



Perceived Effects of Single Parenting on Youths of Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State

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Abstract

This study was an assessment of perceived effects of single parenting on youths of Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Three research questions were raised as a guide to achieving the main aim of this study. In addition, theory of Functionalist propounded by Emile Durkheim (20th century) was adopted to offer a theoretical base for the study. The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed to study 393 youths sampled from a population of 267,400 indigenes using multi-staged sampling technique. Instrument was a validated and reliable questionnaire designed in line with the objectives. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and same revealed that single parenting has an overall perceived negative effect on youths' educational status, moral conducts, and physical development of the area. The effect of single parenting on youths' educational status includes difficulty in attending university level of education (3.71 ± 0.66), poor academic supervision by parents (3.56 ± 0.19), and low academic status (4.19 ± 0.36). Similarly, the effect of single parenting on youths' moral conducts were poor etiquettes (3.66 ± 0.35), deviant behaviors (4.28 ± 0.80), and lawless tendencies (3.90 ± 0.14). Lastly, the effects on physical development includes inability to establish cordial relationships (3.12 ± 0.72), economic and financial challenges (3.96 ± 0.68), and lack of meaningful occupation (3.72 ± 0.71). As a result, it was recommended that divorce among parents should be condemned culturally; parents should prioritize children education as mandatory; Federal Government should declare free education for indigenes as a nation's major oil producing zone, member Communities should maintain healthy and harmonious relationship and State attend to indigenes foremost concerning employment and rural development.

Keywords: Single parenting; Youths; and Perceived effects.



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Introduction

Single parenting is a condition of caring and raising a child by one parent either; by the father or by the mother. It is also referred to as solo parenting being that one parent bears all the responsibilities and challenges of the child. According to Chavda, and Nisarg, (2023); Ekpeyong, & Udisi, (2016); Daryanail, Hamilton, Abramson and Alloy,(2016); Ekpeyong, (2019); Abdulraheem, Raimi and Edet, (2018), single parenting is a social problem leading to adverse development of our country. Globally, about 8% of all households are headed by single parent with 84% of them being mothers. Overall, empirical evidence highlights the importance of considering the unique challenges faced by youths as a result of single-parent families and implementing targeted interventions to support the well-being and development of children raised in these households.

In most cases, condition of single parenting is not elective by either parent but always mandated by several factors beyond efforts of the affected partner (Ali & Soomar, 2019). Naturally it may be warranted by sickness and untimely death of parent. It is estimated that over 100 incidences of divorce are registered in Pakistani customary court to ensure single parenting (Falana, Bada & Ayodele, 2012). Other causes are teenage pregnancies which leads to forceful marriage, rejection by in-laws, socio-economic challenges, illness and death of couple (Fankel, et. al., 2012).

Though it is frowned at by most religious and traditional beliefs, Melinda (2024) highlighted several advantages associated with single parenting most of which are for the benefits of the growing child. Most children report of undivided attention with their affected parents, freedom in decision making, peaceful and fewer arguments among kids, ambient role modeling, independency and responsiveness of children and the solo parent, high sense of belonging organizations, friends and extended families, close relationship, positive parenting and democratic problem-solving techniques. Gongala (2024) asserted that raising babies alone can be stressful, but with appropriate planning, responsiveness and commitment, it can be handled with ease.

Despite these benefits, negative effects of solo parenting outmatch their importance in future lives of youths. According to Gongala (2024), there are high level of indiscipline among children, intense sorrow and loneliness of the parent, difficulty in creating new relationship on both parties, poor socialization on the children, huge pressure of roles and tasks on affected parent, and financial challenges if income level of parent is low (Stack & Meredith, 2017). Other observed disadvantages include low parental quality, low self-esteem and poor adjustment mechanism on the growing children.

It is envisagement of above impacts after surveying lifestyle of the people and literature base that prompts the researchers into this study on impending effects of single parenting on youths of Ogbia Local Government Area, Bayelsa State.

Statement of the Problem

Many of the problems that single parent have are similar to those of the two parents, but these problems seem more difficult to bear or managed when the home is being tutored by only one person. For example, all children feel hostile towards their parents as they grow-up and try to be independent. But in a situation, where the anger and rebellion are all directed towards one person, it may seem worse, if there is only one to bear it, not for two to share. The effects of single parenting are far reaching because single parenthood leaves them with deep scars. Being single is a very tough and challenging task, (Chavda, and Nisarg, 2023; Ekpenyong, &Udisi, 2016; Daryanail, Hamilton, Abramson, and Alloy, (2016); Ekpeyong, 2019; Abdulraheem, Raimi, and Edet, 2018). Children are increasingly socialized by influences outside the immediate family. As a result of poor parental care and guidance caused by divorce, separation or death of a partner, children are exposed to potentially damaging situation, (Ekpeyong, 2019; Abdulraheem, Raimi, and Edet, 2018). When a mother is out of the home, leaving the children under the charity and mercy of stepmother, these children are prone to many problems such as poor feeding, emotional disturbance (fear, insecurity). As such, they are not likely to perform up to expectation in school. Thus, these children suffer from mental retardation, personality disorders and more miserable. They show behavioral response like lying, stealing and playing truant in school. In typical Nigerian homes there is increase in domestic work and redistribution of household chores, which leaves the children with little or no time for their studies. This is the problem that the Ogbia woman faces, despite the fact that she is industrious. So, what are the effects on the girl child mother and other youths? Similar studies have been carried out in other LGAs in Bayelsa State, but it is doubtful if any such researches have been conducted in Ogbia LGA. It is this gap that the present research intends to fill.

Objectives

The aims of this study were to examine Perceived Effects of Single Parenting on Youths of Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

To guide the study, some specific objectives were designed as follows:

1. To examine the perceived effects of single parenting on educational status of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State;
2. To determine the perceived effects of single parenting on the moral conduct of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State;
3. To assess the perceived effects of single parenting on the physical development of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

Research question I. What were the perceived effects of single parenting on educational status of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State?

Research Question II.What was the perceived effects of single parenting on the moral conduct of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State?

Research Question III.What was the perceived effects of single parenting on the physical development of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State?

LITERATURE REVIEWS

1. Perceived effects of single parenting on educational status of youths

The aim of parenting is to produce and leave behind educated offspring that are useful and productive to self and societies. Empirical reports in some African countries revealed that youths from families of single parents are likely to perform academically lower than that of both parents despite possessing equal academic intellectual abilities (Birihanze, (2022). This is as regards purchase of books, fees, school requirements and upgrade. Failure to meet these basic needs warrants a student to vacate school for early child labour in other to assist parents financially (Bandura, 2012). A study carried out by UNICEF (2011) revealed that number of single parents responsible for child's education are more than number of both parents by 55%: 45%. According to Bradshaw and Millar (1991) in their empirical study at Kenya, youths of single parents are not likely to be at school by 17 years of age while youths of both parents do. In another study conducted by Bryant (1990), result states that children from single parents pose a risk factor of manifesting violent behavior, conduct disorder and deviance that may mar their academic performance in the future.

Children from single-parent households may face obstacles in academic achievement due to limited resources, inconsistent parental involvement, and increased stressors at home. These factors can negatively impact on their ability to concentrate, complete homework, and engage in extracurricular activities effectively. Several studies have found out that children raised in single-parent households tend to have lower academic achievement compared to those in two-parent households. This effect can be attributed to various factors, including less parental involvement, financial constraints, and increased stress within the household (Hofferth & Pinzon 2011, Rosksa & Potter 2011).

Another study by Schneider and Harketh (2019), investigated the long-term consequences of single parenthood on educational attainment and family formation, shedding light on the mechanisms through which single-parent households may affect children's academic achievement. In a related study, Harkonen, and Dronkers (2006), highlighted difficulties in availing oneself in the education of higher learning. While focusing on the educational gradient of divorce, this comparative study provides insights into the challenges faced by children from single-parent households in different countries, including barriers to accessing higher education. Again, Amato *et al.* (2015), in a study: *A study on Single-parent households and children's educational achievement*: pointed out that single parenthood has problematic consequences for children's school performance at the aggregate or societal level. Using multilevel modeling, Daryanai, Hamilton, Abramson, and Alloy, (2016); Ekpeyong, (2019); Abdulraheem, Raimi, and Edet, (2018), found out that U.S. students performed poorly on mathematics and reading achievement tests in schools with high proportions of children from

single-parent families, even after controlling for school socioeconomic status and other school characteristics.

Moreover, a meta-analysis by Osborne and McLanahan (2007) highlights that single-parent families often face greater stressors and have fewer resources for effective parenting, which can contribute to negative outcomes for children, including lower educational attainment and increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors.

2. Effects of single parenting on youth's moral conduct

Recent research supports the notion that children raised in single parent families may be at a higher risk of emotional and behavioral issues compared to those in two-parent households. For instance, a study, Chavda, and Nisarg, (2023); Ekpenyong, & Udisi, L. (2016); Daryanail, Hamilton, Abramson, and Alloy, (2016), found that children in single-parent families had a higher likelihood of experiencing emotional and behavioral problems, including depression and anxiety, than those in two-parent households. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Amato (2010) corroborated these findings, highlighting that factors such as reduced parental supervision and strained parent-child relationships contribute to the elevated risk of emotional and behavioral difficulties among children in single-parent families. However, some potential effects may include:

Decreased parental supervision

Single parents may have limited time and resources to provide consistent supervision, which can lead to youths engaging in riskier behaviors or making poor decisions without guidance. Watt, Howells and Delfabbro (2004) explained that offending behaviours manifest from thirteen over eighteen years of age and tends to decline from forties due to poor parenting style. They suggest that both parents should partake in supervision of a child's behaviour towards positive expectations. In the same vein, Cassel and Bernstein (2006) supported that many family dysfunctions are in connection with conflicts among siblings, poor parental attachment, poor supervision and rules, inconsistent discipline, juvenile delinquencies, instability among members. In another development, Hoeve, Blokland, Dubas, Loeber, Gerris and van der Laan, (2008) also supports that children's criminality is in association with detachment of father-son relationship and control. They explained that most delinquent children were abandoned by fathers and emotionally damped by mothers and worse is the case when mother and father split in relationship. The single mothers are known to lack economical and emotional support. For that reason, the mother may emotionally be unable to take care of the child. Solo parenthood by mothers are bereft of father's bond with male children which is a basic source of their positive influence in emotional and social development. Where fathers abandon the family for the mother alone the male siblings are denied of their vital emotional bond which enhance them to assume male role model and responsibilities in the society.

Youths who lack parental supervision are more likely to be involved in early sexual experience and behaviours with drugs than children from authoritative parents. The influence of peers is significantly high during the youthful years, and a poor self-image may allow

these individuals to be more susceptible to engage in criminal behaviour. There seems to be a link between letting children roam the streets unsupervised from an early age and potential criminal behaviour later in life especially under solo parenting of the mother. For instance, in the Cambridge-Somerville study where poor parental supervision in childhood was the best predictor of violent and property offending up to the age of forty-five, the young people who lack both the supportiveness of parental warmth and the self-esteem had major difficulties in coping with challenging situations and negative influences of peers in their future days (Lyons-Ruth, & Jacobvitz, 1999). These children were afraid to say 'no' and had been looking for friendship and support from peers, since they lack support at home. In some cases, the problem is worsened by public responses to young people. Sometimes youths are considered a source of disorder and elders feel their behaviour must be restricted, this may make them feel angry and unwanted. They wonder the street because they have nowhere else to turn, and because they are not appreciated at home. Their frustration and lack of supervision may be expressed in destructive activities, like vandalism. Their misbehavior is always committed in the same area where they live as the place of residence. Youths are likely to be offended by their peers and their criminal activities are often unplanned, and opportunistic. In other words, many of these behaviors are character of attention seeking.

Reduced parental involvement

Single parents may face challenges balancing work, household responsibilities, and parenting, which can result in less involvement in their children's moral development and decision-making process. This is seen the entire task is handled by the mother; she tends to ignore child's homework and assignment. She gets worn out and could not engage the child in home teaching, note supervision and task assessment.

According to Chavda and Nisarga (2023), when divorce is the reason for single parenting, custodial parent invests less time in parenting as they need to work long hours to support the family and play the role of dual parent. As the noncustodial parent visits occasionally, the bonding and contact between the child and the distant parent leads to loss of knowledge, skills, and resources from that parent (Haimi and Lerner, 2016). Parenting during the early period following a divorce is often characterized by increased irritability, coercion, poor communication, affection, consistency, control, non-concern and less supervision, though it later improves after the first year of divorce (Hetherington & Elmor, (2003)). According to Baer (1999), adolescents in single-parent families have more conflict with their parents, less positive communication, and low levels of family cohesion as compared to counterparts living with their nuclear families. In the same direction, Anderson (2014) reported that Children living with one biological parent experienced 3 to 8 times more severe neighborhood violence, caregiver violence, or caregiver incarceration or have lived with a caregiver with mental illness or an alcohol or drug problem than the children living with 2 biological parents. In addition, Dr Richard Gardner introduced the term "parental alienation syndrome", a phenomenon that arises primarily in the context of custody battles, with the manifestation of a child campaigning of denigration or defamation against either of his parents, where the content has no foundation, in reality, acting in accord to another parent's

manipulation. In this context, there can also be false allegations of sexual and physical abuse made by the dominant parent parents (Haimi & Lerner, 2016).

As the solo parents move in and out of intimate relationships, children are exposed to several changes and stresses associated with multiple family transitions. Remarriage of the custodial or noncustodial parent has both positive and negative impacts on the child. The child faces the stress of adjusting to the new foster parent, stepsiblings, extended families and traditions who has less or noninterest over the child's affair. The presence of care by foster parent requires possible emotional, practical, and social support from both the biological parent and the child. If the single parent is distressed and unable to handle their responsibilities, instrumental and emotional parentification of the child occurs who assume more adult-like roles, including performing household tasks, taking care of siblings and serving as emotional support, advisor, or confidant to the distressed parents.

Impact on role modeling

Single parents may face difficulties serving as positive role models for their children, especially if they are dealing with their own stressors or emotional challenges. With the intensification of the conflict between the parents, the emotional and behavioral problems among children clarifies whether the parents are married or divorced. The risk of negative impact depended on whether the conflict's nature and character were more focused on the child and the frequency and degree of violence involved in parental conflicts. Children faced less level of stress and anxiety if parents demonstrated an excellent capacity to solve conflicts during the process of separation (Haimi & Lerner, 2016). In most cases of parental divorce, separation, or remarriage, when children cope with the new situation and confusion, they experience emotional distress, instability, anxiety, depression, and behavior disorders like anger, resentment, and noncompliance. These responses diminish as time passes in most children, but a few experiences may delay the effects; they appear to adjust well in the early stages though with difficulties in later days (Hetherington & Elmor, (2003).

According to Rathus, (2013), Children of single parents develop negative feelings about themselves. They feel unwanted, developed sense of reduced self-esteem, and constantly compare themselves with children living with both parents due to the absence of another parent. These always leads to repressed anger and resentment towards their missing parent and can result in sadness and loneliness (McLanahan & Gary, 1994). Studies in African countries showed that children of solo parents (especially the father) scored lower on assessments of psychological well-being than children from both parent households and faced depression, suicide, and substance abuse at extreme rates. In one of the Indian surveys, it was shown that children from single parent households, especially single father headed, had a higher rate of externalizing and internalizing behavior disorders. Girls were found to be most vulnerable of these behavioral problems, followed by boys from single fathers. In conversely, girls were well-behaved in single-mother households. These children appeared to always hide from their parents, had higher rates of dropping out of high school, and recedes to alcohol and substance abuse for defense mechanism (Jain & Mahmoodi, 2022).

In the other study by Haimi and Lerner (2016), boys raised by single mothers showed impaired masculine development, sort to criminal behavior as a result of their mother's coverage and defense, and had difficulty controlling impulses due to lack of a male figures to control their excesses. They also reported that the experience of divorce processes contributes to juvenile delinquencies of most youths. According to Haimi and Lerner (2016), teens of divorced parents, have a higher risk of developing mental disorders, risk of substance addiction, alcoholism, or getting pregnant as compared to teens of nondivorced parents. These issues arise due to a lack of economic resources in motherheaded parenthood and limited parenting resources in fatherheaded parenthood. Higher rates of delinquency among children from solo parent households are due to attention-seeking and high yearn for affection (Jain & Mahmoodi, 2022).

In cases of suicide incidence in youths, parental divorce is one of the parental factors related to the increased risk of suicide among young people. Studies have found higher rate of depression, suicidal attempts, and higher risk of suicide among girls, compared to boys of divorced parents, whereas suicidal ideation among boys of divorced parents was common (Anderson, 2014). The author also reports of attention disorders, hyperactivity, and somatic symptoms such as headache among children of solo parents.

Generally, youths of divorced parents are reported of having chronic stress, social isolation, chronic worrying, job discontent, loneliness, attachment anxiety, avoidance of responsibilities, and personality disorders than youths whose parents still live together (Schaana, Schulza, Schächingerb&Vögelea, 2019).

Strained parent-child relationship

The stressors associated with single parenting, such as financial struggles or emotional distress, can strain the parent-child relationship, potentially leading to conflict or disconnection, which may affect youths' moral development. According to Haimi and Lerner (2016), adjustment of divorced custodial parent to new roles goes with less time due to job schedules and encompassed family chores. Being that noncustodial parent visits occasionally, the contact and bonding between children and parents are altered leading to loss of interest, concern, compassion and plan. Hetherington and Elmor (2003) comment that parenting during the early period following divorce is often characterized by increased irritability, coercion, poor communication, ill affection, inconsistency, poor control, and supervision, which improves after the first year of divorce.

Baer (1999) reported that adolescents of solo parents have more conflict with their parents, less positive communication, and low levels of family cohesion than their counterparts living from dual parents. Children living with one biological parent experienced 3 to 8 times more severe neighborhood violence, caregiver violence, or caregiver incarceration or have lived with a caregiver with mental illness or an alcohol or drug problem than the children living with 2 biological parents (Anderson, 2014). Dr Richard Gardner introduced the term "parental alienation syndrome," a phenomenon that arises primarily in the context of custody battles, with the manifestation of a child's campaign of denigration or defamation against

either of his parents, where the content has no foundation, in reality, acting in accord to another parent's manipulation. There can also be false allegations of sexual abuse and physical abuse made (Haimi& Lerner, 2016).

As the singleparents move in and out of intimate relationships, children are exposed to the changes and stresses associated with multiple family transitions. Haimi and Lerner (2016) still confirmed that remarriage of the custodial or noncustodial parent has positive and negative impacts on the child. The child faces the stress of adjusting to the new foster parent, stepsiblings, extended families, and traditions. The presence of caring fosterparent offers possible emotional, practical, and social support for both the biological parent and the child. If the single parent is distressed and unable to handle their responsibilities, instrumental and emotional parentification of the child occurs who assume more adult-like roles, including performing household tasks, taking care of siblings, and serving as emotional support, advisor, or confidant to distressed parents.

Peer influence

Youths from single-parent households may seek validation and support from peers, which can influence their moral conduct, particularly if they lack strong parental guidance or supervision.

Studies conducted by Jain and Mahmoodi (2022) disclosed mixed findings on how single-parenting impacts children's physical health and development. Others revealed that these were due to the co-varying differences in socioeconomic status, while most reported a negative impact of single parenting on factors such as child mortality, homicide, and childhood stunting. Infants and children younger than 3 years of age may reflect a caregiver's distress and grief, manifested as irritability, poor sleep-wake rhythms, separation anxiety, feeding disturbances, or even developmental regression (Clark, 2013).

According to Raatikainen, Heiskanen and Heinonen (2005), adverse neonatal incidents like low birth weight, premature birth, small for gestational age, admission to the neonatal intensive care and sick baby unit, are more likely to occur in children born by single mothers. This is because these single mothers were more likely to be unmarried, less likely to attend prenatal care, more likely to be primiparous, uses alcohol, smoke, and might have pregnancy-related diabetes.

Young children between the ages of 2 and 6 years are always fearful, confused, and abandoned during parental separation. Children of this age group adapt quickly as they are often too young to remember their noncustodial parent vividly (Amato & Keith, 2000). The age group of 7 to 12 years can express emotions, accept parental separation much better. They distrust their parents, seek and depend on outside support, and may manifest social and emotional issues (Price &Mckenry, 2001). According to Amato and Keith (2000), adolescents are the worst hit by their parents' divorce, as they find it difficult to accept the change. When it does occur, they resort to their peers for consolation, guide and counsel. They may even abandon their home and have challenges in expressing their emotions (Emery, 2011).

Resilience and coping

Some youths from single parenthood develop resilience and coping skills in response to the challenges they face which may negatively influence their moral conduct and decision-making abilities. These recent studies underscore the importance of understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by children raised in single-parent households to support their well-being and development. In a similar research, Pearlstein (2011), stated that fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the leading cause of declining child well-being in our society. It is also the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to child sexual abuse to domestic violence against women.

3. Effects of single parenting on youth's physical development of the area.

Single parenting can have significant effects on youths' physical development and, consequently, the broader societal implications. Recent research has shed light on these effects, providing valuable insights into the challenges faced by children raised in single-parent households and their impact on society. Studies have shown that children from single-parent families are at higher risk of experiencing health disparities compared to those from two-parent households. Ekpeyong, (2019); Abdulraheem, Raimi, and Edet, (2018), found that children in single-parent families had higher rates of obesity and chronic health conditions, which can have long-term consequences for their physical well-being and healthcare cost.

Nutritional challenges

Single-parent households may face greater difficulties in providing nutritious meals and maintaining healthy eating habits due to limited time and financial resources. A study, Hanson et al. (2020) highlighted that children in single-parent families were more likely to have inadequate nutrition and consume unhealthy foods, which can contribute to poor physical development and increased risk of chronic diseases. In a study conducted by Ntoimo and Odimegwu (2014) on Health Effects of Single Motherhood on Children in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Cross-Sectional Study, findings revealed that children of single mothers due to divorced or early pregnancies from unaccountable men, are more likely to be stunted than those whose mothers are in union. Records from affected countries are Cameroun: OR 1.79 $p < 0.01$, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) 1.69 $p < .01$. This is akin to low or nil economic resources and negligible parental care. Similarly, Thomson and McLanahan, (2012) published that children raised by single mothers are predisposed to poor physical and mental health, and high mortality rate. According to Dearden, Crookston, Madanat, West, Penny and Cueto (2013) in their studies at Peru on "What difference can fathers make? Early paternal absence compromises Peruvian children's growth", it was uncovered that children who didn't sight their fathers every day and weekly because of non-marriage, divorce, separation or father's migration are likely to have stunted growth.

On the other hand, Xu and Hui (2019) conduct a study on "The impact of having one parent on children's food consumption and nutrition status in China", using propensity score

matching and difference-in-difference methods to report that raising a child by one parent has no negative impact on the children's food consumption and nutrition status. This is because the concerned single parent goes extra miles to provide food for the number children so as to compensate absent of the other parent and this intervention offsets the negative impact which declined family income has caused.

Physical activity level

The absence of a second parent may affect children's opportunities for physical activity and sports participation. Ekpeyong, (2019), found that children from single-parent families engaged in less physical activity and spent more time in sedentary behaviors compared to those in two-parent households, potentially increasing their risk of obesity and related health issues.

In a study conducted by Amund, Otto, Bente, Oddrun and Ellen (2019), on association between family structure and young people's activity and screening time behaviors among Norwegian youths, it was revealed that family structure consisting of both parents correlates for Moderate to Vigorous Physical Assessments (MVPA), sport participation and screen time activities. This was also found substantial and reasonable for youth's development in their daily activities. The study unfolded that young people brought up under single parenting are much at risk and will not meet up with recommendations of MVPA and not participating in organized sports (Vella, et. al., 2014). According to Arundell, et. al., (2016) in his study on correlates of after-school sedentary behavior among children aged 5-18 years: a systematic review, it was identified that there was correlates of sedentary time with attention to after-school session, and it existed mainly on watching of television programmes. Though use of computer has grossly displaced children's interest in watching television, it has limited effects in reduction of sedentary time (Salmon, et. al., 2011). In another recent study on Norwegian children above 8 years old, there was eminent disclosure of measured overweight prevalent among children of single parents especially the divorced (Biehl, et. al., 2014). This then confirmed that identified relationship between family structure, physical and sedentary activities are likely pathways to obesity among youths (Marmot, et. al., 2010).

Access to Health care

Single-parent households may face barriers to accessing healthcare services, including financial constraints and logistical challenges. This can result in delayed or inadequate medical care for children, impacting their physical development and overall health outcomes. A study by Walker, et al. (2021) highlighted disparities in healthcare access and utilization among children in single-parent families, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address these disparities.

In a study conducted by Heck and Parker (2002), it was found that many children who receive medical attention were enrolled because they have both parents living together and receiving public assistance. For the fact that public assistance has traditionally been offered primarily to single mothers and because family structure may influence the ability of parents to obtain health care for their children, family size and structure is another important aspect

of children's access to health care in United States. In a keen study over family structure, it seems to have changed greatly in the United States since the past 3 decades. In a field study (Bureau of the Census, 2001), the number of children living with both parents in United State between 1970-1997 declined from 59 million to 48 million, while numbers of children with single mothers increased from 7 million to 17 million. These changes have influenced health insurance and access to health care for children. The nature of children with private health insurance declined between 1977 and 1996, whereas the number of uninsured grew, irrespective of expansions in the medical attention program within the time of report. The increment in the percentage of uninsured people was mainly due to high rise of single parenthood, in line with findings of the three National Medical Expenditure Surveys (Weinick and Monheit, 1999). Children are known to be dependent on their parents to attain access to health care, and family structure had been militating the ability of parents from meeting these needs.

In addition, Socioeconomic Status (SES) equally contributes to situations of family structure, access to children's health care and utilization. Children of single mothers are unlikely to have their parents in fulltime work like children of both parents, which may likely cause reduction in rates of employer-sponsored health insurance. Health insurance scheme is known to be major facilitator of access to health care. The lower employment rates among single mothers result in lower incomes among these families compared with families headed by two parents (Bureau of the Census, 1998). Hence, health insurance policy gotten through child support from non-parent children are not rampant (Meyer, 1997).

Whereas the program of health policy has no control over family structure, they set rules around eligibility of Medical operations and Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that relates with family structure. Thus, it's a necessity to understand health policies and its impact on child health insurance rates. In the study conducted by Heck and Parker (2002), it was hypothesized that overall, children in single-mother families would have less adequate health care access and utilization than children from two-parent families and this difference would result from an interaction between family structure and SES. It was expected that there would be few family structure-related differences in health care access and utilization at high levels of maternal SES, whereas children of single mothers would be worse off than children in two-parent families at low levels of SES. The rationale for the hypothesis of an overall family structure disparity in access to children's health care was the evidence that reduced SES is consistently related to reduced levels of health care access and utilization, and single mothers happens to be sufferers of lower SES. Moreover, single mothers are discovered to have less social support, greater time demands, and less employer-sponsored health insurance than married mothers, resulting in greater difficulty in obtaining care for their children. However, it is expected that no family structure disparity gain access to care among families of high SES because single mothers of higher SES might have resources that would allow them to overcome any likely hindrance to their care.

In conclusion, this analysis uses a nationally representative data set to examine the correlation between family structure, health insurance, and access to health care for children. The study

delves on previous studies by linking parents to children and by including several measures of access and utilization to disclose an indebt picture of access to care among children of single mothers. Even though previous analysis in this field by Newacheck (1992) found that family structure was not related to physician's review after controlling for socioeconomic factors, that study did not truly address the impact of the potential interaction, which was examined here, between family structure and SES on access to health care for children.

Psychosocial stressors

Single parenting can contribute to psychosocial stressors for both parents and children, which may adversely affect physical health. Ekpeyong, (2019); Abdulraheem, Raimi, and Edet, (2018), demonstrated that children in single-parent families were more likely to experience chronic stress, which can negatively impact on the immune function, cardiovascular health, and other aspects of physical development. Overall, the effects of single parenting on youths' physical development have implications for the broader societal well-being, including healthcare costs, productivity, and quality of life. Addressing the unique challenges faced by single-parent families through targeted interventions and support systems is essential for promoting positive physical development outcomes and reducing health disparities in society.

According to Chia and Terwase (2022), the impact of single parenting has been documented by researchers to pose grave implications on both the child/children and parents. Psycho-social implication of single parenting on the child/children of Single-Parenting manifests its effects on the cognitive, emotional and social development of the children (Mabuzza, Thwala & Okeke, 2014). In a study by Harrison-Hale, McLoyd and Smedley (2004), they report that single parents expend minimal time with their children and has no time in monitoring and supervising their activities. In such homes educative communication is less over their needs, lifestyle, social life and moral, thereby making children become unhappy and insecure, subsequently leading to display of maladaptive and anti-social behaviours like: cultism, smoking, intake of hard drugs and alcoholism, delinquency, violence, sexual deviance, unsafe sexual activities and suicidal attempts (Symeon, 2007). In like manner, Levitin (1999) observed and documented psychological implications of single parenting on children from single parenthood as delinquency, poor academic performance and failing out from school, development of inappropriate sex roles in attitude and behaviours. He added that children from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviours, rebellion, poor academic records, ganging, idleness, drug and substance abuse (Salami, 1998 & Agbo, 1997). Single parental offspring are known for exhibiting low self-esteem, poor academic interest, achievement and output, and negative psychological adjustment (Hyunjoon, 2008 & Azuka-Obieke, 2013).

In another study at Ebonyi State—Nigeria, children from single-parent homes are easily described as irritable, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive and easily distracted (Nwachukwu, 2006). It is further disclosed that their social behaviour is impaired, sometimes intimidated and dull during social gatherings (Uzochukwu, 2015), and that life in the single parent family is always stressful for the child (Uwaifo, 2012). Meeker (2011), is of the opinion that children form their identity around the cues they get from both parents. In some

single mother home, the children have an abstract (usually subconscious) knowledge of the whereabouts of their father and why he is not with them. In most times, attitude of mothers towards children reveals that mother's chromosomes are not part of the child's makeup. These makes the child in their full mental maturity, innocently but very unfortunately, blame themselves and wish if their father has been around, they wouldn't have seen what they are seeing. These are manifest in depression, self-cruising, disappointment and anger. According Egbochuku and Oliha (2014), truancy found in behaviours of single-parental children are signs of psychological implication. Keswet and Dapas (2010) reported that single parenthood children are always stigmatized, criticized and discriminated making them feel rejected from their folks. Hence at any point where they are challenged especially males; they will cast their minds back, start to withdraw by school absenteeism, partake in delinquencies, takes drug and alcohol to guy up, and a consequential low educational performance and dropout will be eminent. As Myer (2012) asserted, care of children's needs is enormous and has to be handled by the two parents but taking the responsibilities by one parent is greater risk and confirmed empirically to be aversive. In Myer's view, parenting is a tedious task and when handled by one party especially the mother, there will some unwanted effects on the child's development, and worse where they are more than one child. According to Myer (2012), "it is like carrying the world on one's shoulders".

At the opposite side, single parents are overburdened with responsibilities of assuming two person's roles, causing them to be irritable, impatience to children's demands (Nzewuwah, 1995). This makes the offspring to be susceptible to any form of antisocial, maladaptive and criminal behaviours, according to Essien and Bassey (2012), single mothers are rejected, stigmatized and blackmailed in their societies. They are demonized of being promiscuous in some cases, though they are not at fault, or may be caused by early death of their spouses (Keswet&Dapas, 2010). As such they are stigmatized, rejected and discriminated in their neighborhoods, making them to be withdrawn from associations, helpless, lonely, depressed and psychologically traumatized (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). On the other side, Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2008) reported that unmarried fathers face grievous condemnation than understanding and are challenged with several carrier related problem from their solo children rearing, role conflicts and conflicts with job satisfaction. Myles (2004) also added that there is inherent stress on a woman raising up children alone. And that if when both parent join effort, man's contribution is insignificance, it's worse when the whole load is faced by mother alone. Keswet&Dapas, (2010) enumerated associated stress one a solo parent as insecurity, financial pressures, lack of moral companion to share the stress with associating physiological burnout. Adelan and Ogunbanwo (2008) confirm that single parenthood correlates with loneliness, isolation and disappointments. In the same lane, single parents lack ability to identify and fulfil their specific roles as a mother or father. Meyer (2009) identified social stigmas attached to single parenthood. This is seen in forfeited rights like maternity leave from a single mother whose husband is not made official and publicized. There are also some isolated psychological disorders like anxiety, depression and bipolar disorders that culminate to worsen the situation, but the conference of Beijing (1996) did provide solutions to resolve these issues.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The functionalist theory, also known as functionalism, was embraced in this study. It is one of the major theoretical perspectives with regards to sociology. Functionalism was postulated by Auguste Comte, Malinowski and developed by Durkheim (2001), in his quest to study how stability and orderliness could be achieved in the society. Functionalism views how each part of a society contributes to the stability of the whole society. He opined that society is more than the sum of its parts and that each part of a society is functional for the existence of the entire society. He theorized that different parts of a society are primarily the institution of that society, each of them is formed to perform different roles and needs, and each of them has special consequences for the scope and survival of society. All these parts are interdependence on each other for the smooth running of the society. For instance, the Government or State offers education, healthcare, infrastructure and power to people, families and communities. They people survived and depend on them to be educated, skillfully employed, productive and buoyant to care for his/herself, create job for growing youths, defend the residence community and donate towards its development. Hence, functionalism emphasizes consensus and orderliness in the society ensuring social stability and shared public values. These militates deviancies, delinquencies, crime and unrest leading to mental and physical development of citizens and physical structures. Functionalism ensures cooperation, productivity and attainment of desired goal for the society.

In Functionalism the society which is in segments works for the survival the main system and operation of each segment affects the functioning of others who are relying on her services. Hence, when any of the segment fails, others are distorted, and they team up to resuscitate her for survival of the entire whole.

In application, the expected role of parents is to be performed by dual parents in socialization, attainment to needs, supports, and others (Shaffer, 2002). The background of functionalism is family of both parents (Odumosu, 1997). The author affirms that role of socialization and modelling had to be done by both parents, but these tasks are shifted on only one parent, the child suffers in his socialization process with impacted behaviour, personality disorder and aspiration diversity.

Talcott (2008) affirmed that in the family, the powerful person (the man), builds the family in terms of learning and introduction to cultural institution. Functionalism does not support to challenge to paternal power, because this will give room to emergence of conflicts. According to Robert Merton (1996), functionalists promote both parents as having interdependent and interrelated functions. Each of these functions has its expected and permitted roles to play for the maintenance and socialization of children. On the contrary where children are not groomed by both parents, the functionalists regard it as dysfunctional behavior to the harmonious existence of the social system as this will cause aversive change that will be too harsh on the society in the future.

METHOD

Study Design

The researchers used descriptive cross-sectional survey design which was effective in describing events by observation, survey and case studies. This method also permits utilization of qualitative and quantitative research approach to collect data and describe situations, phenomenon and population of people (Kelkar, 2024). With cross-sectional research design the researchers were also able to observe and collect data of events but without permission to manipulate the variables (Thomas, 2023).

Setting: Ogbia is one of the eight Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. It is also one of the multi- ethno- linguistic LGAs of the State. It has 53 communities configured into four main groups depending on the variety of the Ogbia language being spoken. The groups are the Oloibiri group, the Anyama group, the Kolo group and the Abureni group. The communities are: Ologi, Olobiri, Okodi, Okoki, Iyakiri, Kolo, Imiringi, Ewoi, Obakilolo, Ewama, Igbo, Obeleberi, Emadike, Abobiri, Elebele, Akolomani, Egeleama, Amorokeni, Anyama, Amuruto, Ogireyankiri, Emago, Ogboama, Emakalakala, Ogbia, Emegai, Obuaba, Epebu, Sobo Camp, Otuogori, Sagatami, Otuogodi, Warbugoama, Outar, Otuokpoti, Otegila, Oluaganagu, Oruma, Ologoghe, Otegwe, Onuebum, Otuabagi, Opume, Otuabula 11, Otuedu, Otuabula 1, Otuegwe, Otuaganagu, Otuekpein, Otuabai 1 and Otuakeme. There are four (4) languages known and spoken in Bayelsa and Ogbia is one of them.

Ogbia Local Government has good relationship with Okoroma in Nembe Local Government Area, Ogbogolo in Ahoda West Local Government Area of Rivera State, Odual Local Government of River State/Odual in Abua. It is also an eminent history that Dr Goodluck Ebele Johnathan—the former President of Nigeria and the first civilian governor of River State hailed from Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Population and Sample: from a population of 267, 400 a sample of 393 was gotten from a multi- stage sampling technique.

Instrument for Data Collection: the data was collected using a questionnaire designed by the researchers.

Data Analyses: descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation and simple percentages were used in analyzing the data.

RESULTS

Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents' demographic characteristics (n = 393)

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|------------|----------------|
| Gender: | | |
| Male | 173 | 44.0 |
| Female | 220 | 56.0 |
| Total | 393 | 100 |

Age:

| | | |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| 18 – 23 years | 123 | 31.3 |
| 24 – 29 years | 141 | 35.9 |
| 30 – 35 years | 129 | 32.8 |
| Total | 393 | 100 |

Religion:

| | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Islam | 28 | 7.1 |
| Christianity | 273 | 69.5 |
| Pagan | 92 | 23.4 |
| Total | 393 | 100 |

Educational status

| | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| No formal education | 21 | 5.3 |
| Primary | 49 | 12.5 |
| Secondary | 206 | 52.4 |
| Tertiary | 117 | 29.8 |
| Total | 393 | 100 |

Total

Occupation:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------|------------|
| Artisan | 102 | 26.0 |
| Civil/Public servant | 44 | 11.2 |
| Trader | 84 | 21.4 |
| Farmer | 97 | 24.7 |
| Student | 66 | 16.8 |
| Total | 393 | 100 |

Family size:

| | | |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| Monogamous | 109 | 27.7 |
| Polygamous | 182 | 46.3 |
| Single Parent | 102 | 26.0 |
| Total | 393 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants by demographic characteristics. The Table shows that out of the 393 youths who participated in the study, more than half 220 (56.0%) were female; a greater proportion 141 (35.9%) were between 24 – 29 years of age; majority were Christians; while slightly above half 206 (52.4%) had secondary education as their highest level of academic attainment; while most 102 (26.0%) of the participants were artisans; and almost half 182 (46.3%) half of them had a polygamous family background.

Analysis of research questions

Research Question I.What was the perceived effects of single parenting on educational status of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Respondents' perceived effect of single parenting on educational status of youths (n = 393)

| S/No. | Effects of single parenting on educational status of youths | Weighted mean | Standard deviation | Decision |
|-------|--|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Hardly attend University level education | 3.71 | 0.66 | Significant |
| 2. | Experience poor parental involvement in their academic pursuit | 2.25 | 0.21 | Insignificant |
| 3. | Hardly perform well academically | 1.87 | 0.14 | Insignificant |
| 4. | Poor academic supervision by parents | 3.56 | 0.19 | Significant |
| 5. | Low academic status | 4.19 | 0.36 | Significant |

Decision Rule: $\bar{x} > 2.50 = \text{Significant}$ $\bar{x} \leq 2.50 = \text{Insignificant}$

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceived effect of single parenting on education status of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State. Based on the decision rule, the effect of single parenting on educational status of youths include; difficulty in attending University level education (3.71 ± 0.66), poor academic supervision by parents (3.56 ± 0.19), and low academic status (4.19 ± 0.36).

Research Question II. What was the perceived effects of single parenting on the moral conduct of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Respondents perceived effect of single parenting on moral conduct of youths (n = 393)

| S/No. | Effects of single parenting on moral conduct of youths | Weighted mean | Standard deviation | Decision |
|-------|--|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Poor etiquettes | 3.66 | 0.35 | Significant |
| 2. | Excessive aggression | 2.08 | 0.61 | Insignificant |
| 3. | Deviant behaviors | 4.28 | 0.80 | Significant |
| 4. | Low breakers | 3.90 | 0.14 | Significant |
| 5. | Not trustworthy | 2.41 | 0.56 | Insignificant |

Decision Rule: $\bar{x} > 2.50 = \text{Significant}$ $\bar{x} \leq 2.50 = \text{Insignificant}$

Table 3 presents the perceived effect of single parenting on moral conduct of youths. According to the respondents' response, the perceived effect of single parenting on moral conducts of youths based on the decision rule include; poor etiquettes (3.66 ± 0.35), deviant behaviours (4.28 ± 0.80), and law-breaking tendencies (3.90 ± 0.14).

Research Question III. What were the perceived effects of single parenting on the physical development of youths of Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State?

| S/No. | Effects of single parenting on physical development of youths | Weighted mean | Standard deviation | Decision |
|-------|---|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Poor body growth | 2.39 | 0.15 | Insignificant |
| 2. | Inability to establish cordial relationships | 3.12 | 0.72 | Significant |
| 3. | Susceptible to economic and financial challenges | 3.90 | 0.68 | Significant |
| 4. | Poor emotional coordination | 2.15 | 0.25 | Insignificant |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|------|------|-------------|
| 5. | Lack meaningful occupation | 3.72 | 0.71 | Significant |
|----|----------------------------|------|------|-------------|

Decision Rule: $\bar{x} > 2.50 = \text{Significant}$ $\bar{x} \leq 2.50 = \text{Insignificant}$

Table 3 presents the perceived effect of single parenting on physical development of youths. The Table based on the decision rule shows that the significantly perceived effects of single parenting on the physical development of youths include: inability to establish cordial relationship (3.12 ± 0.72), susceptibility to economic and financial challenges (3.90 ± 0.68), and lack of meaningful occupation (3.72 ± 0.71).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study was conducted to determine the perceived effects of single parenting on youths of Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The study revealed that single parenting had significant perceived effects on the youths' educational status, moral conducts, and physical development. According to the study's findings, the significant effects of single parenting on the educational status of the youth include; difficulty in going beyond the secondary education, that is attending the University. The participants strongly opined that youths raised by single parents find it very difficult to attend university education; hence, they usually have an overall low academic achievement compared to youths raised by married couples which may result from parental poor involvement or poor academic supervision of children. The major reasons for this low academic achievement according to Hofferth et al (2011) may include less parental involvement and financial constraint. In a related study conducted by Harkonen and Dronkers (2006) it was reported that difficulty attending higher learning was a major effect of single parenting. This finding is in line with finding of the present study where difficulty attending the university was perceived as a significant effect of single parenting on the educational status of youths in Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State. Similarly, Schneider and Harketh (2019) reported that poor academic achievement was a long-term consequence of single parenting on children which is in consonance with finding of the present study.

Apart from the effect on educational status of youths, the study revealed that single parenting has a significant negative influence on the moral conducts of youths in Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa. According to the participants, youths raised by single parents do not have good etiquettes, majority opined that deviant behaviours are very common among youths raised by single parents, and as such, law breaking tendencies are very conspicuous among youths raised by single parents. Hence, poor etiquettes, deviant behaviours, and lawless tendencies, were the significantly perceived effects of single parenting on moral conducts of youths in Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa. This finding agrees finding with findings of most authors in a related study. For instance, Chayda and Nisarg (2023); Ekpenyong and Udisi (2016); and Daryanail et al (2016), found that children raised by single parents are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems compared to children raised by both parents. The major reasons for this could be; inadequate parental supervision and strained parent-child relationship which have been reported to exacerbate negative behavioural tendencies in children raised by single parents (Amato, 2010).

Similarly, the present study revealed that single parenting has an overall negative effect on the physical development of youths in Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa as perceived by participants of the study. Majority of the participants opined that youths raised by single parents hardly establish smooth relationship with friends and other community members; majority believed that most youths raised by single parents are susceptible to economic and financial challenges; and a significant proportion of the study participants agreed strongly that most youths raised by single parents do not have meaningful occupation compared to youths raised by the two parents. Hence, inability to establish cordial relationship with peers, susceptibility to economic and financial challenges, and lack of meaningful occupation were the significantly perceived effect of single parenting on the physical development of youths in Ogbia LGA of Bayelsa State. Ekpeyong, (2019); Abdurraheem et al (2018) demonstrated that children in single-parent families were more likely to experience chronic stress, and this can negatively impact on the immune function, cardiovascular health, and other aspects of physical development including establishing relationships with other peers. According to these authors, the overall effects of single parenting on youths' physical development have implications for the broader societal well-being, including healthcare costs, productivity, and quality of life. Therefore, addressing the unique challenges faced by single-parent families through targeted interventions and support systems is essential for promoting positive physical development outcomes and reducing health disparities in a society.

Implication of the study

Single parenting poses grave implications on both the child/children and parents. Psycho-social implication of single parenting on the child/children of single-parenting manifests its effects on the cognitive, emotional and social development of the children. In the long term, its consequences manifest in the lives of these children when they become young adults. In this study, findings revealed that single parenting impose far-reaching negative consequences on youths which affect their educational status, moral conducts, and physical development. These negative consequences of singleparenting also affect other members of the society as a whole. Therefore, based on research findings, suitable interventions should be design and implemented to curb the menace of single parenting on youths who are the life-base of every developing society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government should design a special welfare scheme to support the academic pursuit of children raised by single parents in the area, especially those who are interested in taking up disciplines in the higher institution.
2. Corporate bodies in conjunction with government should design and implement special trade learning scheme to empower youths raised by single parents in the area to boost their socio-economic status and improve overall wellbeing.
3. A needs assessment of single parents in the area should be conducted to raise evidence that will enable government design effective intervention to improve the welfare of single parents and their children.

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