



A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD ON STUDENTS' BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, IN WAKISO DISTRICT, IN UGANDA

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Abstract: The home profoundly impacts the students' psychological, emotional, social, and economic state. The state of the home affects the individual because parents are the initial socialization agents in an individual's life. Family background and setting can affect the child's reaction to life situations resulting in a subsequent effect on the child's behavior and discipline. A single parent is a person who has a child or children but no husband, wife, or partner who lives with them. This could be a result of divorce or the death of a partner. This study attempted to investigate the impact of single parenthood on students' behavior and discipline in secondary schools in Wakiso district, in Uganda. Digital Dissertations, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar were scanned in the research, and 60 studies by the study criteria were included. Studies were included in the review because of their connection to the study, and data were extracted and synthesized using a thematic synthesis approach. Based on PRISMA as a method, secondary data were used in the study. This research found that children from single-parent households experience psychological trauma, which can result in antisocial behaviours. They are also more aggressive, prone to drug abuse, alcoholism, and criminal activities and many end up dropping out of school. Conclusively, school administrators, educational counselors, and teachers ought to acknowledge those factors that affect children from single parenthood to better understand their behaviours and attitudes. Whereas many children in single-parent homes grow up into successful, mature adults, a reasonable number of children raised in single-parent homes may not reach their full potential due to inadequate family resources.

Keywords- Single parenthood, systematic review, family pattern, secondary school, PRISMA

I. INTRODUCTION

A family refers to a group of two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and residing together in a household. A family includes the homeowners among its members (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). A single-parent household can be defined as one headed by a mother, father, older sibling, aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather, foster parent, or extended relative who acts as the primary caregiver and guardian of the child. According to Bukola et al. (2018), single parenthood is the taking of family responsibility which includes caring for children without the father's or mother's contribution. Single-parent families are mainly divided into several types: divorce-based, widow-based, unmarried-based, separated-based, and single-based. Divorce-based single-parent families refer to families where legal procedures dissolve the marriage contract, and underage children live with one parent. Widow-based families on the other hand involve one parent's death, and the other parent lives with underage children. Unmarried-based families are formed by unmarried men and women raising children together in one household yet Separated-based families retain marital status but do not live together. Single-based families involve women getting pregnant by using donated sperm through scientific means.

Behavior can be defined as how an individual conducts herself/himself. It can be seen in society norms or how one treats others or handles objects. Therefore, behavior is the way an individual acts towards people, society, or objects. Behavior can be bad or good, normal or abnormal according to societal norms. Society will always try to

correct bad behavior and try to bring abnormal behavior back to normal (UNESCO, 2000). In a school setting, discipline entails the learners' ability to discern what is right or wrong (Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari, 2013). A disciplined student is one whose behaviours, actions, and inactions conform to the predetermined rules and regulations of the school (Ali, Dada, Isiaka, & Salmon, 2014). The environment at home is a primary socialization agent that influences a child's interest in school and aspirations for the future. The child is morally upright and emotionally stable when the caring responsibilities are carried out by both parents. The family has a great influence on the child's physical, mental, and moral development. In reality, parents play a major role in their children's academic and professional development. Raising a child or children by one parent, either the mother or father alone, most of the time is reported to be quite challenging, placing extraordinary demands on both the parent and the children (Bronnimann, 2007). Situations such as divorce, separation of various kinds, or the death of one spouse can leave a single parent in charge of these responsibilities which can cause behavior-related challenges for the victims. A parent's involvement in their child's education is crucial and the ability of a family to manage a child is essential for achieving success in school (Abd Hamid & Salleh, 2013).

Lately, the number of single parent families has been fast rising in different parts of the world, Uganda inclusive. Today, many children live in single-parent homes more than ever before and more than half of all children born today will likely live in single-parent homes before they reach adulthood (Odu & Ayodele 2007). whereas many single-parent families are the outcome of broken marriages due to poverty, alcoholism, and extramarital affairs among other reasons, numerous others are a result of out-of-marriage childbearing most especially by teenagers. Fadeiye (1985) pointed out that both parents have their roles to play in a child's education. The father is to provide every necessary tool for educational advancement while the mother is expected to supplement the efforts of the father. In a situation where the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater to all the necessary and basic needs as well as supervise the academic performance of the child, by checking the child's academic records or by going through their class and lesson notes or books every day as well as giving counselling support when needed, a child's academic and psychological state are likely to be affected.

The involvement of fathers in their children's schools is important regarding their academic achievement and social behaviour. Nord, Brimhall, and West (1997) argue that in two-parent households, "Fathers' involvement in their children's schools has a distinct and independent influence on children's achievement over and above that of mothers". The authors also stressed that fathers can be a positive force in their children's education, and when fathers get involved, their children are likely to do better academically and morally. Unfortunately, many fathers seem to be relatively uninvolved in their children's schools. Compared to married couples, single parents tend to have a lower level of involvement in children's education devoting less supervision and monitoring of the child's school work (Astone & McLanahan, 1991). Given the positive influence of parental involvement on children's educational outcomes (Scott, 2004; Kim 2002), a low level of parental involvement among single-parent families is considered to be a key reason for poor educational outcomes of children with a single-parent (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Barreto et al. (2014) postulate that family functions are established through patterns of interaction that become deeply embedded in habits that are difficult to break. Each member of the family is impacted by the type of family system they are a part of. According to Fasina (2021), alterations made to any facet of the family will impact every individual within the system and any parent's death would affect the children in the family system, as would any temporary or final separations and divorce. Divorce is associated with a decrease in the quantity and quality of contact between children and non-custodial fathers. Custodial mothers are often preoccupied with work which reduces the number of hours they can devote to their children. This can lead to a decrease in parental attention, help, and supervision and, thus, to lower educational attainment. Furthermore, the loss of parental role models may result in inadequate learning of social skills and a restricted kin network later in life, with consequences on the well-being of children. Divorce is also likely to be a stressful experience for children as it is often associated with other difficult events for children, such as moving houses, changing schools, losing contact with grandparents, and parental remarriage. These stressful events may disrupt children's school attainment, social relationships, and personality development. A broken family cannot fulfill its expected responsibilities due to its fragmented structure and some other reasons. Children who grow up in fragmented or single-parent families fail to fulfill their socialization tasks (Uluğtekin, 1991) and are always caught on the wrong side of the law.

Generally, the overall relationship between a parent and his or her child affects the psychological well-being and ultimately the educational outcomes of the child. Mbah (2019) asserts that children from single-parent households experience psychological trauma, which can result in antisocial behavior and drug abuse. Likewise, children from single-parent households may experience low social interaction and unemployment (Ali & Soomar, 2019). Schools should interest themselves in understanding the nature and family background of the children they teach and accord the necessary guidance and counseling to students depending on students' specific needs and challenges, this psychosocial support will help to reduce the levels of aggressiveness, substance abuse, truancy and alcoholism on the side of children from single parents. Since many single parents especially single mothers are grappling with low levels of income which compounds their frustration and stress levels, they need to be assisted through government initiatives that aim to improve the lives of women by either giving them startup capital or equipping them with skills that will help them to start income generating projects. By raising their income levels, single mothers shall be in position to take care of their children's needs including keeping them longer in school.

II. Methods

2.1 Systematic literature review

A systematic literature review is a review of a formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically assess relevant research and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). This method was chosen because it helps to synthesize academic literature in an accurate and reliable style. For our study, we systematically considered articles that focus on the impact of single parenthood on students' behavior and discipline in secondary schools, in Wakiso District, in Uganda. The systematic literature review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) approach (Moher et al., 2015). This approach involves an evidence-based checklist of 27 items and a four-phase flow chart. The checklist items included were those that did not have high bias risks. A PRISMA aims to ensure clarity and transparency when reporting systematic literature reviews. The PRISMA checklist of 27 items and four-phase flowcharts are used to report the results.

2.2 Search terms

The search action was conducted using the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases which are well-established in the social sciences. The search action included single parenthood and discipline. For each construct, we used several keywords to ensure a broad coverage of studies. Each database has its indexing terms, therefore; individual proximity operators were used. As a result, the following Boolean search action was conducted: single parenthood OR single mother parenthood (NEAR/2), Single parenthood and discipline (NEAR/2) single mothers and discipline.

2.3 Selection criteria

A number of criteria were specified to select the most relevant studies. In all the databases, the limitations of the document type, peer-reviewed articles language, English, and period, 2010 to 2023, were added. To be included, articles had to fulfill the criteria defined below:

1. Focus on single parenthood and students' behavior or those related to single parenthood and discipline because the two terms may complement each other.
2. Include studies on single mother parenthood or single father parenthood because they can be used in the same context.
3. Include conceptualization or terms related to single parenthood and students' discipline
4. Be published in a peer-reviewed journal. This is because journals are the most reliable source of scientific information.

2.4 Study selection

The study selection was made in three steps. First, the titles of all retrieved articles were screened for eligibility for the above-mentioned inclusion criteria. Second, the abstracts of all initially relevant articles were screened for eligibility by applying uniform criteria. Finally, the full text of all remaining publications was checked. All articles deemed relevant were coded in terms of names of authors, date published, journal, main aims, method, contextualization, results, and conclusion. Coding of the articles was done to make sure all articles that fulfilled the four criteria were selected. Based on this document, we extracted information about the study field, study type, main concept, and whether the topic was conceptualized or operationalized in all selected articles. Data extraction is part of the content-analysis process to make an overview of the characteristics of all articles that were included in our research. Then, the content analysis process consisted of looking at how the topic was contextualized to bring out the relationship between single parenthood, students' behavior, and discipline

2.5 PRISMA flowchart

Given the restrictions of document type, language, and period, 60 articles were identified from the databases. Out of which 04 were duplicates which means 56 articles were screened. After title and abstract screening, 53 were read in full-text from which 35 articles met all four inclusion criteria. Fig. 1 presents the flowchart for the selection of the included studies. Extra records were not identified through other sources, because the references of the included articles did not contribute to the received information. Reasons for excluding a full-text screening included: (1) not containing information on single parenthood; (2) focusing on primary schools or universities; (3) not mentioned in the context of a secondary school; (4) not a peer-reviewed journal article; (5) no full-text available online; and (6) duplicated articles. If there were several suitable articles with a duplicated first author, we selected the most recent available article.

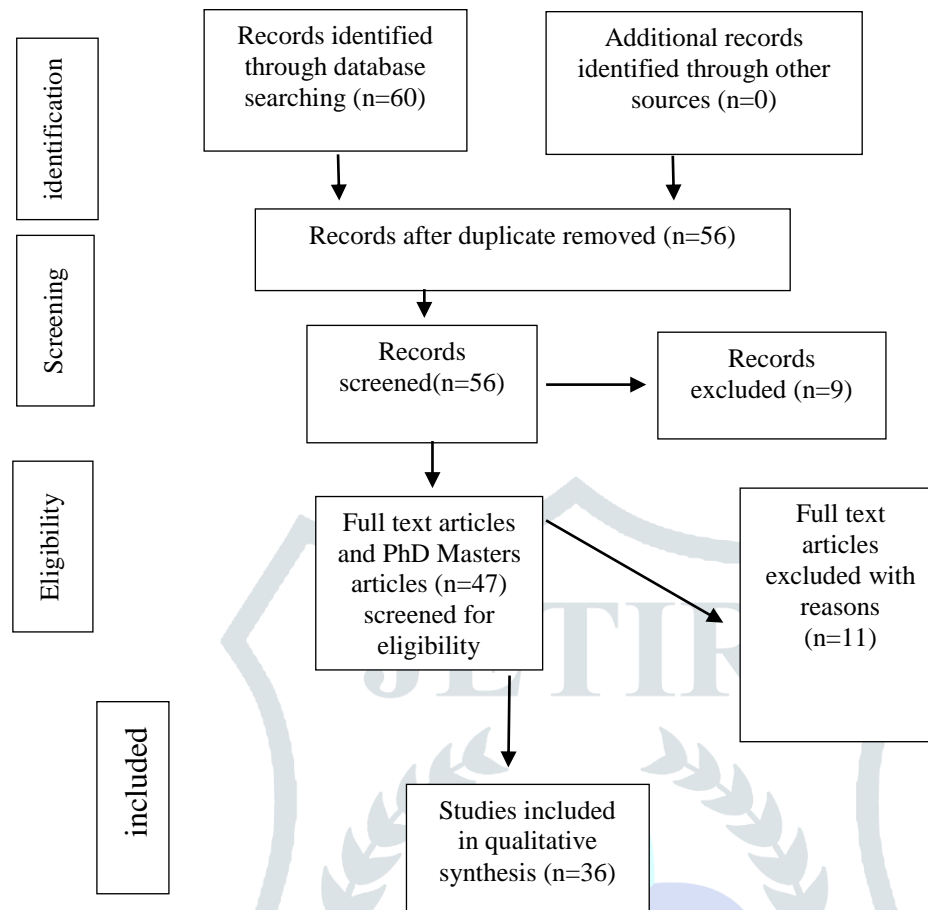


Fig.1. Prisma flowchart

3.0 Results and discussion

Many researchers have studied the consequences of single-parenthood on children. For instance, the absence of the father may be felt as a lack of masculine influence. For proper emotional growth, a child may need the presence of a male role model, the father's absence may be felt as the absence of another adult who would have augmented the child's environment. Akinyele and Onifade (1996) predicted that the withdrawal of one adult from the family will depress a child's cognitive development. As such, the level of cognitive and social stimulation in single-parent homes is lower than when both parents are present. In situations like divorce, separation, or the death of a parent, children are at a bigger risk for symptoms of poor psychological adjustment, behavioral and social problems, and low self-esteem. It is widely believed that in Wakiso district, in Uganda, and elsewhere, children from broken homes have a higher prevalence of academic, emotional, and behavioral problems than other children from intact homes.

Due to limited parental control brought about by the absence of one parent, many of these children portray levels of aggressiveness in school which result into punishments like suspensions or expulsion from school. Soka (1992) contends that boys without fathers have trouble developing self-control. They tend to be more aggressive and may end up becoming delinquents. The rising cycle of aggressiveness that custodian mothers and their sons frequently encounter is sometimes due to the environment and tone of the homes and the kind of supervision that the boys receive. Single-parent family structure has a devastating effect on the intellectual development of the children from such homes. Children often suffer inadequate development of body structures like the nervous system, particularly the brain, the sensory apparatus, and the structures of communication and the process through which they are used to make the individual aware of and understand the world around him.

Absenteeism as one of the common behaviors portrayed by children from single-parent families is also detrimental to students' academic achievement, promotion, graduation, self-esteem, and employment potential. Undoubtedly, students who miss school fall behind their peers in the classroom. This, in turn, leads to low self-esteem and increases the likelihood of such a student to drop out of school. In Wakiso district, in Uganda, cases of absenteeism are common among students from single parent home. Some of them miss school because their single parents cannot afford to raise school fees and others don't have the required scholastic materials. Out of peer influence and the need for children especially boys to acquire some income, many opt to engage in collection of scrap and plastic materials

which they sale to raise some income. It is during such activities that some even learn to use drugs and other dangerous substances.

The absence of a father seems most damaging among children in working-class families and among children in lower- class families. Ming (2009) asserted that the child brought up in a traditional family with both parents is always content with himself, self-reliant, self-controlled, and explorative while a child brought up by single-parent usually portrays poor self-esteem, little curiosity and exploratory behavior, moodiness, lack of joy and happiness, emotional instability and little self- reliance.

A study conducted by McLanahan and Booth (1991) on children from mother-only families compared to children from two-parent families, stated that: Children from mother-only families have poorer academic achievement and it is worse for boys than girls, are more likely to have higher absentee rates at school; are more likely to drop out of school early; are more likely to have lower earnings in young adulthood and are more likely to be poor; are more likely to marry early and to have children early, both in and out of marriage; are more likely to divorce, if they marry; and are more likely to commit delinquent acts and to engage in drug and alcohol use (p. 406). Children living with both biological parents remain in school longer and attain higher educational qualifications than children in one-parent families. In particular, children with absent fathers are more likely to drop out of school than children who live with their fathers (Astone & McLanahan, 1991);

Results from the current study also indicate that children from single-parent households have significantly lower levels of adaptation compared to those from intact families. Prolonged exposure to the stressful and negative emotions predominant in single-parent households can lead to psychological School perspective disturbance, characterized by traits such as self-isolation, indifference, and reluctance to engage in conversations. Children from single-parent homes are often afraid of making friends, fearing others might judge their family situation. As a means of regulating and correcting their misconduct, Modest condemnation may play an important role, aiding children to identify with and be obedient to the guidance of teachers and parents. Since children from single-parent households are often sensitive and pessimistic, excessive criticism can trigger rebellious thoughts, aggravating the portrayal of behavioral problems and yielding counterproductive results. However, complete failure to pay attention to their mistakes can lead to a sense of entitlement, where they believe they can do whatever they want without facing consequences, perhaps even remaining insensible to their wrongdoings.

4.0 Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusively, it is worth mentioning that for children to benefit psychologically and academically, both parents should provide aspects of an orderly and nurturing home life which will enhance their emotional and psychological growth. Couples should endeavor to keep their marriages intact to serve as models to their children. In situations where unavoidable single parenting exists, parents should enhance the healthy emotional and intellectual development of their children to augment their educational outcomes. In addition, Educators need to know the challenges faced by children from single-parent homes to better understand the behaviors and attitudes of the children that they teach.

While many children in single-parent homes grow up into successful, mature adults, many children being raised in single-parent homes may not reach their full potential due to inadequate family resources.

Schools can also help single-parent children who portray unbecoming behavior by engaging them in sports activities which can possibly reduce their negative energy. This will help them develop constructive attitudes as they also develop their talents. In Wakiso district, in Uganda, the challenges faced by single-parent children can be lessened through enhancing the oversight of minors by relevant government agencies to mitigate negative public opinions and increasing economic subsidies that will ease access to basic requirements. Secondly, family members should be encouraged to allocate more time to their children, offering them support and serving as positive role models. It is also essential to minimize conflicts in the presence of children, thus fostering a positive environment for the children to emulate. The mental well-being of students within the school system should be highly prioritized to help them adapt to the school system and foster meaningful levels of socialization. Teachers should engage in more frequent communication with single-parent students, offering encouragement to boost their self-confidence.

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