

INFLUENCE OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD ON CHILD ABUSE IN IKERE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EKITI STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of single parenthood on child abuse in Ikere Local government area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises all the single mothers and fathers residing in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State. A sample of 62 respondents out of 80 selected randomly filled out and returned the questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was ensured, and its reliability was tested using the Cronbach Alpha method, for which the coefficient turned out to be 0.85, meaning that the instrument was reliable enough to collect the necessary data for the study. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Since a 4-point Likert scale was used, any mean score equal to 2.50 and above is regarded as 'Agreed', while any mean score below 2.50 is regarded as 'Disagreed'. The findings of the study showed that financial struggle, employment instability, difficulty in meeting basic needs, limited social support, and economic challenges affecting caregiving availability are the socio-economic conditions of single-parent families that contribute to the occurrence of child abuse in Ikere Ekiti. Findings showed that difficulty in controlling temper when overwhelmed, poor family support increasing frustration, and worry about meeting the emotional and physical needs really contribute to challenges in caregiving. The findings revealed that not strongly feeling judged, isolation, being treated differently, hesitancy to seek support due to stigma, discrimination, being emotionally stressed by others' attitudes, or worrying about others' perceptions of their family do not contribute to the risk of child abuse in single-parent families. The study recommended that single parents should explore opportunities to find stable employment and enroll in a financial literacy course to enhance money management skills and plan for basic needs.

Keywords: *Socio-Economic, Psychological Condition, Stigmatization, Single Parenthood, Child Abuse.*

Introduction

The family structure tends to influence children's development and well-being, with variations like single parenthood garnering substantial interest in social science. Single parenthood is a family structure in which one parent has one or more children and takes care of them without the help of a spouse or a partner (Jones & Watson, 2021). The death of a spouse, divorce, separation, or leaving a partner alone with the infant can lead to this situation (Kareem, et.al, 2024). The population of single-parent households has risen in the last few years all over the world, and it appears to have serious implications for family dynamics and child abuse

(UNICEF, 2022). Single parenthood in Ekiti State, Nigeria, has emerged as a significant family trend attributable to circumstances such as spousal death, divorce, and many socioeconomic issues (Falana, Bada, & Ayodele, 2012). A study indicates that this family structure may influence children's emotional, cognitive, and social development, potentially making them vulnerable to risks such as child abuse (Falana et al., 2012). Hence, it is important to understand the role of single parents in child abuse cases in Ekiti State, where the increasing incidence of single-parent families has raised societal concerns regarding the welfare and safety of children.

As recent empirical evidence in Ekiti State demonstrates, the psychosocial welfare of children and adolescents in single-parent families might be endangered as compared to that of two-parent families. Single parents are seen usually under the increased economic and emotional pressures that may reduce their ability to offer the required care and protection to the children. The stressors are associated with higher rates of child maltreatment, such as neglect and physical abuse (Ayodele Olaseinde, & Akinbebije, 2025). The relationship between the issues of single parenthood and the risk factors related to child abuse in Ekiti State are contextual.

Many factors that could influence child abuse have been revealed by scholars in the recent time. Olaoba and Olasehinde, (2024) revealed that poverty and family conflict, are critical determinants of child abuse and abandonment. Also, the lack of adequate resources and social support exacerbates these families' vulnerability, making children more susceptible to exploitation and harm. Hence, identifying and addressing socio-economic factors is essential to mitigate the risk of child abuse within single-parent families in Ekiti State.

In another dimension, the stigmatization and social perceptions of single parenthood in the academic setting are also linked to poor results on children, such as abuse (Owoeye & Ogunleye, 2023). Single-parent families may subject children to social neglect and social discrimination, thus increasing the effects of neglect or abuse at home. Stigma and discrimination of single moms can introduce obstacles when they want the necessary services and support system, and is a continuation of a certain trend of isolation and marginalization (Adewuya cited by Olajide 2025). Social alienation and psychological stress of both the children and parents seem to cause child abuse in Nigerian communities, especially in Ekiti State, due to stigmatization of single parenthood by the members of the community. It is very clear that single parents endure significant societal shaming, marginalisation, and negative

perceptions from the community, which isolate them and impact their emotional well-being as well as parenting abilities. Such social stigma can lead to increased stress levels, which may negatively affect a single parent's ability to provide proper care and supervision for children, making neglect or abuse more likely.

Additionally, children of single parents often seem to experience secondary stigma, which can affect self-esteem and social lives and potentially lead to negative behavioural tendencies and increased vulnerability to abuse. Therefore, the stigma of single-parent families is an important concern that has to be properly addressed because it aggravates the external financial difficulties that single-parent families encounter, which is why awareness of the community needs and the implementation of supporting strategies should be taken to limit prejudice and safeguard the well-being of children in single-parent families (Oluseye, Waterhouse, & Hoggart 2024; Chavda & Nisarga 2023; Eghenure, 2024).

To address the pathetic situation, many some empirical studies have been conducted which include Akinola, Onipede, and Ojo (2024) who examined socio-economic background as a predictive factor of child maltreatment in Ekiti State particularly in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State. They used sample of two hundred (200) students randomly selected in five senior schools. Data collection instrument employed by the researchers was a questionnaire. Analysis of the data was done using one-way ANOVA and t-test statistics. The findings showed that parental socio-economic background and child maltreatment had a significant relationship. The occupation of parents also played a major role in maltreatment of a child.

Similarly, Oluwagbohunmi, and Owayin, (2025) examined how the socio-economic status of parents relates to the prevalence of street hawking among secondary school students in Ekiti State in Nigeria. In particular to evaluates the level of participation of students in street hawking and examined the variation in hawking between low-, middle-, and high-income parents

and students with different educational levels and occupational status. The research design was a descriptive survey, and the sample that was used was 600 students of 12 senior secondary schools who were sampled based on the selection technique and sampling procedure. Descriptive analysis of the study showed that students were mostly engaged in street hawking, as they had to meet immediate family demands, and economic pressures were found to be serious. One-way ANOVA testing of hypotheses did not identify significant differences in the involvement of the students in street hawking according to their parental income ($p = 0.707$), educational status ($p = 0.811$), or the occupation type ($p = 0.709$).

Okusanya, Sholabi, Onasanya, and Amosun, (2025) also examined the socio-economic factors that contribute to child abuse and neglect in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, and the implication of this on the rights of children. Anchored in the Social Disorganisation Theory, the research adopted a mixed-methods design to explore how poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, low parental education, and cultural norms fuel systemic child maltreatment. The empirical evidence with 180 participants in four local governments showed that physical, emotional and sexual abuse was highly prevalent, poverty and urban stress were the strongest predictors. The stakeholder interviews indicated poor implementation of the Child Rights Act and cultural justification of corporal punishment to be a significant hindrance to any change. Results revealed that emotional abuse and physical abuse are the most in existence, which is compounded by poor healthcare, exploitative labour and weak legal provisions. Child protection laws have been domesticated in Oyo State, although they are not enforced because of the weaknesses of the institutional capacity, lack of awareness, and opposition by the traditional and religious leaders.

Ayodele, Olaseinde, and Akinbebije (2025) examined the correlation between single parenting and the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents in the Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area in Ekiti State. The research adopted the

descriptive survey research design. The study population used was the adolescents of Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The researchers used a simple random sampling method to choose the 120 adolescents as the study sample. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data. Frequency and simple percentage were examined to analyze the collected data to answer the research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation and ANOVA were to test the hypotheses. The research results showed that death, divorce, and other social factors are the major causes of single parenting in Ado-Ekiti. The psychosocial well-being outcomes are greatly different between the adolescents who were raised by single fathers and single mothers, and there is a bias of considering single mothers more positively. The results indicated a strong correlation between single parenting and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents and this is dependent on financial situations, stress, and family support networks.

Oluseye, Waterhouse and Hoggart (2024) examined stigma management interventions and how such interventions work towards young mothers in rural Nigeria. Key informants were ten and young mothers 24 in number; recruited in Ife- East in South-Western Nigeria. Semi-structured interview data revealed that disapproval of pregnant teenagers and young mothers by the society was part of the norm. The strategies that women utilized in order to actively deal with stigma consisted of: belief in predestination, avoidance, concealment, and cohabitation. These plans might be viewed as the means of abating the negative stereotypes and discrimination. Nevertheless, they also came with undesired effects of exacerbating the problematic situations of a large number of young women and subjecting them to negative consequences, such as gender-based violence, repeat pregnancies, poor mental health, and a low rate of service uptake. This is because the findings demonstrate that policy frameworks are required to be active in fighting stigma by dealing with the negative portrayal of early pregnancy and motherhood and assisting young

mothers in supportive settings.

Khan, Mehjabin, and Hossain, (2025) investigates the stigma faced by single mothers and their coping strategies using Ervin Goffman's social stigma theory, labeling theory, and stigma management communication theory. In-depth interviews with nine single mothers were conducted, using snowball sampling and thematic analysis to explore their experiences. The findings revealed that stigmatization pervades all aspects of life, leading to adverse effects like social deprivation, emotional turmoil, anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, professional challenges, reduced family support, and suicidal tendencies. It was found that to cope, single mothers employ various tactics, including limiting social interactions, hiding marital status, and drawing strength from religious faith or meditation.

Awuor, Chesikaw, and Wambu (2025) applied mixed methods to examine how income levels can determine parenting styles, education accessibility, emotional support, and the wellbeing of children in general. They used mixed-methods research design. A total of 121 respondents were supplied data used for the study. The information was gathered by administering structured questionnaires and interviewing key informants to the single parents, teachers and community leaders. The results indicate that low income is a serious constraint on parental ability to offer proper nutrition, education, healthcare, and emotional support, which usually leads to impaired parenting and negative outcomes for children's academic performance and socialization.

The research conducted by Cruz, et.al. (2024) demonstrated the concealed issues as it addressed the problem of financial challenges single parents have to deal with and how they affect the well-being. The studies are aimed at gaining insights into the financial problem facing the single parenting as a challenge to finance childcare when living alone. A qualitative study design was used, the research collected data by using open-ended and semi-structured

interviews that involved 55 single parents in Hagonoy, Bulacan, Philippines. Although the survey and interview were carried out with single parents on diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, the idea behind the survey was to get to know the factors that have formed their financial problems. Thematic analysis was used to find important themes and trends, which assisted in discovering common experiences of the participants. The findings showed that single parents often experience financial stress due to insufficient income, lack of support systems, and the pressures of balancing work and childcare.

Despite all the empirical studies that have been conducted, yet there seem to be increasing number of single-parent families. Again, there is dearth of empirical studies focused on the effects of single-parent households on child abuse in Ekiti State, particularly with respect to socio-economic status, psychological condition, societal stigma and economic pressure.

Statement of the Problem

The rise in the number of single-parent families in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State has been of great concern due to the welfare and protection of children, especially when it comes to child abuse. Single parenthood, which transpires as divorce, separation, death, or socio-economic constraints, places parents in a state of financial crisis, emotional distress, lack of social support, and stigma, which could have an adverse impact on effective parenting and supervising children. Empirical evidence reveals that these factors increase the susceptibility of children to different types of abuse, such as neglect, physical, emotional and psychological abuse, but most of the available research in Ekiti State has centred on general child abuse or psychosocial wellbeing without necessarily analysing the impact of single parenthood at the local government level. In Ikere Local Government Area, the interaction between single parenthood and economic pressures, psychological stress, and social stigmatisation resulting in child abuse is not well documented, and this creates a gap in knowledge in understanding how to intervene and protect

children through effective intervention and child protection strategies. Thus, this research examines the influence of single parenthood on child abuse in Ikere Local government area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on:

- i. Examine the socio-economic conditions of single-parent families that contribute to the occurrence of child abuse in Ikere local Government area of Ekiti State.
- ii. Examine psychological condition of single-parent families in Ikere Ekiti that contribute to the occurrence of child abuse.
- iii. Examine how the stigmatization of single parenthood influence the risk of child abuse in single-parent families.

Research Questions

The following research question were stated to guide the study:

- i. What are the socio-economic conditions of single-parent families that contribute to the occurrence of child abuse in Ikere Local Government area of Ekiti State?
- ii. What are the psychological conditions of single-parent families that contribute to

- the occurrence of child abuse in i Ikere Local Government area of Ekiti State?
- iii. How does the stigmatisation of single parenthood influence the risk of child abuse in single-parent families in Ikere Local Government area of Ekiti State?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design of a survey type. The population of the study comprises all the single mothers and fathers residing in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State. A sample of 62 respondents out of 80 selected randomly filled out and returned the questionnaire. Simple random sampling techniques was used to select the respondents; the reason was to give equal opportunity to everyone who fall into the category of the study population. The validity of the instrument was ensured, and its reliability was tested using the Cronbach Alpha method, for which the coefficient turned out to be 0.85, meaning that the instrument was reliable enough to collect the necessary data for the study. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Since a 4-point Likert scale was used, any mean score equal to 2.50 and above is regarded as 'Agreed', while any mean

Table 2: Mean Responses on the psychological conditions of single-parent families that contribute to the occurrence of child abuse

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	I often experience high levels of stress related to parenting alone, which affects my behavior toward my child.	62	2.25	0.88	Disagreed
2	Feelings of loneliness as a single parent make it difficult for me to provide emotional support to my child.	62	2.35	0.79	Disagreed
3	My experienced periods of anxiety or depression that have impacted my parenting ability.	62	2.19	0.74	Disagreed
4	When overwhelmed, I sometimes have difficulty controlling my temper with my child.	62	2.64	0.79	Agreed
5	Poor family support increases my feelings of frustration and lead to harsh disciplinary actions.	62	2.77	0.75	Agreed
6	I worry about my ability to meet both the emotional and physical needs of my child.	62	3.70	0.52	Agreed
7	Emotional exhaustion from managing parental responsibilities alone sometimes makes me less patient with my child.	62	2.32	0.69	Disagreed
Grand Mean Value			2.60	0.73	Agreed

The result in Table 2 indicates the respondents' opinion on the psychological conditions of single-parent families that contribute to the occurrence of child abuse. Vividly, the result showed that the respondents agreed that difficulty controlling temper when overwhelmed (2.64), poor family support increasing frustration (2.77), and worry about meeting the emotional and physical needs (3.70) really contribute to challenges in caregiving. On the other hands, the respondents disagreed that experiencing high stress (2.25), loneliness (2.35), anxiety or depression (2.19) and

emotional exhaustion (2.32) as factors affecting parenting. The grand mean value of 2.60 and standard deviation of 0.73 showed that the respondents slightly agreed that psychological conditions of single-parent families contribute to the occurrence of child abuse. This suggests that while not all psychological strains are universally perceived as impacting parenting, concerns related to emotional regulation, social support deficits, and anxiety over caregiving adequacy are important psychological stressors linked to the risk of child abuse in single-parent families.

Table 3: Mean Responses on the stigmatization of single parenthood influence the risk of child abuse in single parent families

S/N		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remarks
1	I often feel judged by others because I am a single parent.	62	2.38	1.04	Disagreed
2	Social stigma makes me feel isolated and unsupported in my parenting role.	62	2.22	0.91	Disagreed
3	People treat me differently because of my status as a single parent.	62	2.23	0.98	Disagreed
4	Due to stigma, I hesitate to seek help or support for parenting challenges.	62	2.48	0.76	Disagreed
5	I experienced discrimination in my community because I am a single parent.	62	2.32	1.00	Disagreed
6	The attitudes of others sometimes cause me emotional stress or frustration.	62	2.32	1.06	Disagreed
7	I worry about how others perceive my family because I am a single parent.	62	2.38	0.98	Disagreed
Grand Mean Score			2.33	0.96	Disagreed

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5	I experienced discrimination in my community because I am a single parent.	62	2.32	1.00	Disagreed
6	The attitudes of others sometimes cause me emotional stress or frustration.	62	2.32	1.06	Disagreed
7	I worry about how others perceive my family because I am a single parent.	62	2.38	0.98	Disagreed
Grand Mean Score			2.33	0.96	Disagreed

The results in Table 3 show the respondents' views on how stigmatization of single parenthood influences the risk of child abuse in single-parent families. The respondents were of the view that they do not strongly feel judged (2.38), isolated (2.22), treated differently (2.23), hesitant to seek support due to stigma (2.48), discriminated against (2.32), emotionally stressed by others' attitudes (2.32), or worry about others' perceptions of their family (2.38). This suggests that, in this sample, stigma and social discrimination are not perceived as contributors to parenting difficulties or child abuse risk among single-parent families. The grand mean of 2.33 and standard deviation of 0.96 further justify the claim of the respondents that stigmatization of single parenthood will not influence the risk of child abuse in single-parent families.

Discussion

Findings of the study showed that financial struggle, employment instability, difficulty meeting basic needs, limited social support, and economic challenges affecting caregiving availability are the socio-economic conditions of single-parent families that contribute to the

occurrence of child abuse in Ikere Ekiti. The finding supports the study of Akinola, Onipede, and Ojo (2024) who revealed that parental socio-economic background and child maltreatment had a significant relationship as well as that the occupation of parents also played a major role in maltreatment of a child. The finding is in agreement with the study of Awuor, Chesikaw, and Wambu (2025) who found that low income is a serious constraint on parental ability to offer proper nutrition, education, healthcare, and emotional support which usually leads to impaired parenting and negative outcomes for children's academic performance and socialization.

Findings showed that difficulty controlling temper when overwhelmed, poor family support increasing frustration, and worry about meeting the emotional and physical needs really contribute to challenges in caregiving. The findings agreed with the outcome of the previous study of Ayodele, Olaseinde, and Akinbebije (2025) who disclosed a strong correlation between single parenting and psychosocial wellbeing among adolescents and this is dependent on financial situations, stress, and

family support networks. The finding is in line with the study of Cruz, et al. (2024) who showed that single parents often experience financial stress due to insufficient income, lack of support systems, and the pressures of balancing work and childcare.

The findings revealed that not strongly feel judged, isolation, treated differently, hesitant to seek support due to stigma, discrimination against, emotionally stressed by others attitudes, or worry about others' perceptions of their family contribute to the risk of child abuse in single-parent families. The findings contradict the study of Khan, Mehjabin, and Hossain, (2025) who revealed that stigmatization pervades all aspects of life, leading to adverse effects like social deprivation, emotional turmoil, anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, professional challenges, reduced family support, and suicidal tendencies. It was found that to cope, single mothers employ various tactics, including limiting social interactions, hiding marital status, and drawing strength from religious faith or meditation.

Conclusion

This paper concluded that socio-economic challenges like unpredictable household earnings and a lack of support networks have a devastating effect on the health of the single-parent family, predisposing the child to maltreatment. The emotional pressure and caregiving stress are additional factors which demand parents deliver proper care, and social isolation and stigma concerns affect the coping behaviour of parents. These are some of the economic, emotional, and social barriers that need to be addressed to limit the risk of child abuse and enhance the resilience of families in single-parent households in Ikere, Ekiti.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made.

1. Single parents should explore opportunities to find stable employment and enrol in a financial literacy course to enhance money management skills and plan for basic needs.

2. There should be parenting education sessions and stress-coping strategies such as counselling, peer support, or mindfulness meditations for single parents to improve emotional stability in the face of caregiving problems such as the inability to control temper and a lack of family support.

3. To address stigma, isolation, and negative social perceptions, the single parent should take part in awareness campaigns within the community that facilitate acceptance, find supportive social networks, and be involved in the activities that will help him or her gain self-confidence and lessen the sense of being judged.

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