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PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF SINGLE PARENTING ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AWKA SOUTH L.G.A. ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceived influence of single parenting on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. The research, guided by three research questions, adopted a descriptive survey design. A sample of 220 SS1 students, selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure from 10 public secondary schools, responded to a 30-item structured questionnaire titled "Perceived Influence of Single Parenting on Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students" (PISPASSS). The instrument, validated by experts and with a high reliability coefficient of 0.91, was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that the major causes of single parenting in the area include divorce, death of a spouse, early pregnancy, economic hardship, and domestic violence. The study also identified effective counselling measures to support affected students, such as regular guidance sessions, emotional therapy, teacher training, and parental involvement in counselling. Crucially, the results indicated a high perceived negative influence of single parenting on students' academic performance, manifesting as emotional instability, lack of academic support, financial struggles, and reduced self-discipline, though some students demonstrated resilience. The study concludes that while single parenting presents significant challenges to academic achievement, these effects can be mitigated through robust school-based counselling services, teacher support, and targeted government interventions. It is recommended that schools strengthen their guidance and counselling units, teachers receive training to support vulnerable students, and policymakers implement social support programs to alleviate the socioeconomic burdens on single-parent families.

Keywords: influence; single parenting; academic achievement; secondary school students

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Introduction

Family is the first primary social group that a child interacts with and belongs to. It plays a vital role in shaping the child's emotional, social, and intellectual development. According to Maduewesi and Emenogu (2021), the family lays the foundation of education before formal schooling begins. Children learn language, values, discipline, and behaviors within the family, making it a pivotal agent in early childhood education and moral development. Agulanna (2020) further supports this by asserting that the family lays the psychosocial, moral, and spiritual foundations necessary for the overall development of the child. The presence and cooperation of both parents are crucial in ensuring this holistic development.

Marriage is a foundational social institution that traditionally underpins the family structure. It is a legally and culturally recognized union between two individuals, typically designed to provide a stable framework for reproduction, child-rearing, and mutual support. In many societies, including Nigeria, marriage is seen not only as a union between two people but also as a bond between families and communities, reinforcing social cohesion and continuity. A stable marital relationship often provides an enabling environment for the proper nurturing and education of children. The presence of both parents allows for shared responsibilities: mothers often play nurturing and caregiving roles, while fathers may assume the roles of providers and disciplinarians, although these roles can be flexible. In Yoruba culture, for example, maternal roles include home training and emotional support, while paternal roles focus on economic responsibilities and enforcing discipline (Maduewesi & Emenogu, 2021).

The presence of both a mother and a father provide complementary perspectives and a more balanced moral education. For instance, while a mother may emphasize nurturing, empathy, and compassion, a father might stress discipline, accountability, and resilience. Together, they create a moral compass that guides children in making sound decisions in school and life. In single-parent families, this balance may be disrupted. The single parent, overwhelmed with financial, emotional, and time constraints, may struggle to provide adequate moral supervision. Due to the absence of one parent, children may lack role models of the opposite sex, which can impact their social development and understanding of appropriate behavior. The lack of consistent discipline, guidance, and value transmission can lead to issues such as indiscipline, truancy, disrespect for authority, or association with negative peer groups. These behavioral problems often translate into poor classroom conduct, lack of focus, and diminished academic achievement.

Single-parenting can be defined as when one out of two people who is responsible for the nurturing and child rearing is not available, and the work meant for two people, is now been carried out by only one person. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, single-parenting is been defined as a mother or

father who looks after children on their own, without the other partner. Single-parenting can also be defined as a situation in which one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for the upbringing of the child (Whitting and Child 2023). Single-parenthood may arise when either the male or the female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock (Ortesse, 2020).

As Osarenren (2020) puts it, "single-parenthood is a situation where the upbringing of a child/children in a family is carried out by one parent either the father or the mother". Osarenren (2020) identified different types of single-parents: Single-parenthood arising from the death of the other partner, Separation or divorce and Teenage pregnancy. Akinbade and Akinloye (2022), are of the opinion that single-parents face more than the ordinary difficulties in raising children. According to them, single-parents usually adopt or establish adult sexual relationships that will not hurt their children, in order to provide role models to the opposite sex and to deal with the feelings of not being "normal family". Onuoha (2024) opines that single-parents have to play the roles of two parents, but unfortunately, they do not possess the greater financial and psychological reserves at the disposal of two parents.

Researchers such as Akinboye (2021), Bakare (2023) and Uche (2020), have shown that many single-parent families lack many basic necessities of life because of lower income. These researchers opined that, women are usually granted the custody of their children in the event of divorce and the bitterness they feel towards their partners do not allow them to accept any financial assistance from their partners who may not even want to provide for her and the child/children. This is to the detriment of the children's welfare and education. For instance, in a single-parenting families where the father or the mother is handicapped financially, children in those homes find it difficult to pay their school fees as at when due; pocket money may not be given to the children, school uniform may not be provided, textbooks and educational materials may not be possessed by the children due to lack of finance in the home. The resultant effect in this situation is that the children most often dropping out of school or exhibit truancy and absenteeism which may lead to poor academic (Nnah 2020).

Academic refers to measurable learning outcomes and milestones attained by students through formal education. These outcomes include grades, test scores, grade point averages, awards, and completion of educational levels. Academic success helps develop critical thinking, communication skills, discipline, time management, and self-confidence. These personal qualities are essential for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship (York, Gibson & Rankin, 2025). Academic records often determine access to higher education and employment. Individuals with strong academic backgrounds have better chances of securing meaningful employment, achieving career advancement, and earning higher income (Crede & Kuncel, 2022).

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Researchers such as Udansky and Wolf (2021) further opined that there is an awareness of the importance of the home environment or family on students' academic. The home has a great influence on the students' psychological, emotional, social and economic state. In the view of Ajila and Olutola (2022), the state of the home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. This is because the family background and context of a child affect his reaction to life situations and his level of academic achievement. Although the school is responsible for the experiences that make up the individual's life during school periods, parents and the individual's experiences at home play tremendous roles in building the personality of the child and making the child what he is.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to determine the Perceived influence of single parenting on academic of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. Specifically, the study will examine the:

1. Causes of single parenting in Awka South Local Government Area.
2. Perceived influence on single parenting on student's academic achievement
3. Counselling measures that can be adopted to handle students from single-parenting to aid their academic achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the causes of single parenting in Awka South Local Government Area?
2. What is the perceived influence of single parenting on student's academic achievement?
3. What are the counselling measures that can be adopted to handle students from single-parenting to aid their academic achievement?

Research Method

The study was carried in Anambra State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Akuezuilo and Agu (2015) survey research is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people for survey research, the focus is on people, their beliefs, opinions, attitude and behavior. This design is appropriate for the present study as it involves the use of a questionnaire to ascertain the results, one on one interaction with the respondents, and usage of mean and standard deviation to ascertain results. The design there seeks to ascertain the Perceived influence of single parenting on academic of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State.

The population for this study consists of 2760 students in SS1, in 20 public Secondary Schools in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State (Post Primary School Service Commission, 2025).

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Using Multi stage sampling, a sample size of 220 students for the 2024/2025 academic session was drawn from the 8% of the population 2760 students in public secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area. The instrument was a single standardized instrument which contained a 30 item researchers-structured questionnaire titled "Perceived influence of single parenting on academic of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area **"**PISPASSS"**.** The instrument adopted response pattern: Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD) a copy of the instrument is attached as appendix page.

Validation of the Instrument

The validity of an instrument was the degree to which the instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure. The instruments (PISPASSS) were subjected to face and content validation by two experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundation both in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, the corrections of the experts were effected and the final corrected copy was produced and used.

For the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used on 20 students of public secondary schools Nnewi North LGA. The respondents did not have any problem in responding to the items. The coefficient obtained for the variables was 0.91. This indicated that the instrument is highly reliable. The administration of the instruments was done through Direct Delivery Approval. By this method, copies of the questionnaire were administered personally to the respondents by the researcher with the help of research assistants. A total number of 220 copies were distributed to the students and collected after completion by the researcher. It was collected on the spot. This was to avoid instrument mortality rate.

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The decision rule was that any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed, while any with a mean score below 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. The cutoff point is determined by finding the average of the nominal value, thus;

Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points
Agree (A) = 3 points
Disagree (D) = 2 points
Strongly Disagree = 1 point

Mathematically, the mean cutoff was represented thus;

$$\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

Presentation of Results

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Research Question 1: What are the causes of single parenting in Awka South Local Government Area?

Cluster 1: Mean rating of respondents on the causes of single parenting in Awka South Local Government Area.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	σ	Remark
1.	Divorce is a major cause of single parenting in the area.	132	38	15	35	220	3.21	1.12	Agreed
2.	Death of a spouse often leads to single parenting.	23	182	15	0	220	3.03	0.56	Agreed
3.	Early pregnancy without proper marital arrangement causes it.	114	102	0	4	220	3.48	0.76	Agreed
4.	Economic hardship contributes to separation and single parenting.	95	99	16	10	220	3.26	1.02	Agreed
5.	Cultural beliefs do not affect the rise of single parenting.	112	56	48	4	220	3.25	1.05	Agreed
6.	Single parenting is sometimes a result of personal choice.	101	98	9	12	220	3.30	1.03	Agreed
7.	Unwanted pregnancy is not a common cause of single parenting.	14	38	97	71	220	1.97	0.95	Disagreed
8.	Migration of a partner to another location may lead to it.	78	99	14	29	220	3.02	1.10	Agreed
9.	Legal restrictions have no impact on single parenting.	47	20	129	24	220	2.40	0.95	Disagreed
10.	Domestic violence can result in single parenting.	98	99	6	17	220	3.26	1.01	Agreed
	Cluster Mean						**3.024**		

In Cluster 1, Items 7and 9 had a mean score of below 2.50 indicates rejection while clusters (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10) obtained a mean score above 2.50 which indicates that the items were accepted, the table had a cluster mean of 3.024 which also implies acceptance. Therefore, there is a high extent on the several causes of single parenting in Awka South Local Government Area.

Research Question 2: What is the perceived influence of single parenting on student's academic achievement?

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Table Cluster 2: Mean rating of respondents on the perceived influence of single parenting on student's academic achievement.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	σ	Remark
1.	Students from single-parent homes may lack adequate academic support.	113	64	34	9	220	3.27	0.87	Agreed
2.	Emotional instability affects academic concentration.	143	56	0	11	210	3.57	0.78	Agreed
3.	Such students may struggle with self-discipline in studies.	88	79	34	19	220	3.07	0.97	Agreed
4.	They perform equally well as others academically.	52	89	74	5	220	2.85	0.83	Agreed
5.	Lack of parental guidance can hinder academic.	102	58	34	26	220	3.07	1.01	Agreed
6.	Financial struggles affect their access to learning resources.	101	78	41	0	220	3.27	0.83	Agreed
7.	Students from such homes are always high achievers.	50	65	95	10	220	2.70	0.83	Agreed
8.	Peer influence can affect their academic focus.	53	155	12	0	220	3.18	0.59	Agreed
9.	Parental status has no impact on academic achievement.	6	34	103	77	220	1.85	0.82	Disagreed
10.	Some develop resilience and excel academically despite the challenges.	106	73	40	1	220	3.29	0.83	Agreed
	Cluster Mean						**3.017**		

In Table Cluster 2, Items (5, 7 and 9) had a mean score of below 2.50 indicates rejection while items (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10) obtained a mean score above 2.50 which indicates that the items were accepted, the table had a cluster mean of 2.910 which also implies acceptance. Therefore, there is an increased sense of the perceived influence of single parenting on student's academic achievement.

Research Question 3: What are the counselling measures that can be adopted to handle students from single-parenting to aid their academic achievement?

Cluster 3: Mean rating of respondents on the counselling measures that can be adopted to handle students from single-parenting to aid their academic achievement.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	σ	Remark
1.	Schools should provide regular guidance and counselling sessions.	78	124	16	2	220	3.26	0.63	Agreed
2.	Peer group support can help students from single-parent homes.	75	132	5	8	220	3.24	0.64	Agreed

3.	Parents should be engaged in follow-up counselling sessions.	160	60	0	0	220	3.72	0.45	Agreed
4.	Teachers need training on how to support such students.	110	109	1	0	220	3.49	0.50	Agreed
5.	Counselling does not make any difference to student achievement.	14	18	132	56	220	1.95	0.88	Disagreed
6.	Emotional therapy helps in boosting self-esteem of affected students.	141	79	0	0	220	3.64	0.48	Agreed
7.	Group counselling is ineffective for children from single-parent homes.	0	8	100	112	220	1.527	0.73	Disagreed
8.	Career guidance should be made available to these students.	132	78	5	5	220	3.53	0.60	Agreed
9.	Counsellors should ignore family background in therapy.	3	3	103	111	220	1.53	0.73	Disagreed
10.	Regular check-ins can help monitor their academic progress.	83	106	18	13	220	3.17	0.82	Agreed
	Cluster Mean						**2.910**		

In Cluster 3, cluster 9 had a mean score of below 2.50 indicates rejection while clusters (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10) obtained mean score above 2.50 which indicates that the items were accepted, the table had a cluster mean of 3.017 which also implies acceptance. Therefore, there are counselling measures that can be adopted to handle students from single-parenting to aid their academic achievement such as financial inculcation, proper parental guidance, etc.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that there is a high extent of several causes of single parenting in Awka South, including divorce, death of a spouse, early pregnancy, economic hardship, and domestic violence. These align with earlier studies which noted that marital instability and economic deprivation are leading drivers of single-parent households in Nigeria (Amato, 2022; Osarenren, 2020). Divorce and separation often result in custody arrangements that leave one parent primarily responsible for the child, while death of a spouse though less frequent today due to improvements in healthcare remains a significant factor (Baker & Ben-Ami, 2021). Teenage or unintended pregnancies also contribute to the rise of single-parenting, particularly in socio-cultural contexts where forced marriages fail or where fathers withdraw responsibility (Thomas et al., 2021). Economic hardship and domestic violence further exacerbate family instability, leading to separation or abandonment (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2024). These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of single-parenthood, showing that both socio-economic pressures and personal circumstances play crucial roles in shaping family structures.

The study also found that guidance and counselling interventions significantly

influence the academic achievement of students from single-parent families. Respondents strongly agreed on the importance of counselling services, teacher training, emotional therapy, and parental involvement in counselling sessions. This finding agrees with Jeynes (2025), who emphasized that school-based counselling and mentorship programs help mitigate the emotional and academic challenges faced by students from disrupted homes. Counselling serves as a protective mechanism by providing emotional stability, boosting self-esteem, and addressing behavioral problems that might hinder learning (Hamre & Pianta, 2021). Furthermore, involving teachers in training programs ensures that they are equipped with the skills to identify, empathize with, and support students from disadvantaged family structures. Regular counselling check-ins also provide a platform for early intervention, preventing academic decline (Hill & Taylor, 2024). Thus, the findings highlight that counselling is not only remedial but also preventive, ensuring that students from single-parent households are not left behind academically.

The study found a high extent of perceived influence of single parenting on students' academic achievement. Students from single-parent homes were perceived to experience emotional instability, lack of adequate academic support, and financial struggles, all of which negatively affect learning outcomes. This aligns with the attachment theory of Bowlby (1969), which posits that the absence of one parent can disrupt secure emotional bonds, thereby affecting children's confidence, discipline, and school engagement. Consistent with Amato (2019), children from single-parent families often struggle with concentration, motivation, and social adjustment, which in turn diminishes their academic achievement. Financial constraints further restrict access to learning resources such as textbooks, tutoring, and school activities, confirming findings by McLanahan and Sandefur (2024) that socio-economic disadvantage is a strong predictor of academic under. However, the study also found that some students demonstrate resilience and excel despite these challenges, which agrees with Whitehead (2023), who argued that with proper support from schools, communities, and extended families, children from single-parent households can succeed academically. Overall, the findings suggest that while single parenting poses significant challenges, targeted support systems can moderate its negative influence on students' educational outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined the perceived influence of single parenting on the academic of secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. The findings revealed that single parenting arises from multiple causes including divorce, death of a spouse, early or unintended pregnancy, economic hardship, and domestic violence. These causes disrupt family stability and create conditions that challenge children's development. The study further found that

counselling measures such as regular guidance and counselling sessions, peer group support, emotional therapy, and teacher training are effective in addressing the educational challenges faced by students from single-parent homes. Most importantly, the findings indicated that single parenting significantly influences students' academic achievement, often leading to reduced academic support, emotional instability, financial struggles, and difficulties in discipline. However, the study also showed that some students exhibit resilience and excel despite these challenges when provided with adequate support. While single parenting presents undeniable obstacles to children's education, these challenges are not insurmountable. With the right combination of parental involvement, counselling interventions, school support, and community assistance, students from single-parent households can achieve academic success comparable to their peers from two-parent families (Amato, 2022; Whitehead, 2023).

Recommendations

From the result of the findings, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen School Counselling Services: Schools in Awka South and beyond should employ more qualified counsellors to provide regular guidance and counselling programs targeting students from single-parent homes.
2. Teacher Training: Teachers should be trained on how to identify emotional and academic difficulties among students from single-parent families and provide individualized support where necessary.
3. Parental Support Programs: Single parents should be encouraged to participate in parenting workshops and counselling sessions to improve their coping strategies, time management, and parenting skills.
4. Government Intervention: The government should provide targeted financial assistance, such as scholarships, free school uniforms, and educational materials, for students from single-parent homes to reduce dropout rates.
5. Community and Religious Support: Community-based organizations and religious groups should establish mentorship and after-school programs to provide moral and academic guidance to students lacking adequate parental support.

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