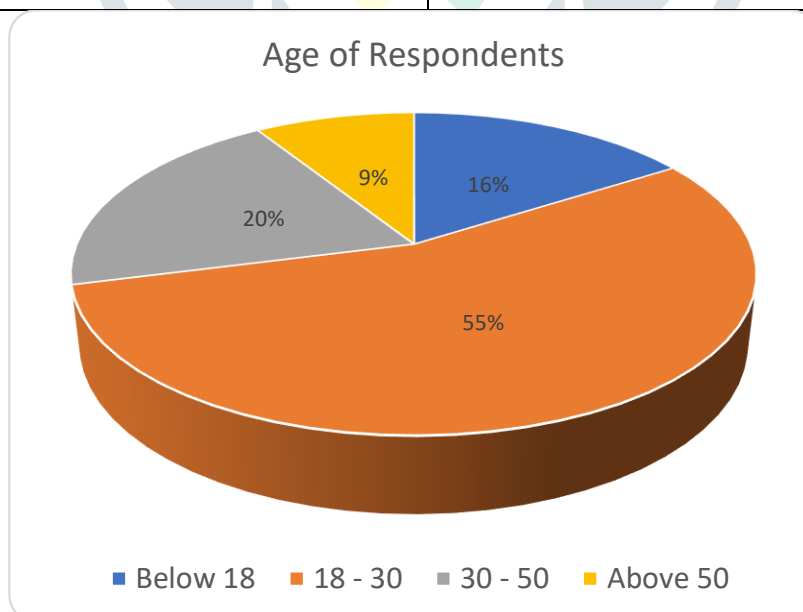




The total number of respondents for the research are 138; out of which 50 respondents belonged to dual parent families whereas 38 were from single parent families as a result of divorce and the rest belonged to single parent families as a result of death of one parent.

**Age of respondents**

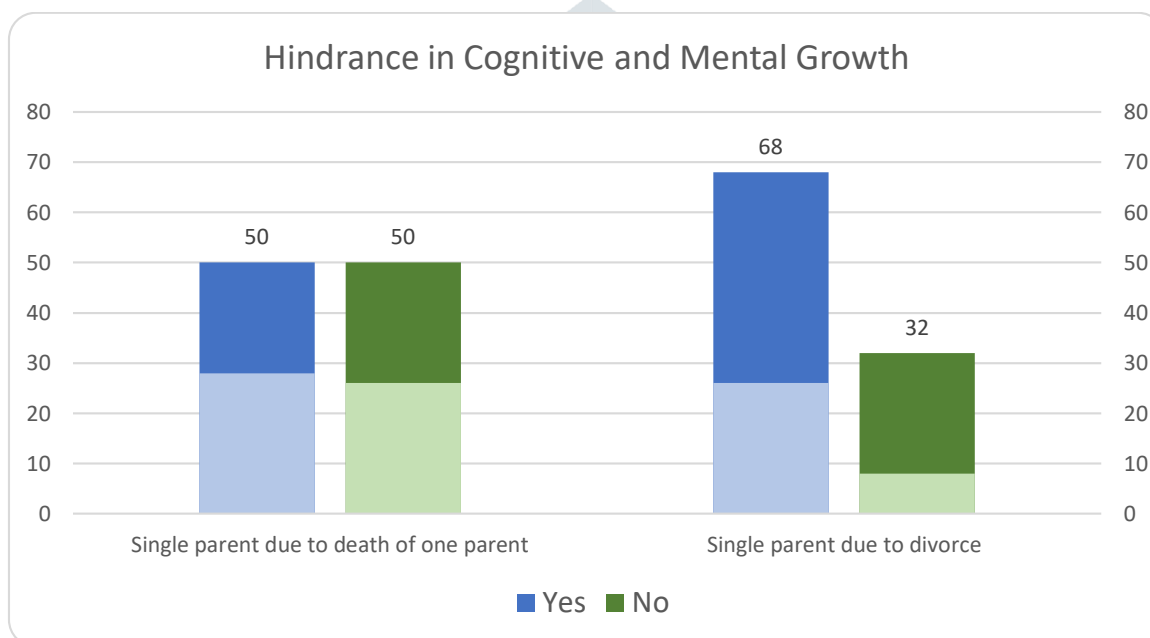
Age of respondents	No. Of respondents
Below 18	22 (15.9%)
18 - 30	77 (55%)
30- 50	27 (19.6%)
Above 50	12(8.7%)



**Interpretation -** According to the above pie chart, 55% of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 30, while respondents above the age of 50 bring up the smallest percentage of respondents.

**Cognitive and mental growth**

Hindrance in cognitive and mental growth						
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yes	11(44%)	14(56%)	25(50%)	16(62%)	10(38%)	26(68%)
No	12(48%)	13(52%)	25(50%)	9(75%)	3(25%)	12(32%)
Sub-total			50			38

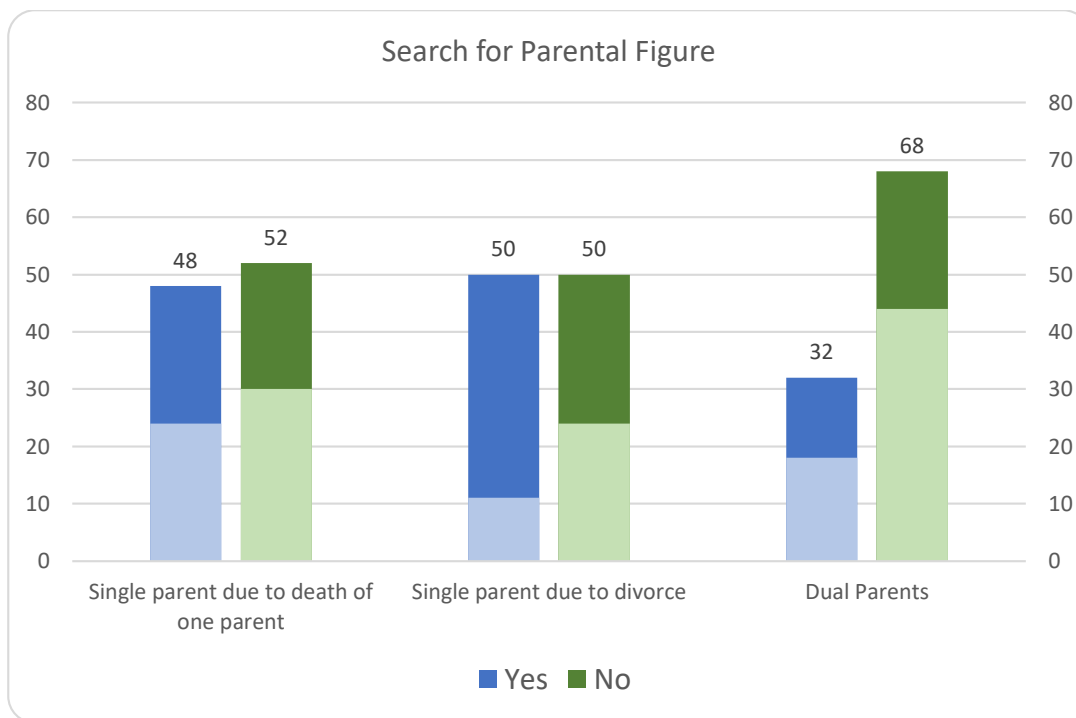


**Interpretation-** The above bar graph shows the different perspectives of children who have a single parent due to divorce or due to death of one parent, regarding the limitations on cognitive and mental development. Here, it is shown that children who have a single parent because of a divorce experience more limitations than children who have a single parent because one of their parents has passed away. Speaking specifically of gender, males are more hindered in case of divorce and females are hindered more in case of parental death.

**Search for Parental Figure**

Search for Parental Figure									
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce			Dual parents		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yes	12 (50%)	12 (50%)	24 (48%)	15 (79%)	4 (21%)	19 (50%)	7 (44%)	9 (56%)	16 (32%)

No	11 (42%)	15 (58%)	26 (52%)	10 (53%)	9 (47%)	19 (50%)	12 (35%)	22 (65%)	34 (68%)
Sub-total			50			38			50

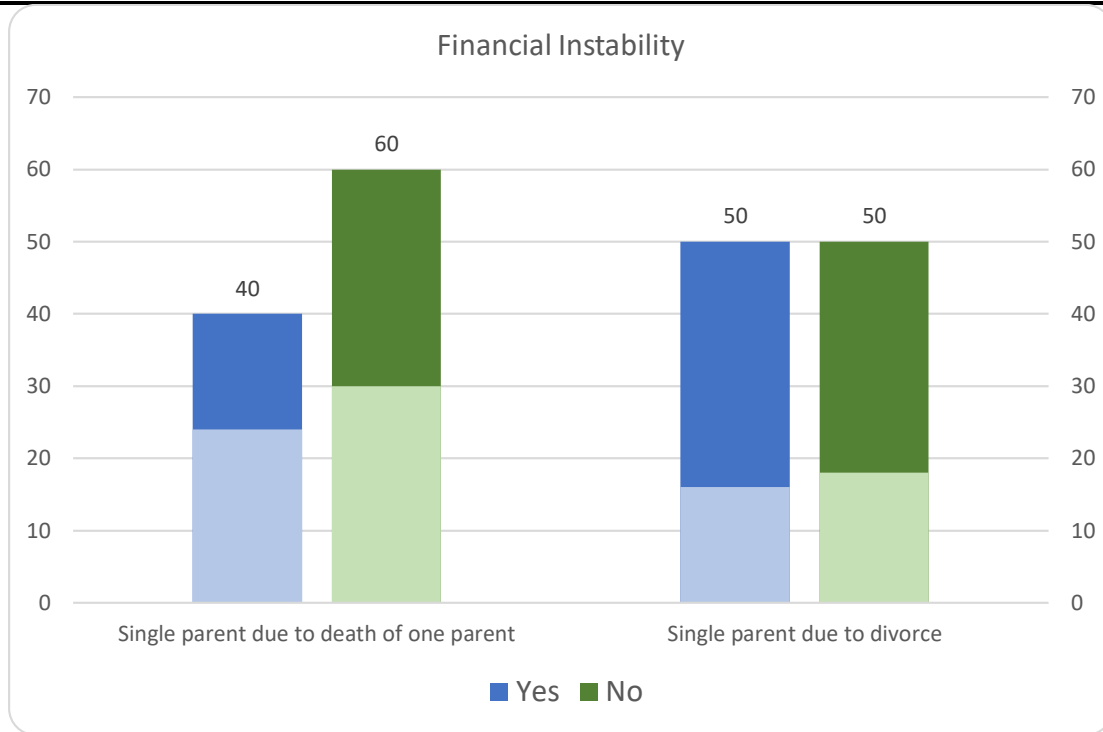


**Interpretation** - According to the responses received, the bar graph shows that children who have a single parent because of a divorce seek for a parental figure more frequently, and the ratio of men to women is higher.

**Financial Instability**

Financial Instability						
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yes	8(40%)	12(60%)	20(40%)	13(68%)	6(32%)	19(50%)
No	15(50%)	15(50%)	30(60%)	12(63%)	7(37%)	19(50%)
Sub-total			50			38

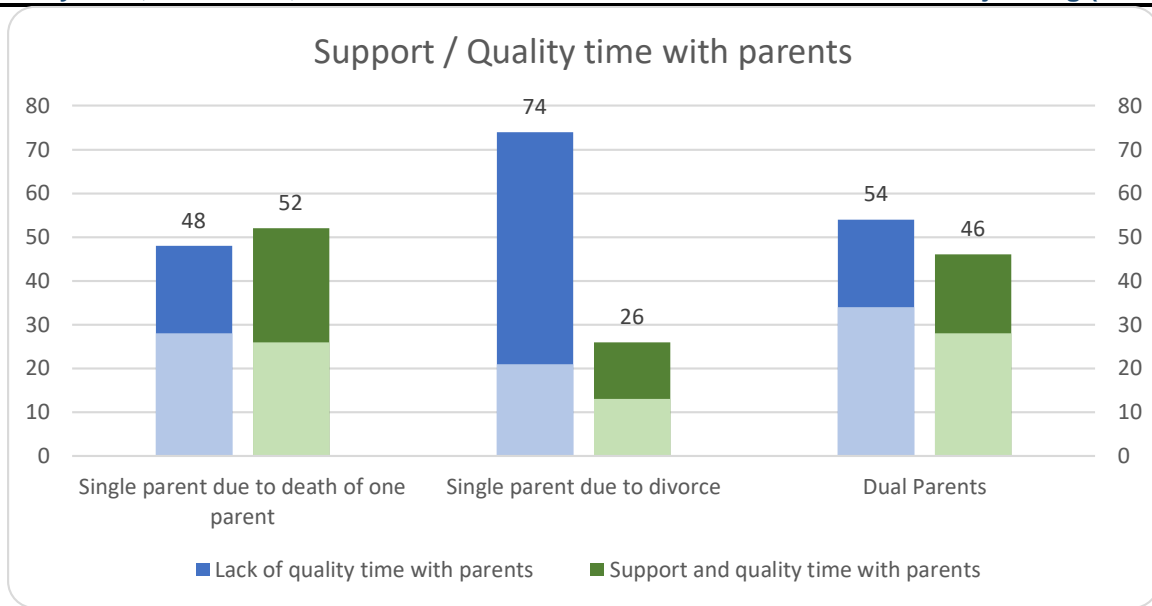




**Interpretation-** The above bar graph shows the condition of financial instability of the children in single parent families. As compared to single parent child due to death of one parent, children from single parent families due to divorce have more instable finances and in both cases males seem to face the heat of being primary monetary supporter.

**Support / Quality time with parents**

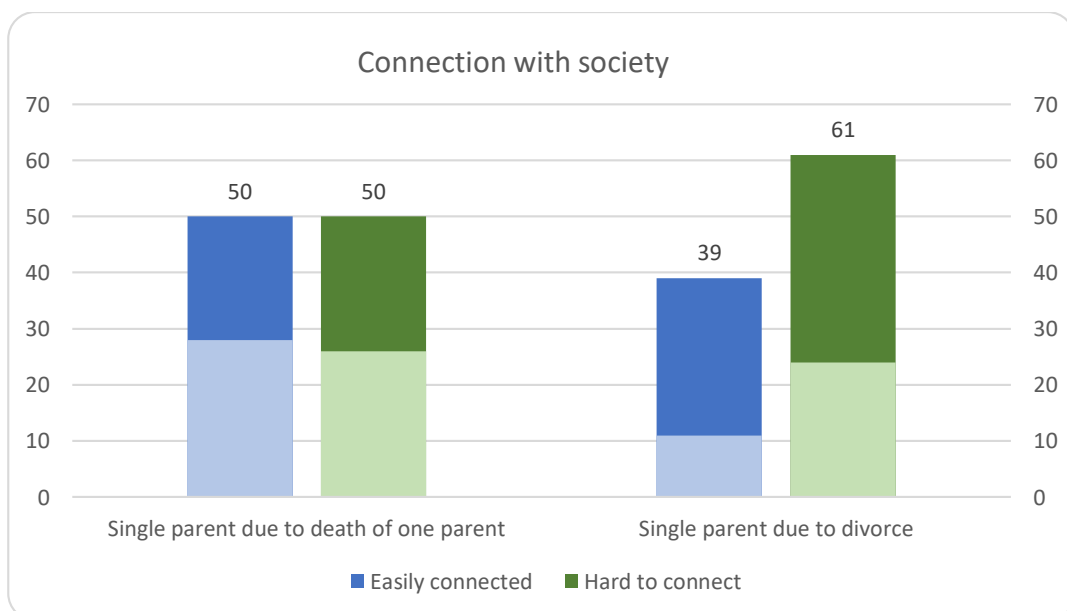
Support / Quality time with parents									
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce			Dual parents		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Lack of support & quality time with parents	10 (42%)	14 (58%)	24 (48%)	20 (71%)	8 (21%)	28 (74%)	10 (37%)	17 (63%)	27 (54%)
Support & quality time with parents	13 (50%)	13 (50%)	26 (52%)	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	10 (26%)	9 (39%)	14 (61%)	23 (46%)
Sub-total			50			38			50



**Interpretation** - According to the graph, children who have both parents receive more support and quality time than children who only have one parent due to either divorce or death of one parent. Lack of quality time is highest in child of single parent due to divorce and surprisingly males experience this lack more than females.

**Connection with society**

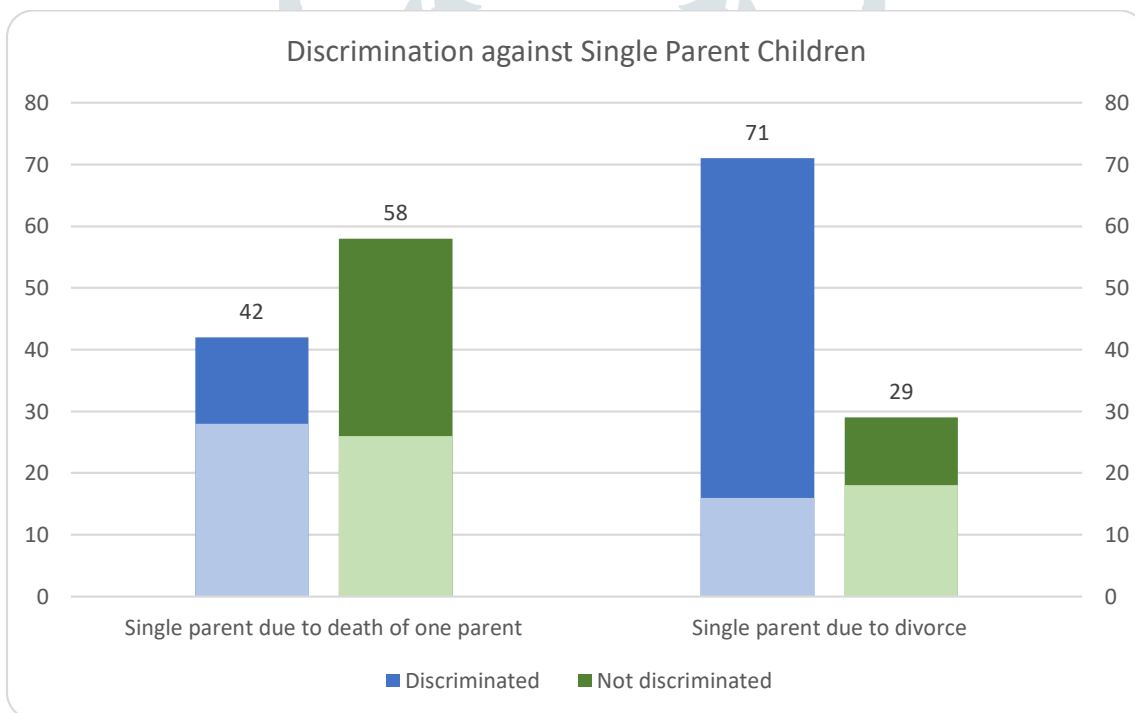
	Connection with society					
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Easily connected	11 (44%)	14 (56%)	25 (50%)	11 (73%)	4 (27%)	15 (39%)
Hard to connect	12 (48%)	13 (52%)	25 (50%)	14 (61%)	9 (39%)	23 (61%)
Sub-total			50			38



**Interpretation** – The responses show that single parent children due to death of one parent quickly integrates into society as compared to children of single parent due to divorce. More number of males find difficulties while interacting with others.

**Discrimination among children of single parent**

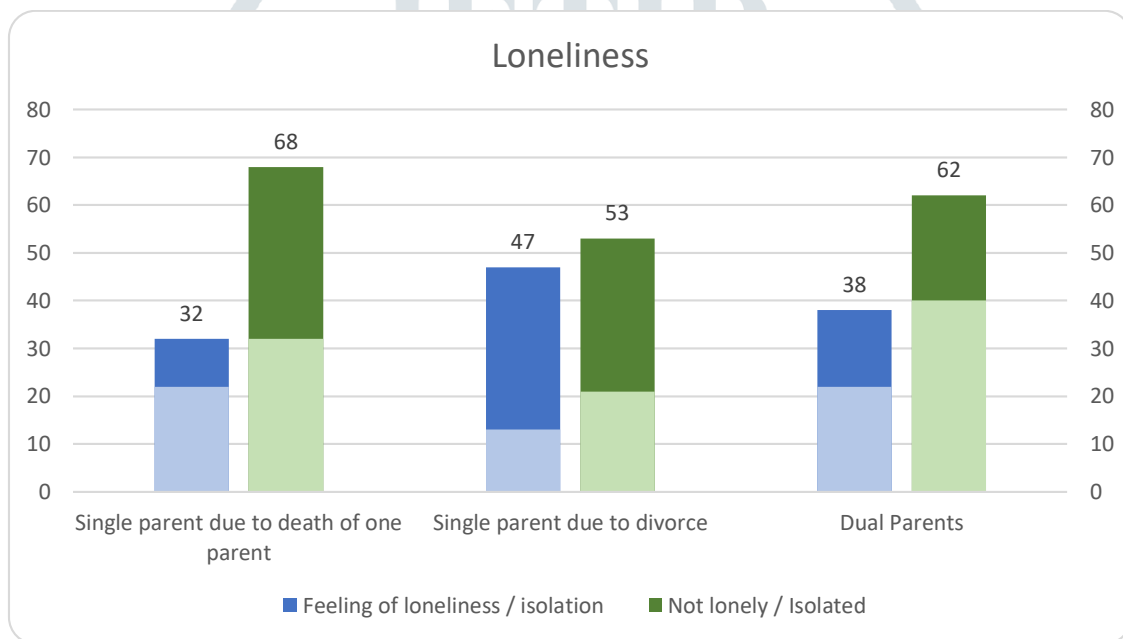
Discrimination among children of single parent						
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Discriminated	7 (33%)	14 (67%)	21 (42%)	21 (78%)	6 (22%)	27 (71%)
Not Discriminated	16 (78%)	13 (59%)	29 (68%)	4 (36%)	7 (64%)	11 (29%)
Sub-total			50			38



**Interpretation** – The bar graph represents the feeling of discrimination felt by children to single parents due to death or divorce. Children of single parents due to divorce feel discriminated by the society. But the women are less discriminated as compared to male.

**Loneliness**

	Loneliness								
	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce			Dual parents		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Lonely/ Isolated	5 (22%)	11 (41%)	16 (31%)	13 (52%)	5 (38%)	18 (47%)	8 (42%)	11 (35%)	19 (38%)
Not lonely / Isolated	18 (78%)	16 (59%)	34 (68%)	12 (48%)	8 (62%)	20 (53%)	11 (58%)	20 (65%)	31 (62%)
Sub-Total			50			38			50

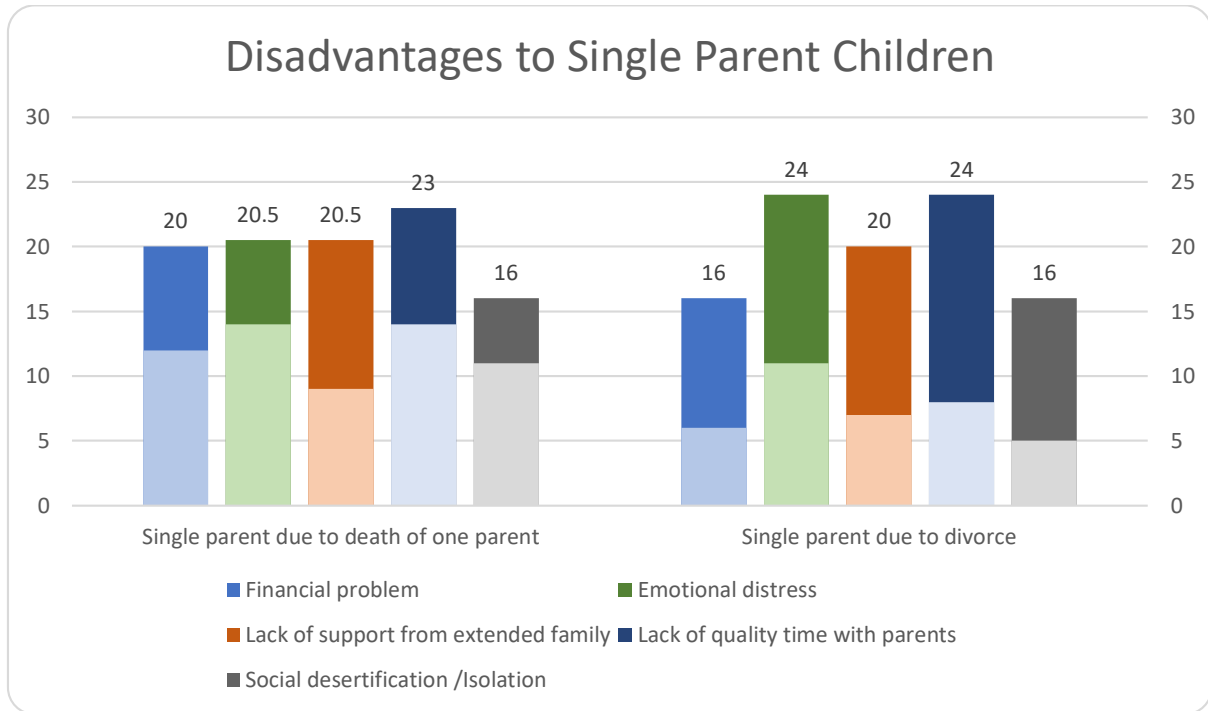


**Interpretation** – A child may feel particularly lonely during their development spurt. Children raised in single-parent households seldomly experience loneliness. Child of single parent due to divorce feels lonelier as compared to others and here the females feel lonelier.

**Disadvantage to Single Parent Children**

	Single parent due to death of one parent			Single parent due to divorce		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Financial problem	8(40%)	12(60%)	20(20%)	13(68%)	6(32%)	19(16%)
Emotional distress	7(33%)	14(67%)	21(20.5%)	17(61%)	11(39%)	28(24%)

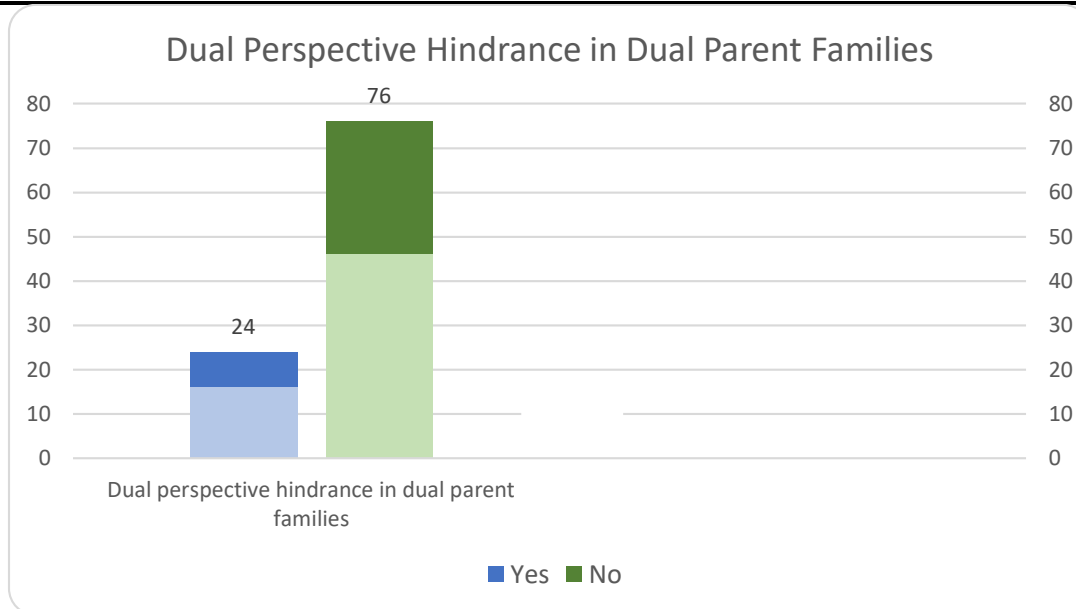
Lack of support from extended family	12(57%)	9(43%)	21(20.5%)	16(70%)	7(30%)	23(20%)
Lack of quality time with parents	10(42%)	14(58%)	24(23%)	20(71%)	8(29%)	28(24%)
Social desertification /Isolation	5(31%)	11(69%)	16(16%)	13(72%)	5(28%)	18(16%)



**Interpretation** – According to the data that was obtained, children of single parent families who have a divorced parent experience more issues than children of single parent families due to death of one parent. The issue of lack of quality time with parents is the highest in both cases. Also, emotional distress is seen more in male as compared to female in single parent due to divorce.

**Dual Perspective Hindrance in Dual Parent Families**

Dual perspective hindrance in dual parent families			
Dual parents			
	Male	Female	Total
Yes	4 (33%)	8 (67%)	12 (24%)
No	15 (39%)	23 (61%)	38 (76%)
Sub-total	19	31	50



**Interpretation** - Children in dual parent families can occasionally experience a hindrance from both parents' perspectives, while often not. But females face more hindrance as compared to males.

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The respondent demographic is an indicator that divorce culture is less prevalent in the sample group spread across the country which acts as a representative of the citizens of our country implying comparatively less divorce rates in India.
2. A lot of response was collected from children with single parents due to death of a parent and the major reason for the same was the huge wave of COVID pandemic which claimed a lot of lives.
3. One of the biggest striking findings was that most of the negative emotions experienced by single parent children such as loneliness, emotional distress, pressure to provide monetary support, lack of quality time with parents etc., males experienced such emotions more than females.
4. This indirectly implies that a male child's intensity of feeling such emotions is not only higher but also that a boy child is more affected by single parenting than a girl child is.
5. Children of single parents who have passed away adapt to life more readily than children of single parents who have divorced; as a result, the latter experience mental development challenges and frequently experience social insecurity.
6. An intriguing discovery was that children of single parents tend to look for and don't look for parental figures in equal amounts in both situations. The most likely cause of this could be that each individual interprets an event differently, which causes them to make various choices.
7. Children of a single parent who passes away have been seen to experience less financial instability. The government's numerous financial programs, assistance from non-profit organizations, and the children's own financial responsibility have all been identified as contributing factors.
8. The mental stress of self-blame experienced by children of divorced parents is the reason why children of single parents due to death, on average, get considerably more quality time and support from parents than children of single parents owing to divorce.



9. However, a baffling finding was that children having both parents are slightly lonelier than children who experience death of a parent a leading cause of increasing dependency on social media for validation.
10. Single parent's children due to divorce find it much more complex to interact and connect with the society after the emotional strain from their parent's divorce sets in and hence children who face a parent's death connect with the society better. Whereas children with both parents never face such challenge.
11. Children with a single parent because of a parent's divorce have been observed to experience greater social discrimination than children whose parents passed away.
12. Children who face a parent's death experience loneliness more than a child with single parent due to divorce. However, a baffling finding was that children having both parents are slightly lonelier than children who experience death of a parent a leading cause of increasing dependency on social media for validation.
13. Children who were raised by one parent, either because of divorce or the loss of a parent, experienced issues such as financial hardship, emotional pain, lack of support from other family members, a lack of parent-child time and social seclusion.
14. Children of dual parents said that, depending on the circumstance, their parents occasionally functioned as supporters or suppressors and, more often than not, as supporters.
15. Children that have both parents more often than not see the dual perspective as an advantage rather than a barrier to their development.
16. But within those dual parent children females majorly think of the two perspectives as an advantage whereas more of males view the two perspectives as a hindrance in decision making.
17. It was discovered that children who experience single parenting as a result of a divorce harbored negative feelings against the non-custodial parent or the spouse who requested the divorce.
18. Children who lost a parent and transitioned into a household with only one parent had bad feelings toward the deceased parent, especially in those cases where the child lost their parent very young in life.

## **SOLUTIONS**

Measures to be taken before single parenting starts-

1. Stable family planning- If two people decide to start a family then they should make sure that both of them are on the same page and want the same things in the aspect of bringing a child into the world. After a child is born going for a divorce not only affects the child but also the parents.
2. Effective and sincere communication- One of the biggest contributing factors for separation can be gaps in communication between parents. Eliminating those gaps helps in strengthening the relationship and effectively reducing probability of separation.
3. Future financial planning for family- Death of a parent is not predictable and hence when it occurs suddenly, it financially cripples the family. Therefore, it is important for the parents to keep themselves and their family financially stable through savings and insurances.

Measure to be taken after single parenting starts-

1. Confrontation about problems faced- Single parenting is stressful not only to the child but also the parent hence the only way to reduce this stress is by confronting each other about the problems being faced. This helps in building understanding, awareness and sympathy for each further helping in smoothening the hardships of single parenting.
2. Consult a counselor or therapist- Talking about one's emotions openly may not always be an option so during such times taking guidance or help from a counselor or therapist can be freeing. They guide us to understand ourselves better and process our emotions in a healthy manner.
3. Reasonable responsibility division- Due to loss or absence of a parent their responsibility not only completely falls on the other parent but the child is also exposed to responsibilities at an early age. This might become a gateway for negative feeling to develop towards the non-custodial or deceased parent. Hence it is important for the remaining parent and child to divide the responsibilities according to their age and strengths so as to nullify the burdens.

## **CONCLUSION**

Life as a single parent family can be stressful for both, the child and the parent. Each single parent family is unique, as is single parenting. Thus, it has a varied impact on every child. Even if a single parent strives to take on the responsibilities of both parents, he or she might not be able to do so.

This has negative impacts on the child's future development as well as on their current mental development. The research has highlighted the main challenges experienced by children of single parents, such as financial issues that further result in loss of educational chances, loss of quality time with parents, isolation by extended families especially in case of divorce, discrimination by individuals of orthodox thinking, emotional anguish as well as loneliness and long-lasting emotional damage in case of parent death. These single-parenting circumstances have the potential to be a double-edged sword for the kids since they could either spiral into depression or come out stronger and more resilient.

The responses from children who have both parents suggest that those kids have had significantly more of a sheltered upbringing than the others. However, a recent trend points to an increase in loneliness among teenagers, even when both parents are present and supportive. This is likely due to the teens' growing reliance on social media for validation as well as a shift in their way of thinking, which holds that a single parental no based on circumstances is the same as parents stifling their dreams and aspirations.

Thus, it can be said that single parenting likely has negative effects on a child's overall development, and very rarely does it result in the child becoming more responsible and independent. In contrast, having both parents result in the child not experiencing any significant challenges and remaining emotionally vulnerable.

- The previous researches, their theories and outcomes provided a basis for the overall research pattern which further underwent changes due to the varied results in responses due to time differences yet a few theories proved to be applicable in today's society as well. (Erikson's & Bandura's theories)

- Hence, the objective of understanding the impact of single parenting on a child's overall development was fulfilled and the results were that Single parenting regardless of the reason of its start is restricting and harmful to a child's overall development.
- Another objective of scrutinizing single parenting with dual parenting resulted in showing that dual parenting has almost negligible negative effects with enormous scope for the child in terms of development. Therefore, dual parenting is always more preferable to single parenting and in case of death the suggested solutions can be implemented to neutralize the ill effects of single parenting.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Participation in this study was strictly voluntary. Additionally, the researchers saw to it that participant's right to privacy was upheld. The researchers also confirmed that data must never be presented in a way that could be harmful to the study participants. All study participants had the option to drop out or ask that the information that was gathered about them not be utilized.

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