

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SINGLE PARENTING BY LITERATE PARENTS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Due to different lifestyles that now permeate the Nigerian society, single parenthood which in the past decades was alien to the Nigerian culture has been on a geometric increase. This study investigated the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis. The differences in the respondents' expression on the bases of gender, age and type of occupation were also examined. Two hundred (200) literate single parents were selected in Ilorin metropolis using convenience sampling technique. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The instrument used was a researcher-designed questionnaire entitled "Problems Associated with Single Parenting Questionnaire (PASPQ)". The validity of the instrument was done by experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin while its reliability was ascertained using test-retest reliability method with r-value of 0.68. The data collected were analysed using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools at 0.05 alpha level. The findings showed that the problems associated with single parenting are loneliness, sense of guilt, deteriorating health profile, financial difficulty, and inability to give children adequate discipline among others. The findings also revealed that there were no significant differences in the problems associated with single parenting on the bases of age, gender and type of occupation of the respondents. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors, psychologists, family therapists and social workers should sensitise people about problems associated with single parenting. In addition, single parents should be helped to resolve and cope with the problems associated with single parenting.

Keywords: Problems, Single Parenting, Literate Adults, Ilorin Metropolis

Introduction

The survival of any society depends on the continued existence of the family; children are raised by the family and much of what these children turn out to be in the society stem from the family. Family emerges from marriage; marriage as an institution is oriented towards fostering the coming together of two individuals with their divergent personality-traits as husband and wife to plan for their future and set up a home. The major determinant of a steady family is the nature of interaction

which occurs as a series of social relationships that link parents directly to their children. Dave (2000) stressed that family interaction is influenced not only by the physical and emotional closeness of the system, but also by the patterns of organisation within the family. In essence, the child-rearing practice which the family chooses to employ in bringing up their children determines to a great extent, the nature of these individuals' relationships in later life. Today, more marriages are breaking up and the case of single parenting is increasing (Kibel & Wagstaff, 2006).

Single parenting simply means a situation whereby one parent alone, be it the mother or father, married or divorced or never married, shoulders the responsibility of bringing up the children (Johnson, 2013). The single parent family is created in a number of ways such as the death of a spouse, divorce, separation and desertion. In the mid-twentieth century, single parenting was as a result of the death of a spouse. The death of a partner can result in single parenting especially when the surviving partner decides not to remarry. Divorce or marital dissolution among couples can also lead to single parenting. Willicox (2003) stated that, single parents in India are mainly women who are widows.

Over the past 20 years, single parent families have become even more common than the family consisting of the two parents (American Psychological Association (APA), 2016). Single parenting is very common in the United States of America. For instance in 2013, 77% of single parents were single mothers with 85% of the children living with their mothers (US Census Bureau, 2013). In Nigeria, the picture is not significantly different.

Insecurity, financial pressure, lack of companion in the home and the burden of bringing up children alone all constitute stressful conditions which take their toll on the health of women who find themselves in the situation of being single parents. According to Unilorin Annual Report (2015), 60% of students arraigned for misconduct over the past 5 years are students living with their mothers alone. Furthermore, there are so many cases of children/ adolescents living with their father/mothers only who have been found to engage in all sorts of anti-social behaviors in the secondary schools (Goldsmith, 2000). Single parents especially mothers complained of loneliness, traumatic situations and depression and found it difficult to establish a routine for their children (Kamla, 2009). It has been observed that 55% of children living in female-headed families are poor and are five times poorer than children in other families (Kibel & Wagstaff, 2006). Unmarried fathers are also not without problems and generally receive more condemnation than help. Generally, they have more healthy economic status than their female counterparts. However, single fathers are often confronted with serious career related problems as they find their sole children-rearing role conflicting with work expectation (Adelani & Ogunbawo, 2008).

It was reported that single parents who get pregnant are not allowed the benefit of maternity leave simply because they are not married. The single parent may exhibit some sort of persistent sadness, irritability, depression, feelings of guilt,

grief and anxiety (Myles, 2004). In the view of Johnson (2013), single parents face the challenge of bearing many responsibilities and they struggle to squeeze everything into their day. Single parents experience a great deal of tension and sometimes guilt that come with not being able to make use of opportunities they wish their child to have. At the extreme, these parents feel they cannot deal with their children anymore. They may resort to physical punishment and even become abusive if they are pushed too far or they may give-up altogether and agree too easily to their children's demands. When possible, they may need to turn over more of the child raising responsibilities to the youngsters; other parents get some professional counseling to help cope better (Spillman & Wickrama, 2006).

The risk of hospital treated physical illnesses did not differ between men of single parent and two-parent family background. Poisoning and injuries were however more common reasons for hospital admission among men with single parent family backgrounds than among other men (Myles, 2004). From the foregoing, it is glaring that single parenting has its challenges. Therefore, this study investigated the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State.

Research Question

The following research question was generated to guide the study:

1. What are the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of age.
3. There is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of type of occupation.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey method as it enables information to be obtained from a representative sample of the population. The target population for this study consisted of literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis. The researchers employed convenience sampling technique to select 200 respondents that participated in the study.

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The instrument used for this study was a researchers-designed questionnaire entitled "Problems Associated with Single Parenting Questionnaire (PAS PQ)". The instrument has two sections; A and B. Section "A" focused on the personal data (demographic characteristics) of the respondents, while section "B" contained fifteen (15) items used to elicit information on the problems associated with single parenting. The mean score was 2.5. Therefore, any item with mean score ranging from 2.5 and above was adjudged to indicate a problem associated with single parenting while any item with mean score less than 2.5 was adjudged not to be an indicator of problems associated with single parenting. The validity of the instrument was done by experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin while its reliability was ascertained using test-retest reliability method with a coefficient of 0.68.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers and three trained research assistants. Percentage was used to analyse the demographic characteristics provided by the respondents under section "A" of the instrument. In the same way, t-test and ANOVA statistical tools were used to analyse the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Descriptive Data

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age and Type of Occupation

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	94	47.0
Female	106	53.0
Total	200	100.0
Age		
25-35 years	68	34.0
36-45 years	72	36.0
46 years and above	60	30.0
Total	200	100.0
Type of Occupation		
Civil servant	102	51.0
Private organization	62	31.0
Self-employed	36	18.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It shows that 47% of the respondents were males while, 53% of the respondents were females. 34% of the respondents were between 25-35 years, 36% between 36-45 years while 30% were 46 years and above. 51% of the respondents were civil servants, 31% were engaged by private organisations while 18% of the respondents were self-employed.

Results

Research Question 1: *What are the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis?*

Table 2: Mean and rank order of the Problems associated with Single Parenting as expressed by Literate Single Parents in Ilorin Metropolis

Items No.	I often experience:	Mean	Rank
14	Loneliness	3.58	1 st
3	sense of guilt	3.45	2 nd
4	deteriorating health profile	3.42	3 rd
7	financial difficulty	3.33	4 th
11	inability to give children adequate discipline	3.12	5 th
6	difficulty catering for the basic needs of children	3.11	6 th
8	Difficulty meeting emotional needs of the children	3.29	7 th
1	Depression	3.20	8 th
13	loss of concentration	3.16	9 th
9	feelings of inferiority in the society	3.10	10 th
10	Stress	3.08	11 th
12	feelings of aggression towards my children	3.07	12 th
13	difficulty coping with my work	3.05	13 th
5	difficulty making workable choices	2.99	14 th
2	unsettled mind	2.70	15 th

Table 2 shows the mean and rank order of the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis. All the items have mean score above 2.5; therefore, it can be concluded that the problems associated with single parenting range from loneliness, guilt of not being with one's spouse, failing health, financial difficulty, inability to give children adequate discipline to depression, among others.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of gender.*

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-values on the Problems associated with Single Parenting as Expressed by Literate Single Parents in Ilorin Metropolis on the Basis of Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Female	106	46.93	6.85419			
Male	94	48.54	4.05126	198	0.91	1.96

Table 3 shows the calculated t-value of 0.91 and critical t-value of 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of gender was not rejected.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of age.*

Table 4: ANOVA Result on the Problems Associated with Single Parenting as Expressed by Literate Single Parents in Ilorin Metropolis on the Basis of Age

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio
Between group	34.340	2	17.170	0.82	3.00
Within group	4081.323	197	20.710		
Total	4115.663	199			

Table 4 shows a calculated F-ratio of 0.82 and critical F-ratio of 3.00. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of age was not rejected.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of type of occupation.*

Table 5: ANOVA Result on the Problems Associated with Single Parenting as expressed by Literate Single Parents in Ilorin Metropolis on the Basis of Type of Occupation

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Cal. F-ratio	Crit. ratio	F-ratio
Between group	201.729	2	100.864	2.42	3.00	
Within group	6114.905	197	41.597			
Total	6316.634	199				

Table 5 shows the calculated F-ratio of 2.42 and critical F-ratio of 3.00. Since the calculated F-ratio is less than the critical F-ratio, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of type of occupation was not rejected.

Discussion

Results revealed that the problems associated with single parenting as perceived by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis range from loneliness, sense of guilt, failing health, financial difficulty, and inability to give children adequate discipline to depression among others. These corroborate the findings of Adelani and Ogunbawo (2008) which revealed that the challenges associated with single parenting in many societies are inability to provide all the needs of the children and the single parent consequently perceives the responsibilities as overwhelming. The findings of this study could be because marriage, building a home, as well as raising and caring for the children are responsibilities of a father and mother. Therefore, without the other in marriage, there is bound to be some challenges.

Hypothesis one revealed that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of gender. This implies that both male and female literate single parents are similar in their expression as regards problems associated with single parenting. The finding ran contrary to the findings of Myles (2004) which showed that the problem of single parenting is gender specific. The trend of the findings could be as a result of the fact that problems associated with single parenting could be enormous and it does not matter whether one is a male or female.

Hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of age. This implies that even when the respondents have different age range, they held similar views about the problems associated with single parenting. This finding negates the findings of Kamla (2009) who in his study, found a significant difference in the perception of single parents on the basis of age. The finding could be because of the 'heavy weight' that problems associated with

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single parenting carry. It is surprising that older literate adults did not hold a different view about the problems differently. The researchers assumed that adults who are older should have a way of managing the problems hence, their expression would be different from that of the younger adults.

Hypothesis three revealed that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate adults in Ilorin Metropolis on the basis of type of occupation. This finding is similar to that of Kibel and Wagstaff (2006); Adelani and Ogunbawo (2008) who also found no difference in the expression of single parents in terms of the type of occupation they do. This finding could be attributed to the fact that after all, the sampled respondents are human beings and married adults who ordinarily would have wished for a lifelong marriage relationship in which their partners would show them affection, companionship and other features of a stable marriage in order for them to carry out the discharge of their responsibilities creditably well. Thus, where this is not achievable it is not unlikely that the feeling or expressions of single parents would be the same.

Conclusion

Problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis are loneliness, sense of guilt, deteriorating health profile, financial difficulty, inability to give children adequate discipline, etc. There were no significant differences in the problems associated with single parenting as expressed by literate single parents in Ilorin Metropolis on the bases of gender, age and type of occupation.

Implications of the findings for Marriage Counselling

It was found from the study that problems associated with single parenting are loneliness sense of guilt, deteriorating health profile among others. The implication of this is that counsellors should enlighten their clients and general populace about single parenting and its associated problems. It was also found that single parents often possess a pervading sense of guilt, therefore, counsellors should organise seminars on problems associated with single parenting in communities. This is to make adults aware of the problems associated with single parenting. Counsellors should also implore community members to give support to single parents. In the case where single parenting is inevitable e.g. in the case of death of an aged partner or separation occasioned by desire for genuine self-preservation against imminent threat to life or safety, the surviving or *self-relieving* spouse should be taught life coping skills and positive self-talks required for self-management. It was also found from the study that there is difficulty in giving children adequate discipline. The implication of this is that would-be couples and couples should be counselled on the need to show commitment to marriage for the sakes of their children in order to

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to or reduce incidence of single parenting caused by divorce, separation.

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ge counsellors should take the lead in sensitising people about single need to educate the populace on the problems associated with single. Stakeholders in the marriage enterprise like father and mother in- support and encourage couples to stay together and help prevent as much as possible. Religious leaders should also partake in the union through genuine companionship and mutual sharing which marital stability and the antidotes against single parenting due to ration as this is how they can raise a happy family.

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