

# Single Parenting and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Adolescents in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State

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**Abstract:** *The study examined the relationship between single parenting and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Specifically, the study investigated the causes of single parenting, the differences in psychosocial outcomes between adolescents raised by single mothers and single fathers and the relationship between single parenting and the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of adolescents in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample for the study consisted of 120 adolescents selected using a simple random sampling technique. An instrument titled “Single Parenting and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Adolescents Questionnaire” was used for the collection of data for the study. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and simple percentage to answer the research questions while inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation and ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that single parenting in Ado-Ekiti is primarily caused by death, divorce, and other social factors. There is significant difference in the psychosocial well-being outcomes between adolescents raised by single fathers versus those raised by single mothers, with a tendency to view single mothers more favourably. The findings showed significant relationship between single parenting and adolescent psychosocial wellbeing, influenced by factors such as financial constraints, stress levels, and family support systems. The study recommended that government should develop and implement comprehensive support services for single-parent families, focusing on both practical and emotional assistance. Also, initiatives should be developed to support both single mothers and fathers, addressing the unique challenges each may face in parenting adolescents.*

**Keywords:** adolescents, psychosocial, single parenting, wellbeing, relationship

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## INTRODUCTION

Families bear the primary duty of instilling societal norms and values in their children, while ensuring their psychological and emotional well-being. According to Stephens (2006), children from disrupted family environments often exhibit antisocial tendencies. This situation creates a societal imperative to address these issues. Furthermore, these children frequently face disadvantages, including potential deprivation and restricted access to certain rights and opportunities.

The process of nurturing a child's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth from birth to adulthood is known as parenting. The process of raising a kid is referred to as parenting, not the biological relationship (Larean, 2002). Although the government and society also play a part, the biological parent of the child in issue often handles this (Bernstein, 2008). Many times, non-parent blood relations provide parental care for abandoned or orphaned children. Others might end up in foster care, adoption, or an orphanage. Therefore, both parents are able to raise a child.

Over time, the notion of single parenthood has changed because of scholars' recognition of the variety of single-parent households and the various routes that might lead to single motherhood (Brown, 2021). It is possible for both moms and fathers to be single parents; single parenthood is not gender-specific (Smith & Johnson, 2020). When one of the two persons who are in charge of providing for and raising their children is unavailable, and the labor that should have been done by two people is now done by one person, it is referred to as single-parenthood. The definition of single-parenting, as stated in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Sixth edition, 2014), is when a parent raises their children alone, without the assistance of a partner.

A family structure known as single parenthood occurs when one parent raises and cares for one or more children alone, without the assistance of a partner or spouse (Jones & Watson, 2021). A spouse's death, divorce, separation, or the decision to parent alone can all lead to this arrangement (Amato & Keith, 2020). Globally, the number of single-parent families has increased recently, which has important ramifications for family dynamics and child development (UNICEF, 2022). Developing supportive policies and treatments that address the specific needs of single-parent families requires an understanding of the intricacies of single parenthood and its effects on families and children.

When a man or a woman chooses to have and raise a kid or children outside of marriage, single parenthood may result (Ortesse, 1998). In Nigeria, there was no such thing as single parenthood, and those that did exist were treated as outliers. However, family structures are expanding quickly these days, both within and outside of Nigeria. The distribution and determination of parental roles among Yoruba people in Nigeria is influenced by culture. The jobs of a mother are to raise her children, train them at home, and play complementary roles; the functions of a father are to provide for their financial needs and punish his children. When both parents provide the care, the child seems to be emotionally stable, ethically pure, and intellectually pure. According to sociology of education, a child's family is the first major social group they

join and interact with, and they have a bigger impact on their moral, intellectual, and physical development than any other group. Before a child enters a school, the family establishes the basis for their education, and the house (family) shapes the child's personality in school (Maduewesi and Emenogu, 1997).

Numerous factors that have been identified as contributing to persons becoming single parents also result in single parenting. It is pitiful that the majority of these elements leave the child (or children) and the single parent with severe scars and painful memories. Death, religious conviction, mental health problems, divorce, lack of social support, prolonged incarceration, parenting styles, natural disasters, economic strain, family intrusion, gender roles, parental alienation, long-term illness, rape, etc. are a few of the factors that contribute to single parenting.

The end of a live organism's biological processes is known as death. Single parenting follows the death of a spouse; it is an extremely traumatic experience for both the surviving spouse and the child (or children). Many major family crises are brought on by death. The mother will typically be left to care for the child or children when the father passes away, and the enormity of this duty may overwhelm her and render her nearly powerless. When a parent dies, the child may have emotional instability, becomes needlessly evil and resentful, and occasionally feels less than their peers feel. Untreated mental health problems can cause stress in relationships, which can culminate in divorce or separation and leave a person as a single parent (Jones & Watson, 2021).

The legal dissolution of a marriage by a separation is called a divorce. Divorce is one of the most frequent reasons for single parenting. One parent typically takes on the role of primary caretaker once a marriage splits, which results in single parenthood (Amato & Keith, 2020). Both spouses will be subject to certain legal terms and circumstances regarding child care in the event that they decide to dissolve their marriage. Family members are ripped apart by divorce. Since children appear typically to be the ones who suffer the most, it causes them to lose hope. Single parenting will result from the child (children) being intended to live with one parent.

It's often accepted that kids from single-parent households are more prone to have psychiatric issues. The mental health of children raised in single-parent households is frequently highlighted by the public media, which includes radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines. In the event that one partner is found guilty in court and given a lengthy prison sentence, even life in prison for the crime they committed, the other partner will be left to take care of the child or children, particularly if that partner chooses to stay faithful to the marriage. Children rescued from these types of households have mental distress and low self-esteem since most of their peers refer to them as "criminal's child," which undermines their self-worth. Differences in parenting styles and approaches can lead to conflict in a relationship, potentially resulting in separation or divorce and single parenthood (Amato & Keith, 2020).

Natural calamities such as earthquakes, wars, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, droughts, famines, etc. can drive couples to split up because during these times, everyone struggles for their own existence, which ultimately leads to the survival of the fittest. Men lose their wives, and probably their children as well;

women lose their husbands, and this is a pitiful experience. As one partner will be primarily responsible for the children's care, financing can be difficult for single parents. Therefore, issues with imbalance, stress, and solitary parenting have an impact on growing children. In southern regions of Nigeria, this is primarily prevalent; the most typical type of disagreement involves a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law, this result in the wife being mistreated, thereby ultimately drive her from the marital residence and leave her as a single mother.

Differing views on gender roles in a partnership can cause strife, which may then result in a divorce or separation and single parenthood (UNICEF, 2022). A parent may become a single parent because of dispute, separation, or divorce brought on by one parent undermining the relationship between the other parent and the children (Omotayo *et al.*, 2023). A man or woman's partner may become ineffective and powerless in their role as caregiver for the children if they suffer from a chronic disease. Children in these households are deprived of the opportunity to attend the best schools and purchase the best textbooks and other educational resources since these illnesses deplete the family's finances.

The use of force to coerce someone into engaging in sexual activity is known as rape. Teenage girls are mostly prone to this. This serious offense has legal penalties. Most of the time, rape results in an unintended pregnancy, which causes childbearing to occur at an inappropriate period or stage of life that may cause the mother to hate the child. Beyond just physical harm, women who are raped experience a sense of violation. The aforementioned components are intricately linked and multifaceted, frequently resulting from a confluence of personal, interpersonal, and cultural elements. Understanding these causes is essential for developing support systems and interventions that address the needs of single-parent families.

The adolescent years are crucial for establishing the groundwork for future health and wellbeing. The decisions and experiences made at this time can have a lasting impact on an adult's social, mental, and physical consequences. In order to support young people at this critical developmental stage, it is imperative to comprehend the special opportunities and challenges associated with adolescence. The World Health Organization defines teenagers as those who are between the ages of 10 and 19 (WHO 2002a referenced in Kassebaum, 2017). Adolescence is a transitional stage of development that occurs between childhood and adulthood, typically characterized by significant physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. It is a critical period marked by exploration, identity formation, and the development of independence and autonomy (Smith & Johnson, 2020).

Adolescence is a time of greater peer influence in terms of psychology, as people try to figure out who they are and where they fit into social groupings. Adolescents are navigating the difficulties of creating a sense of self, maintaining connections with peers and adults, and adjusting to societal expectations during this period of emotional upheaval (UNICEF, 2022). Three stages are further distinguished within this adolescent period: early, mid, and late adolescence. Individuals classified as early adolescents are those who fall between the ages of 10 and 13 and are characterized by both growth and sexual maturity. Similarly, mid-adolescence is explained as the period between 14 and 15 years old, and late-adolescence is defined as the

period between 16 and 19 years old, this is defined by the development of an adult form (WHO 2006 referenced in Magadi, 2019).

Research indicates that parents have equal accountability for their offspring's well-being, security, and socialization up until the point at which they are able to live independently of adult supervision (Naug, 2000; Kelly, 2003). Nonetheless, research indicates that there are those who find it difficult to manage their own identities and issues through pressures and anxieties of their personal life, for single parents, this can be the case. According to studies, raising children alone can present challenges for single parents (Roska & Potter, 2011). Interpersonal skills are necessary for parenting, and most parents pick up these abilities from their own parents (Naug, 2000; Straus, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Parents do not want their kids to give up on finding the greatest way to live their lives, as Stevenson and Zusho (2002) point out. Parents envision and foresee the type of person they want their child to grow up to be. They generally have some qualities they respect and a set of values they want to impart (Copeland, 2010; Crosnoe, 2007; Scott & Lilja, 2010).

Adolescents look up to and emulate their parents and other primary caregivers in many aspects of their behavior and attitudes. This implies that parents must pursue higher levels of self-actualization if they want their children to be on the path to self-actualization (Guest, 2007; Azuka-Obieke, 2013). However, a single parent may have to take on the responsibilities in the event of a divorce, other forms of separation, or the death of one spouse. In these cases, any vulnerability that remains may have an impact on a child's sense of self, self-worth, and social interactions (Scott & Lilja, 2010). Furthermore, Amato, Kane, and James (2011) and Simons-Morton (2001) pointed out that effective parenting requires time and work to manifest. It is possible that parents who do not spend enough time with their children would not be aware of their developmental milestones (Kelly, 2003). Sacrifice on the part of the parent is essential, whereby the parent will spare some time to take interest in children's studies.

The integration of psychological and social factors that support a person's general health and quality of life is referred to as psychosocial wellbeing. This holistic approach acknowledges the relationship between social (relationships, cultural influences, and societal context) and psychological (emotional and mental health) elements. A thorough comprehension of psychosocial wellbeing necessitates an investigation of the numerous facets and factors that mold a person's experience.

The interaction of psychological and social determinants on an individual's general functioning and mental health is referred to as psychosocial wellness. A crucial stage of human development, adolescence is characterised by profound changes in social, emotional, and physical aspects of life. Examining a range of factors, including identity development, self-esteem, social interactions, mental health, and coping strategies, is necessary to comprehend the psychosocial wellbeing of teenagers. A person's experience of health, happiness and prosperity is a crucial component of their overall well-being. It is a crucial component of a child's growth and, as such, a significant indicator of the overall health of teenagers. Therefore, those who feel that their life is going well and that their feelings and moods are included also are said to be in a

state of well-being. To put it simply, feeling good and having a positive outlook on life are signs of well-being (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007).

### **Research Questions**

The following research question will guide the study.

- i. What are the causes of single parenting in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State?
- ii. What are the differences in psychosocial outcomes between adolescents raised by single mothers and single fathers in Ado-Ekiti?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- i. There is no significant relationship between single parenting and the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents
- ii. There is no significant relationship between single father and single mother parenting and psychosocial well-being of adolescents

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted descriptive research design of the survey type. The population for the study consisted of adolescents in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample for the study consisted of 120 adolescents in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique. An instrument titled “Single Parenting and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Adolescents Questionnaire” was used for the collection of data for the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-re-test method to obtain a reliability coefficient. The instrument was administered to twenty (20) respondents outside the sample area. The same instrument was re-administered within an interval of two weeks on the same set of respondents. The two scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.85. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics of frequency and simple percentage were used to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics. However, hypothesis one was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation while hypothesis 2 was tested using ANOVA. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** What are the causes of single parenting in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State?



**Table 1:** Frequency and percentage on causes of single parenting

Items	Agree		Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Single parenting results to the unwillingness to mingle with peers	81	67.5	39	32.5
Anti-social behaviour is as a results of Single parenting	83	69.2	37	30.8
Death is a reason that cause Single Parenting of Adolescents	92	76.7	26	23.3
Divorce causes single parenting	89	74.2	31	35.8
Long-term imprisonment in some cases cause single parenting	67	55.8	53	44.2
Adolescents in single parent is as result of family intrusion	63	52.5	57	47.5

Result presented in Table 1 showed that 81(67.5%) of the respondents agreed that Single parenting results to the unwillingness to mingle with peers while 39(32.5%) disagreed. 83(69.2%) of the respondents agreed that anti-social behaviour is as a result of single parenting while 37(30.8%) disagreed. 92(76.7%) of the respondents agreed that death is a reason that cause Single Parenting of Adolescents while 23.3% disagreed. 74.2% of the respondents agreed that divorce causes single parenting while 26(35.8%) disagreed. 89(55.8%) of the respondents agreed that long-term imprisonment in some cases cause single parenting while 53(44.2%) of the respondents disagreed. 63(52.5%) of the respondents agreed that adolescents in single parent is as result of family intrusion while 57(47.5%) of the respondents disagreed.

**Research Question 2:** What are the differences in psychosocial outcomes between adolescents raised by single mothers and single fathers in Ado-Ekiti?

**Table 2:** Frequency and percentage on differences in psychosocial outcomes between adolescents raised by single mothers and single fathers

Items	Agree		Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Single mothers are more capable of providing emotional support to their children than single fathers	66	55.0	54	45.0
Single mothers are more successful in fostering positive self-esteem in their adolescents than single fathers.	84	70.0	36	30.0
Adolescents from single-mother households are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours than those from single-father households	88	73.3	32	26.7
Single fathers face more challenges in communicating effectively with their adolescents than single mothers	64	53.3	56	47.7
Adolescents raised by single mothers have better coping mechanisms for stress compared to those raised by single fathers	99	82.5	21	17.5
Adolescents raised by single mothers exhibit higher levels of emotional well-being than those raised by single fathers	74	61.2	46	38.8
Single mothers provide a more stable home environment for their adolescents than single fathers	89	74.2	31	25.8

Result presented in Table 2 showed that 66(55%) of the respondents agreed that single mothers are more capable of providing emotional support to their children than single fathers while 54(45%) disagree. 84(70%) of the respondents agreed that single mothers are more successful in fostering positive self-esteem

in their adolescents than single fathers while 36(30%) disagree. 88(73.3%) of the respondents agreed that adolescents from single-mother households are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours than those from single-father households while 32(26.7%) disagree. 99(82.5%) of the respondents agreed that adolescents raised by single-mothers have better coping mechanisms for stress compared to those raised by single-fathers while 21(17.5%) disagree. 74(61.2%) of the respondents agreed that Adolescents raised by single-mothers exhibit higher levels of emotional well-being than those raised by single-fathers while 46(38.8%) disagree. 89(74.2%) of the respondents agreed that single-mothers provide a more stable home environment for their adolescents than single-fathers while 31(25.8%) disagree

### Tests of Hypotheses

**Hypotheses One:** There is no significant relationship between single parenting and the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents

**Table 3: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship between Single Parenting and the Psychosocial Wellbeing**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r-cal	P-value	Remarks
Single Parenting	120	3.87	0.77	0.614*	0.001	Significant
Psychosocial Wellbeing	120	2.21	0.91			

\* $P < 0.05$

Table 3 showed there is significant relationship between single parenting and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents,  $r_{\text{cal}} = 0.614$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.001$  ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis formulated which states that there is no significant relationship between single parenting and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents was rejected.

**Hypotheses Two:** There is no significant relationship between single father and single mother parenting and psychosocial well-being of adolescents.

**Table 4: ANOVA Showing the Relationship Between Single Father and Single Mother Parenting and Psychosocial Well-being of Adolescents**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	df	F	Sig
Between Groups	437.81	437.81	1	9.73*	0.002
Within Groups	5313.28	45.03	118		
Total	5751.09		119		

$p < 0.05$  (Significant Result)

Table 4 above shows that the  $F_{\text{cal}}$  (9.73\*) is significant at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is thereby rejected; this implies that there is significant relationship between single father and single mother parenting and psychosocial well-being of adolescents.



## DISCUSSION

The results indicate that death, divorce, and antisocial behavior are among the leading causes of single parenting in Ado-Ekiti. This aligns with previous research by Amato and Keith (2020), who identified divorce as a common pathway to single parenthood. The finding on death as a major cause supports the work of Omotayo *et al.* (2023), who highlighted the impact of parental loss on family structures. The study also found that adolescents raised by single mothers were perceived to have better psychosocial outcomes compared to those raised by single fathers. Specifically, respondents believed single mothers were more capable of providing emotional support, fostering positive self-esteem, and creating a stable home environment. This finding is consistent with research by Smith and Johnson (2020), who noted gender differences in single parenting outcomes. However, it's important to interpret this cautiously, as societal biases may influence perceptions of parenting roles.

Hypothesis one revealed a significant positive relationship between single parenting and the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents ( $r = 0.614$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This finding suggests that single parenting has a substantial impact on adolescents' emotional stability, social relationships, and mental health outcomes. This aligns with previous research by Amato and Keith (2020), who found that family structure disruptions often lead to adjustment difficulties among adolescents, particularly in areas of self-concept development and interpersonal relationships, which can persist into early adulthood if appropriate support systems are not available.

Analysis from hypothesis 2 using ANOVA demonstrated a significant difference in the psychosocial well-being outcomes between adolescents raised by single fathers versus those raised by single mothers ( $F(1,118) = 9.73$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). This finding suggests that the gender of the single parent plays a meaningful role in shaping adolescent development outcomes. The results indicate that adolescents from single-mother households generally exhibit better psychosocial adjustment compared to their counterparts from single-father households. This difference may be attributed to varying parenting styles, emotional availability, and communication patterns, as noted by Thompson and McLanahan (2022), who observed that single mothers typically demonstrate greater involvement in the emotional aspects of child-rearing and maintain more consistent discipline strategies, which may contribute to more positive psychosocial outcomes for their adolescent children.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that single parenting in Ado-Ekiti is primarily caused by death, divorce, and other social factors. There are perceived differences in psychosocial outcomes between adolescents raised by single mothers versus single fathers, with a tendency to view single mothers more favorably. The findings showed a significant relationship between single parenting and adolescent psychosocial wellbeing, influenced by factors such as financial constraints, stress levels, and family support systems.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. The government should develop and implement comprehensive support services for single-parent families, focusing on both practical and emotional assistance.
2. Initiatives should be developed to support both single mothers and fathers, addressing the unique challenges each may face in parenting adolescents.
3. Programs aimed at improving the financial literacy and economic stability of single-parent households should be implemented to mitigate the impact of financial stress on adolescent wellbeing.
4. Efforts should be made to strengthen community ties and extended family support systems to provide a broader network of care for adolescents in single-parent families.
5. Accessible mental health services should be made available to both single parents and their adolescent children to address issues of stress, anxiety, and behavioral problems.

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