

Original Research Report



The Roots of Single Parenting and Its Influence on the Socioeconomic Trajectories of Young Adults in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigates the causes and multifaceted impacts of single parenting on the socio-economic development of young adults in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. This context, often overlooked in global family dynamics research, is increasingly relevant as urbanization accelerates. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from 399 respondents, including both academic and non-academic staff, through structured questionnaires. The study found that the primary drivers of single-parent households in the region are divorce (49.6%) and widowhood (40.1%). Young adults from single-parent families face significant challenges, including heightened risks of social stigma, economic hardship, and educational disparities. These challenges were reflected in clustered mean scores of 2.715 for social impact and 2.729 for economic impact. The study also highlighted gendered perceptions, revealing that social adjustment and career outcomes are shaped by both gender and family structure. Female respondents, in particular, reported greater difficulties in social integration and career progression. A unique aspect of this study is its localized focus on the dynamics of single-parenting in a rapidly urbanizing Nigerian city. The findings underscore the critical need for targeted interventions at both policy and community levels to address the specific challenges faced by young adults in these households. Recommendations include enhancing support networks, improving access to mental health services, and offering financial aid for educational advancement. The study emphasizes the importance of developing tailored interventions that foster resilience among young adults from single-parent households. By addressing systemic challenges, these interventions could play a vital role in promoting socio-economic inclusion and informing more inclusive policies in Nigeria's rapidly changing socio-economic landscape.

Keywords: Single parenting, socio-economic development, young adults, policy implications, family dynamics, Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Single-parent households have become a prominent and increasingly common family structure worldwide, with their socioeconomic effects on young adults garnering growing research attention, particularly in regions undergoing significant economic transitions (Koops et al., 2021; Henson et al., 2014). The rise of this family structure is driven by multiple factors, including shifts in cultural norms, economic pressures, and evolving social policies that increasingly acknowledge and support the autonomy of single-parent families (Gerson & Torres, 2015). In Nigeria, this phenomenon has become more visible, as cultural and economic changes contribute to the increasing number of single-parent households, which in turn influence young adults' access to education, social stability, and economic independence (Owolabi, 2023). This study, focused on Uyo in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, aims to explore the underlying causes of single parenting and its multifaceted impacts on the social and economic development of young adults, an area that is critical for designing effective policies to address the challenges faced by this demographic.

The causes of single parenting are complex and multifactorial, shaped by both structural and personal factors. Key contributing elements include high rates of divorce and separation, early pregnancies, and the death of a spouse. Other factors such as unemployment, migration, and economic hardship further complicate the landscape (Al Qallaf, 2018). Divorce rates, for instance, have notably influenced family structures in Nigeria, with sociocultural norms gradually evolving to accommodate single-parent families in some areas (Owolabi, 2023). However, this shift brings substantial challenges, particularly for young adults from these families. These individuals often face limited economic resources, less parental guidance, and reduced social networks—factors that can significantly hinder their overall development and long-term success (Cotterell, 2013).

In Uyo, single-parent families encounter distinct economic and social challenges, exacerbated by weakened traditional extended family support networks, which have been further strained by urban migration and economic constraints (Essien, 2013). As these families navigate the complexities of single parenting, the implications for young adults' well-being, educational outcomes, and economic opportunities are profound. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive policy frameworks that can support single-parent households and mitigate the socioeconomic disparities faced by young adults in such families.

When analyzing the impact of single parenting on young adults in Uyo, it is essential to consider both social and economic factors, as they play critical roles in shaping their experiences and outcomes. Socially, young adults raised in single-parent households often face unique challenges that can significantly affect their emotional and social development. These challenges include limited access to stable social environments and a lack of supportive role models, both of which are vital for fostering emotional resilience and social skills (Rees et al., 2023). Without consistent and positive influences, these young adults may be at higher risk of emotional and behavioral issues, which can impair their ability to form healthy relationships and integrate into community structures effectively (Zimmerman et al., 2015). This social instability, coupled with a lack of mentorship, can create long-term difficulties in navigating the complexities of adulthood.

Economically, single-parent households are often marked by financial limitations that restrict access to education, career opportunities, and overall upward mobility. Young adults from such families are frequently at greater risk of falling into poverty, with fewer resources available to support their educational advancement and career development (Damaske et al., 2017). The economic pressures inherent in single parenting, such as the need for a single income to support the household, often result in financial instability, which perpetuates a cycle of poverty that affects future generations (De Schutter et al., 2023). These compounded challenges make it more difficult for young adults from single-parent homes to break free from socioeconomic constraints, further deepening the disparities they face in comparison to their peers from two-parent households.

Uyo, the study's location, provides a particularly relevant context for examining the impact of single parenting. As the capital of Akwa Ibom State, Uyo is undergoing rapid urbanization, attracting families from rural areas seeking better economic opportunities. However, despite the promise of improved living conditions, urban migration does not always lead to better outcomes, especially for single-parent households. These families often encounter obstacles such as high living costs, limited affordable housing, and precarious employment opportunities that complicate their financial stability (QI, 2019; Awumbila et al., 2014). As a result, young adults raised in single-parent families in Uyo frequently face amplified socioeconomic challenges, which underscores the importance of investigating how local factors interact with broader social and economic trends to affect this demographic.

While there has been extensive research on single-parenting dynamics globally, studies focusing on Nigeria, and specifically Uyo, remain sparse (Onyemelukwe, 2016). This gap highlights the need for context-specific research that can provide insights into the unique challenges faced by young adults in single-parent households within Uyo. By exploring the causes and impacts of single parenting in this urban setting, the study aims to generate valuable knowledge that can inform targeted interventions, policies, and resources to support both single parents and their children. Additionally, the findings hope to contribute to a broader understanding of the socioeconomic pathways that shape young adults' lives in Uyo, fostering resilience and empowering them to overcome the obstacles associated with growing up in a single-parent household. Through this, the study aspires to help create more supportive structures that enable young adults to thrive despite the challenges posed by their family circumstances.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The increasing prevalence of single-parent households in Nigeria, particularly in urban areas like Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, has brought to light significant socioeconomic challenges that disproportionately affect young adults. Research indicates that young adults raised in single-parent households are more likely to face barriers to educational attainment, limited access to economic resources, and heightened social isolation, all of which negatively impact their social and economic development (Varga, 2021). The erosion of traditional family support systems, exacerbated by urban migration and economic pressures, has left many single-parent families more vulnerable to these challenges. As a result, young adults in these families often struggle to achieve financial independence,

secure stable employment, and maintain emotional well-being (Kwan, 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of these issues in global discussions about family dynamics, there is a significant lack of research specifically focused on the context of Uyo. This gap in the literature hinders a comprehensive understanding of how single parenting in this particular urban setting affects young adults' socioeconomic outcomes. The unique combination of urbanization, migration, and local economic factors in Uyo creates a distinct environment for single-parent families, one that may require tailored interventions and policies to address the specific challenges faced by these young adults. This study seeks to fill this research void by investigating the causes of single-parent households and examining their direct effects on the developmental trajectories of young adults in Uyo. By exploring these localized dynamics, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into how single-parenting influences socio-economic outcomes and offer recommendations for policies and interventions that could better support young adults in similar contexts.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to explore the causes of single parenting and assess its impact on the social and economic development of young adults. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- a) Investigate the underlying causes of single parenting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, and the factors contributing to the rise of single-parent households in the region.
- b) Examine the perceived effects of growing up in a single-parent household on young adults' social development, including aspects such as emotional well-being, social relationships, and community integration.
- c) Assess the perceived economic consequences of single parenting on young adults, focusing on educational attainment, employment prospects, financial stability, and overall economic mobility.
- d) Identify potential strategies and interventions that can improve the socio-economic development of young adults from single-parent families, including recommendations for policy changes and support systems.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- a) What are the main causes of single parenting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, and what factors contribute to the increasing prevalence of single-parent households in the region?
- b) How does growing up in a single-parent household affect the social development of young adults, particularly in terms of emotional well-being, social relationships, and community integration?
- c) What impact does single parenting have on the economic development of young adults, particularly regarding their access to education, employment opportunities, and financial stability?
- d) What measures or interventions could be implemented to improve the socio-economic

development of young adults raised in single-parent households, and how can these interventions address their specific challenges?

2.2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Design for the Study

This study adopted a survey research design, a method commonly used to collect information through direct questioning of individuals. The primary objective of using this design was to gather data from a representative sample of young adults in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, using structured questionnaires. The survey design was chosen because it allows for the collection of data on participants' perceptions and experiences, which can then be generalized to the broader population. This approach is particularly effective for investigating the causes and impacts of single parenting on the social and economic development of young adults, as it facilitates the capture of a wide range of responses from different demographic groups within the study area.

2.1.1 Ethics Statement

Ethical considerations were rigorously addressed to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the data collected. Key ethical principles were adhered to throughout the research process:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were thoroughly briefed on the purpose, procedures, and scope of the study, ensuring that they were fully aware of their rights and the voluntary nature of their participation. Informed consent was obtained in writing from all participants prior to their involvement in the study, in accordance with ethical standards for research involving human subjects (Fouka & Mantzourou, 2011).
- **Confidentiality:** To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participants, personal identifiers were anonymized, and data were stored securely. This ensured that participants' responses could not be traced back to them, encouraging honesty and openness in their responses (Kaiser, 2009).
- **Right to Withdraw:** Participants were explicitly informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without facing any negative consequences. This reinforced the principle of voluntary participation and respected participants' autonomy in the research process (Orb et al., 2001).
- **Emotional and Psychological Well-being:** Recognizing that the study involved sensitive topics related to family dynamics, participants were assured that any distress caused by the questions would not be ignored. To address potential emotional concerns, resources for counseling and psychological support were made available to participants, in line with ethical recommendations for research involving personal or social challenges.

2.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Uyo Local Government Area, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State,

Nigeria. Uyo is geographically bordered by several neighboring local government areas, including Abak, Itu, Uruan, Ibesikpo Asutan, and Etinan. The city is well-connected by road, with major routes such as the A345 highway, Abak Road, Nwaniba Road, Itu Road, and Aka Road offering convenient access. Additionally, Uyo is served by the Victor Attah International Airport, providing air travel connections. The predominant language spoken in Uyo is Ibibio, reflecting the ethnic composition of the area. Page | 173

Religiously, Uyo is largely Christian, with many religious institutions serving the local community. The area is known for its relatively high level of civilization, evident in its infrastructure, educational institutions, and economic activities. The researcher selected Uyo as the study area due to their familiarity with the region, which facilitated easier access to the participants. Moreover, Uyo was chosen because it is home to a significant number of respondents from single-parent households, making it an ideal location to investigate the impacts of single parenting on young adults.

2.3 Population and Sample

The total population for this study was composed of 3,576 academic and non-academic staff from the University of Uyo, as documented by the University's Personnel Office. From this population, a sample size of 399 respondents (representing approximately 11% of the total population) was selected to participate in the study. This sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, which is commonly used for calculating sample sizes in survey research.

To reach the respondents, the study employed a combination of snowball sampling and convenience sampling techniques. Snowball sampling was particularly useful for identifying and reaching individuals from single-parent households, as participants were encouraged to refer others who met the criteria. Convenience sampling allowed for easy access to participants from the University of Uyo, given the researcher's proximity to the institution and the availability of respondents. These sampling methods facilitated efficient data collection while ensuring a diverse sample of respondents relevant to the study's objectives.

2.4 Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure

The primary instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was carefully crafted to align with the study's objectives and was divided into five sections (A–E) to ensure a comprehensive collection of data.

- Section A: This section gathered demographic information and other relevant details from the respondents, providing context to the data and helping to classify responses.
- Section B: This section sought to understand the causes of single parenting, asking respondents to identify factors they believed contributed to the rise of single-parent households.
- Sections C and D: These sections included a 4-point Likert scale format (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) to assess the impacts of single parenting on the social and economic development of young adults, respectively. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement.

- Section E: This section focused on strategies to improve the socio-economic development of young adults from single-parent homes. It also used the 4-point Likert scale to collect respondents' opinions on potential measures to enhance the well-being of young adults from such households.

Respondents were instructed to tick (✓) the column corresponding to their level of agreement with each statement, ensuring clarity and simplicity in answering.

2.5 Data Collection Technique

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents on the University of Uyo campus with the assistance of two research assistants. The researcher and the research assistants were present to explain the purpose and instructions of the study, answering any questions the respondents had about the questionnaire. Once respondents completed the questionnaires, the researcher and research assistants collected the completed forms for analysis.

2.6 Data Analysis Technique

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These statistical tools were used to analyze responses to the research questions, with a set acceptability level of 2.50 on the 4-point Likert scale. Any item that scored a mean below 2.50 was considered not accepted.

To test the hypotheses, the t-test was used to analyze the null hypothesis, with a significance level of 0.05. This statistical method enabled the researcher to determine whether there were significant differences in the responses, providing insights into the relationships between single-parenting and the social and economic outcomes for young adults in the study.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	215	53.9
	Male	184	46.1
Age of Child	17-19 years	199	49.9
	20-22 years	95	23.8
	23-26 years	105	26.3
Religion	Christianity	363	91.0
	Islam	35	8.8
	Traditional	1	.3
Marital Status	Single	33	8.3



	Separated	52	13.0
	Divorced	98	24.6
	Widowed	216	54.1
Level of Education	Primary Education	29	7.3
	Secondary Education	154	38.6
	Tertiary Education	216	54.1

The demographic characteristics of respondents in Table 1 offer valuable insights into the composition of the sample, which is crucial as socioeconomic impacts can vary significantly depending on factors such as gender, age, marital status, and education level (Creswell, 2013). The sample shows a slight female dominance, with 53.9% female respondents and 46.1% male respondents. This distribution is consistent with broader research, which indicates that female-headed households are more prevalent, particularly in regions undergoing economic transitions (Amato & Patterson, 2017). Women in single-parent households often face unique challenges, such as increased economic strain and limited career advancement opportunities (Ratliff-Gendron, 2017), emphasizing the need for policies that cater specifically to their needs.

The age distribution of respondents shows that 49.9% are between 17-19 years, 23.8% are aged 20-22, and 26.3% fall within the 23-26 years range. This aligns with the demographic most impacted by the socioeconomic challenges tied to single-parent households. Young adults from such backgrounds often face challenges such as limited access to quality education and stable employment, which increases their vulnerability to poverty (Heminway, 2023). Research indicates that individuals under 20 are particularly vulnerable, underscoring the importance of interventions aimed at supporting their educational and career development (Amato, 2010).

Religious affiliation reveals that 91% of respondents identify as Christian, 8.8% as Muslim, and 0.3% follow traditional beliefs. This religious distribution mirrors that of Akwa Ibom State, where Christianity is the predominant religion (Nelson et al., 2021; Jacob et al., 2018). Religion can play a significant role in shaping the support structures available to single-parent households, with Christian churches often providing community-based assistance (Yom, 2013). However, non-Christian families may have more limited access to such resources, which could influence their stability and access to support services.

Marital status data reveals that 54.1% of respondents are widowed, 24.6% are divorced, 13.0% are separated, and 8.3% are single. The high proportion of widowhood stands out, as it often leads to significant financial and emotional challenges, particularly in societies where extended family support systems are weak or absent (Makanga, 2022). Widowhood often results in reduced economic resources and increased caregiving responsibilities, which can compromise financial self-sufficiency (Sarker, 2024). Conversely, divorced and separated families, accounting for 37.6% of the sample, may face distinct dynamics, including varying levels of social support. This diversity in marital status emphasizes the need for policies that address the unique needs and challenges of each group.

The educational attainment data indicates that 54.1% of respondents have completed tertiary education, 38.6% have finished secondary education, and 7.3% have only attained primary education. Education is a key determinant of socioeconomic outcomes, as higher levels of education are typically associated with better employment prospects and higher earning potential (Mirowsky, 2017). For young adults from single-parent households, tertiary education can serve as a crucial pathway out of economic hardship (Koh et al., 2017). However, those with only primary or secondary education may face limited opportunities for career advancement, highlighting the need for programs that provide access to higher education and vocational training.

These demographic insights highlight the diverse backgrounds and challenges faced by young adults from single-parent households in Uyo. The high proportion of young, female respondents and the predominance of widowed, Christian families point to significant areas of vulnerability, such as economic dependency and limited social support. Addressing these challenges will require tailored policies and programs that recognize the unique characteristics of this population. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could implement initiatives that offer financial assistance, counseling services, and educational scholarships to support young adults from single-parent families. Additionally, religious institutions and community organizations in Uyo could strengthen their support networks with culturally sensitive programs specifically designed for widowed and divorced families (Creswell, 2013).

3.2 Perceived Causes of Divorce in Uyo

Table 2: Respondents' perceived causes of single parenting

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Death of Spouse	160	40.1
Divorce	198	49.6
Teenage pregnancy	28	7.0
Adoption	13	3.3

Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of respondents' views on the causes of single parenting in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The data reveals a complex range of factors contributing to single-parent households, each carrying its own set of social and economic implications.

The most frequently reported cause of single parenting was divorce, cited by 49.6% of respondents. Divorce has increasingly become a major cause of single-parent families, particularly in urban areas, where changing social norms and a reduction in the stigma associated with divorce have led to a higher incidence of marital dissolution (George et al., 2014; Adegoke, 2010). This trend often results in one parent, usually the mother, shouldering the dual responsibility of caregiving and economic support. The financial strain that accompanies this burden can have lasting effects on the well-being of children in single-parent households, limiting their access to quality education and stable social environments (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009).

The second leading cause of single parenting was the death of a spouse, affecting 40.1% of

respondents. Widowhood can have profound social and economic consequences, particularly in African contexts, where the extended family support system may no longer function as it traditionally has (Peterman, 2012). The death of a spouse typically results in a sharp decline in household income, making it difficult for the surviving parent to meet the educational, emotional, and social needs of their children. Additionally, the emotional and psychological effects of such a loss can be long-lasting, affecting the children's mental health and overall development (Gass-Sternas, 2014).

Teenage pregnancy, identified as a cause by 7.0% of respondents, also plays a significant role in the creation of single-parent households. Teenage mothers often face considerable economic disadvantage, with limited access to education and employment opportunities. This economic vulnerability restricts their ability to adequately provide for their children, while the stigma attached to teenage motherhood exacerbates their social isolation and limits opportunities for economic independence (Ferguson & Ladd, 2011; Heminway, 2023). Teenage pregnancy thus not only impacts the mother's socio-economic status but also has significant implications for the child's future prospects.

Another factor contributing to single parenting is adoption, which was identified by 3.3% of respondents. Adoption reflects a shift in family structures, where individuals or couples, for various personal or social reasons, may choose non-traditional routes to parenthood (Creswell, 2013). While adoption is often a well-considered decision, it can still lead to single-parent situations, especially when the adoptive parent chooses to raise the child alone.

Collectively, these findings highlight the multifaceted nature of single parenting in Uyo, each cause contributing to distinct social and economic challenges. Divorce and widowhood, as the most prevalent causes, indicate a need for targeted interventions that support the financial and emotional needs of single parents, particularly mothers. Teenage pregnancy and adoption, though less common, also require specific support strategies to address the unique needs of young mothers and individuals choosing alternative family structures. These complex causes necessitate a comprehensive approach to support single-parent households, addressing the financial, emotional, and social dimensions that influence the well-being of both parents and children.

3.3 Perceived Impacts of single parenting on the social development of a young adult

Table 3: Impacts of single parenting on the social development of a young adult

S/N	Statement	Female (n=215)			Male (n =184)		
		Mean	Std Dev.	Decision	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
1.	Young adults with single parent feel unaccepted in the society	2.71	1.218	A	2.65	0.678	A
2.	Young adults with single parents lack ability to learn from both parents	2.55	0.893	A	2.02	0.457	A
3.	The academic and extra-curricular performance level of	2.48	0.948	R	2.78	0.564	A

	young adults from single parents are very low						
4.	Young adults from single parent homes are prone to anti-social behaviors such as aggression and anxiety	3.10	0.990	A	2.90	0.644	A
5.	Single parenting gives rise to depression, alcohol or drug and substance abuse in offspring.	2.71	1.218	A	3.02	0.756	A
6.	Young adults of single parents lack adequate supervision and are more likely to suffer from family disputes and agony.	2.55	0.933	A	1.98	0.768	DA
7.	Young adults of single parents are prone to humiliation and stigmatization from relatives, peers and the society.	2.57	0.993	A	2.57	0.786	A
8.	Young adults of single parents have inability to build stable relationships.	2.48	0.948	DA	3.01	0.786	A
9.	Young adults from single parents have low career achievements.	3.10	0.990	A	2.23	0.765	DA
10.	Young adults from single-parent families are more likely to marry early, have children early, and divorce.	2.81	1.081	A	2.65	0.865	A
11.	Young adults from separated parents faced development and socialization problem which leads to social vices such as drugs, armed robbery, cultism, swindling (419), Prostitution and abortion.	2.55	0.933	A	1.77	0.754	DA
12.	Girls from mother-only families are at greater risk of becoming single mothers as a result of no early sex education from mothers.	2.49	0.948	R	1.66	0.657	DA
13.	Young adults from single parents take decision without fear of parent's reaction	3.19	0.890	A	3.23	0.564	A
	Clustered Mean	2.715	0.999		2.498	0.696	

Decision: any mean score < 2.5 = Agree (A), any mean score > 2.5 = Disagree (DA)

Table 3 presents an analysis of respondents' views on the social impacts of single parenting on young adults in the study area, highlighting both the challenges and some potential outcomes of growing up in a single-parent household.

A significant finding is the perception that young adults from single-parent families often feel socially unaccepted, with mean scores of 2.71 for females and 2.65 for males, indicating agreement from both groups. This perception aligns with existing research that suggests children from single-parent households may experience social stigmatization or internalize insecurities tied to their family structure, leading to challenges with social integration and self-esteem (Heminway, 2023). These factors are crucial for healthy social development, as poor self-esteem and social isolation can hinder a young adult's ability to build meaningful relationships and navigate social environments (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009).

Respondents also agreed that young adults from single-parent families are at a disadvantage when it comes to learning from both parents, as evidenced by mean scores of 2.55 for females and 2.02 for males. The absence of one parent limits exposure to a diverse range of perspectives on social roles, responsibilities, and conflict resolution. This can restrict the development of well-rounded personal growth and affect their understanding of relationship dynamics, as well as the skills required to handle complex social situations (Amato, 2010).

Regarding academic performance, respondents expressed mixed views. Females disagreed with the statement that single-parent families generally experience lower academic performance, with a mean of 2.48, while males agreed, with a mean of 2.78. This disparity is consistent with studies that link single-parent households to lower academic achievement, often attributed to economic strain and reduced parental supervision (Azuka-Obieke, 2023). However, some research also highlights the potential for young adults in single-parent families to develop resilience and motivation, which can offset these disadvantages (Dunifon & Kowaleski-Jones, 2002).

Both groups agreed that young adults from single-parent homes face higher risks of anti-social behavior, such as aggression and anxiety, with mean scores of 3.10 for females and 2.90 for males. This finding echoes literature suggesting that the stressors in single-parent households can create environments that increase susceptibility to behavioral issues (Taylor & Conger, 2017).

Additionally, both genders agreed that single parenting is linked to higher risks of depression and substance abuse, with mean scores of 2.71 for females and 3.02 for males. This supports existing studies that associate family structure with mental health challenges among young adults, indicating that the absence of one parent can contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive coping behaviors such as substance use (Schlack et al., 2021).

However, there was a divergence in responses regarding supervision and vulnerability to family disputes. Female respondents agreed (mean of 2.55) that young adults from single-parent households often lack adequate supervision, while male respondents disagreed (mean of 1.98), which may reflect differing perceptions of parental involvement across genders (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). The lack of supervision is a critical concern, as research shows that adequate parental involvement is linked to better social adjustment and fewer behavioral problems.

Another key finding is the perception of humiliation and stigmatization faced by young adults from single-parent families, with both genders agreeing (mean of 2.57). This highlights the societal pressures they experience, contributing to feelings of inadequacy and social withdrawal (Amato, 2010). Such social challenges can hinder the emotional well-being of these young adults, potentially affecting their long-term psychological and social functioning.

Both genders also agreed that young adults from single-parent families are more likely to experience early marriage and subsequent divorce (mean scores of 2.81 for females and 2.65 for males). This suggests that early exposure to family instability may influence future relationship choices, contributing to a cycle of instability in adulthood (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009).

In terms of career achievements, there was a noticeable gender divide. Females agreed (mean of 3.10) that young adults from single-parent families often have lower career achievements, while males disagreed (mean of 2.23). This divergence likely reflects differing gendered perceptions of economic disadvantages and career opportunities, with females perhaps viewing single-parenthood as a more significant barrier to career advancement (Azuka-Obieke, 2023).

Finally, both genders agreed that young adults from single-parent households tend to make more independent decisions without fearing parental reaction, as reflected in mean scores of 3.19 for females and 3.23 for males. This suggests that single-parent families may foster an environment of independence, where young adults are encouraged to develop self-reliance, which can be beneficial for decision-making and autonomy (Creswell, 2013). However, this independence without adequate guidance can also have a double-edged effect, as it may lead to risky decisions, emphasizing the need for a balance between autonomy and parental guidance.

These findings collectively underscore the complex social impacts of single parenting on young adults in Uyo. While single-parent households can foster independence and resilience, they also expose young adults to a range of social, emotional, and academic challenges that require targeted interventions to address the unique needs of this demographic.

3.4 Perceived Impacts of single parenting of the economic development of a young adult

Table 4: Impacts of single parenting of the economic development of a young adult

S/N	Statement	Female(n = 215)			Male(n = 184)		
		Mean	Std Dev	Decision	Mean	Std Dev	Decision
1.	Young adults from single parents are more likely to face economic hardship.	2.79	0.748	A	2.56	0.56	A
2.	Young adults of separated parents have an increased risk of ill health.	2.68	0.756	A	2.55	0.670	A
3.	Young adults of separated parents have an increased risk of school failure.	2.71	0.792	A	2.69	0.870	A

4.	Young adults of single parents experience low standards of living.	2.65	0.880	A	2.88	0.770	A
5.	In mother-only families, young adults tend to experience short- and long-term economic and psychological disadvantages	2.87	0.826	A	2.66	0.599	A
6.	In single parent families, young adults tend to experience higher absentee rates at school, lower levels of education, and higher dropout rates (with boys more negatively affected than girls).	2.77	0.775	A	2.51	0.768	A
7.	Young adults of single parents, in order to help with the financial burden of the family, are forced into unsuitable acts just to raise funds to assist the family.	2.63	0.813	A	2.299	0.564	A
Clustered Mean		2.729	0.799		2.593	0.686	

Decision: any mean score < 2.5 = Agree (A), any mean score > 2.5 = Disagree (DS)

Table 4 provides an analysis of the economic impact of single parenting on young adults, based on responses from 399 participants (215 females and 184 males) in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The clustered mean scores of 2.729 for females and 2.593 for males indicate a consensus that young adults from single-parent families face significant economic challenges, a finding that aligns with existing literature on the economic disadvantages associated with single-parent households. Both female and male respondents agreed that young adults from single-parent families are more likely to experience economic hardship, with mean scores of 2.79 for females and 2.56 for males. Research has highlighted that single-parent households often face financial strain due to lower earning potential, which impacts access to resources such as education and career development, creating barriers to upward social and economic mobility (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009; Smeeding, 2016).

The results further reveal that respondents believe young adults from single-parent families are at a higher risk of health challenges, with mean scores of 2.68 for females and 2.55 for males. Health disparities in these households often stem from limited access to healthcare, nutritious food, and stable housing, all of which are essential to maintaining both physical and mental well-being (Amato, 2010; Liang et al., 2019). This highlights the urgent need for health interventions targeting economically disadvantaged single-parent households to help mitigate these risks.

When it comes to academic success, respondents also agreed that young adults from single-parent families are at a higher risk of school failure. The mean scores of 2.71 for females and 2.69 for males

indicate that both genders perceive educational challenges as a significant issue for this group. Single parents typically face time and financial constraints that limit their ability to provide academic support for their children, contributing to higher dropout rates and fewer opportunities for post-secondary education (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023; Bloome et al., 2018). This economic strain and lack of academic support can undermine the long-term educational prospects of young adults from single-parent households.

Respondents also reported that young adults from single-parent families experience lower living standards, as reflected in the mean scores of 2.65 for females and 2.88 for males. Economic disadvantages often result in limited access to quality housing, transportation, and recreational activities, all of which can contribute to poorer social outcomes (Schlack et al., 2021). This lack of access to basic resources can further exacerbate the challenges faced by young adults in single-parent families, limiting their overall quality of life.

The results also point to the unique economic and psychological challenges faced by mother-only families. Respondents agreed that young adults in mother-only households experience both short-term and long-term economic and psychological difficulties, with mean scores of 2.87 for females and 2.66 for males. Single mothers often face compounded challenges due to low income and psychological stress, which can have a detrimental impact on their children's emotional well-being and future economic stability (Heminway, 2023). These pressures can perpetuate a cycle of economic disadvantage and emotional strain, limiting opportunities for young adults in these households.

Additionally, perceptions of absenteeism and school dropout rates were noted. Both genders agreed that young adults from single-parent families, particularly boys, are more likely to experience absenteeism and lower educational attainment, with mean scores of 2.77 for females and 2.51 for males. Research suggests that boys are particularly vulnerable to academic and behavioral challenges due to a lack of positive male role models and insufficient supervision (Stephen & Udisi, 2016). This absence of guidance can lead to higher dropout rates and fewer career opportunities, further deepening the economic challenges faced by young adults from single-parent families.

Finally, respondents noted that the financial pressures experienced in single-parent households may drive young adults to seek income through unsuitable means, with mean scores of 2.63 for females and 2.29 for males. This economic pressure can expose young adults to exploitative work environments, low-wage jobs, or even illegal activities, all of which compromise their safety and long-term prospects (Liang et al., 2019). These findings suggest that the economic strain faced by young adults in single-parent households can have far-reaching consequences, not only on their immediate financial well-being but also on their future opportunities.

Overall, these responses indicate that single parenting has a profound impact on the economic development of young adults, affecting areas such as health, education, financial stability, and social outcomes. The clustered mean scores suggest that both genders perceive similar risks, with females generally expressing slightly higher levels of agreement. These findings align with existing literature on the economic challenges faced by children from single-parent families (Amato, 2010; McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009). Addressing these challenges through targeted support programs, educational

initiatives, and health interventions could significantly enhance the economic prospects of young adults from single-parent families, helping to break the cycle of disadvantage.

3.5 Perceived Strategies to improve the socio- economic development of single parent

Table 5: Strategies to improve the socio- economic development of single parent

S/N	Statement	Female (n = 215)			Male(n=184)		
		Mean	Std Dev.	Decision	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
1.	Single parent families can handle the issue of loneliness by engaging in more productive activities and spending quality time with the child(ren)	3.59	0.631	A	3.23	0.567	A
2.	Prior to divorce or death of spouse, the best ways to handle boundaries, discipline and co-parenting should be well defined and accepted within the household.	3.30	0.797	A	3.45	0.574	A
3.	Relationship counsellors and psychologists can help deal with emotional instability in the children or young adults that brew indiscipline as an after-effect of single parenting.	3.40	0.715	A	3.21	0.876	A
4.	To manage low self-esteem, surround yourself with people who believe in you and understand your predicament without any judgment.	3.13	0.779	A	3.78	0.678	A
5.	Members of a single parent family should contributively agree on how to cut back excess luxuries to manage their financial resources and needs.	2.74	1.041	A	3.56	0.875	A
6.	Allowing a new partner in the life of a single parent can help stabilize everything.	3.37	0.806	A	3.89	0.564	A
Clustered Mean		3.255	0.794		3.52	0.689	

Decision: any mean score < 2.5 = Agree (A), any mean score > 2.5 = Disagree(R)

Table 5 outlines various strategies identified by respondents to enhance the socio-economic development of children from single-parent families, based on a sample of 399 participants (215

females and 184 males). The clustered mean scores of 3.255 for females and 3.52 for males indicate general agreement on the effectiveness of these strategies in improving the socio-economic well-being of children in single-parent households.

The first strategy emphasizes combating loneliness by engaging children in productive activities and spending quality time together, with mean scores of 3.59 for females and 3.23 for males. Research supports the notion that increased quality time between parents and children helps reduce social isolation, while also promoting self-discipline and skill-building. These factors, in turn, contribute positively to both socio-economic growth and psychological health (Smeeding, 2016; Amato, 2000). This approach encourages the development of important life skills and emotional well-being, essential for long-term success.

The second strategy involves defining household boundaries, discipline, and co-parenting practices before separation, with mean scores of 3.30 for females and 3.45 for males. Setting clear household roles and routines not only mitigates emotional strain but also helps create a stable environment for children. Structured routines and defined roles can foster emotional resilience and enhance social skills, reducing the negative impacts of family disruption (Lamb, 2012; Fagan & Churchill, 2012). Respondents highlighted the importance of establishing these boundaries early on to minimize instability during family transitions.

Another crucial strategy identified by respondents was the use of relationship counselors and psychologists to help children manage emotional instability. The mean scores for this strategy were 3.40 for females and 3.21 for males. Professional counseling provides children with essential coping strategies, helping them develop emotional self-regulation and resilience. These skills are instrumental in promoting academic achievement, social integration, and overall well-being (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023; Barber & Eccles, 1992). Counseling services also support children in navigating the emotional complexities of growing up in single-parent households.

To address low self-esteem, respondents proposed the creation of a support network, with mean scores of 3.13 for females and 3.78 for males. A strong support system consisting of understanding family members, friends, and mentors can significantly help children from single-parent families develop a strong sense of self-worth, which is vital for socio-economic mobility. This network plays a critical role in boosting children's confidence and equipping them with the emotional tools needed to succeed in life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009).

A more practical strategy put forward was the need to reduce excessive luxuries and manage financial resources carefully, with female and male mean scores of 2.74 and 3.56, respectively. Encouraging financial discipline can teach children important skills like budgeting and prioritization, which helps prevent economic deprivation and promotes long-term socio-economic success (Smeeding, 2016; Bloome et al., 2018). By instilling sound financial practices, parents can create a more secure financial environment for their children, even within the constraints of single-parent households.

Finally, the idea of allowing a new partner to join the family was viewed as stabilizing, with mean scores of 3.37 for females and 3.89 for males. A supportive new partner can offer emotional, social,

and financial benefits that contribute to the stability of the household. This creates a balanced and nurturing environment that can help children feel secure and supported as they navigate life. Research indicates that a stable family environment is key to promoting the well-being and development of children (Rees et al., 2023; Jayatillake et al., 2023).

In summary, the strategies outlined in Table 5 emphasize the importance of family stability, emotional support, financial management, and role modeling in enhancing the socio-economic development of children from single-parent families. These strategies align with existing research, which underscores that children from stable, supportive environments benefit from better outcomes in terms of academic success, psychological health, and socio-economic mobility (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009). By adopting these strategies, single-parent households can foster an environment that promotes the long-term well-being and success of their children.

3.6 Variation on Gender perception of impacts of single parenting

Table 6: T-test analysis of the gender differences on the impacts of single parenting on the social and economic developments of young adults

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Err	Std Dev	Df	t-ratio	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	184	9.5678	3.01	0.54607	397	3.885*	0.000
Female	215	4.5673	2.34	0.5458			
Difference		5.0005					

Note: t-test is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 presents the results of a t-test analysis comparing the impacts of social and economic developments on young adults raised by male and female single parents. The sample consisted of 184 male single parents and 215 female single parents. The analysis reveals a significant difference in the mean scores: male single parents scored an average of 9.57 (SD = 3.01), while female single parents scored an average of 4.57 (SD = 2.34). The calculated t-ratio of 3.885, with a significance level of 0.000, indicates that these differences are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The mean difference of 5.0005 suggests that young adults from male single-parent households perceive or experience greater impacts on their social and economic development compared to those raised by female single parents. This outcome is consistent with existing research that highlights the role of a single parent's gender in shaping the developmental experiences of children. Studies have suggested that male single parents may provide unique social and economic opportunities for their children due to differing parenting styles and available resources (Owolabi, 2023). These differences in parenting approaches could lead to variations in economic capital and social mobility for the children, potentially providing more opportunities for development.

Additionally, the higher mean score for male single parents may also reflect the socio-economic challenges they face while trying to fulfill both economic and emotional roles that are traditionally divided between male and female parents. Research indicates that male single parents often face the difficulty of balancing their financial responsibilities with the emotional and caregiving duties typically associated with parenting (Chen et al., 2019). This dual burden may influence young adults'

perceptions of their own economic prospects and social mobility, shaping how they view their future opportunities.

These dynamics illustrate the complexity of parenting roles within single-parent families and underscore the importance of understanding the different challenges and opportunities presented by the gender of the parent. Recognizing these differences is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address the specific needs of children raised by male and female single parents. Such interventions could help promote more effective social and economic development, ensuring that children from single-parent households receive the support necessary for their long-term success.

Implications and Limitations, Suggestions for Further Research

The study examining the impacts of single parenting on young adults provides valuable insights with significant societal implications, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions and thoughtful policy development. Understanding the diverse challenges faced by children from single-parent households—such as social stigmatization, economic hardships, and educational disparities—is critical for creating supportive environments that foster their development. This research underscores the importance of community-based and social services in providing essential resources to single-parent families, empowering them to overcome obstacles that impede their children's social and economic progress. Programs designed to improve access to mental health support, educational resources, and community engagement could greatly enhance the well-being of young adults from single-parent households (Amato, 2005). By addressing these areas, societies can help level the playing field for children from single-parent families, improving their opportunities for success in adulthood.

However, the study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may have underreported or overreported their experiences due to social desirability or personal sensitivities surrounding family dynamics. While the data provides a valuable snapshot of participants' experiences, future research could benefit from incorporating qualitative interviews or observational methods. These approaches would allow for a more nuanced understanding of participants' experiences, offering deeper insight into the psychological, emotional, and social factors affecting young adults from single-parent families.

Another limitation of this study is the focus on a sample of 399 respondents from a specific demographic—academic and non-academic staff in Uyo, Nigeria. While this sample size provides a strong foundation for analysis, the geographic and socio-cultural homogeneity of the sample restricts the generalizability of the findings. The socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, and family dynamics in Uyo may differ significantly from those in other regions, particularly rural areas or states with strong extended family networks. These networks may play a more substantial role in supporting children from single-parent households. Future research should explore comparative studies across

different geographic regions and cultural contexts to strengthen the external validity of the findings, ensuring that the results are more widely applicable to diverse settings.

Additionally, the findings may reflect cultural biases inherent in the Nigerian context, where societal perceptions of single parenting are influenced by traditional gender roles, religious beliefs, and entrenched family expectations. These biases could shape participants' views on social stigma, economic challenges, and career prospects. To address this, future studies should consider cross-cultural comparisons, examining the experiences of single-parent families in Nigeria and other African countries, as well as in global contexts. This approach would help to identify both universal challenges and culturally specific factors that impact the lives of children raised in single-parent households.

Finally, the study primarily addresses the immediate impacts on young adults, without considering the long-term trajectories that may result from growing up in a single-parent family. Investigating how single parenting influences long-term outcomes, such as career success, mental health, and relationship stability in adulthood, would offer invaluable insights. Such research could inform the development of policies and programs aimed at supporting the long-term well-being of individuals raised in single-parent households, ensuring they have the resources necessary to thrive both socially and economically as adults.

In conclusion, while the current study provides important insights into the immediate effects of single parenting, there is a clear need for future research that expands on these findings, explores different cultural contexts, and looks at long-term developmental outcomes.

Conclusion

This study has provided valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted impacts of single parenting on young adults, highlighting significant social and economic challenges faced by this demographic. The findings reveal that young adults from single-parent families often encounter issues such as economic hardship, social stigmatization, and educational barriers, all of which hinder their immediate development and have lasting consequences on their lives. These challenges extend beyond childhood and adolescence, influencing critical aspects of their adult lives, including career success, mental health, and social integration. The research emphasizes the need for targeted interventions, community support, and policy initiatives to address the specific and often unique needs of single-parent families. Effective interventions should focus on providing access to resources that mitigate the negative impacts of single parenting, such as financial assistance, mental health services, and educational support. The study also underscores the importance of community-based programs that foster resilience and empowerment, helping young adults from single-parent households to overcome the barriers they face and thrive in their personal and professional lives.

Moreover, the study calls for further research to deepen our understanding of the nuanced experiences of single parents and their children. Future studies should focus not only on the immediate

impacts but also on the long-term outcomes of growing up in a single-parent family. Investigating how single parenting influences career trajectories, mental health over time, and relationship stability would provide valuable insights that could inform the development of more effective support systems. Research should also examine the role of external factors—such as extended family networks, community engagement, and cultural norms—in shaping the experiences of children raised by single parents. By gaining a deeper understanding of the dynamics within single-parent households, stakeholders—such as policymakers, educators, and social service providers—can better design and implement programs that promote resilience, independence, and success for young adults. These efforts will help empower them to overcome adversity and reach their full potential, despite the challenges posed by their family circumstances.

Ultimately, addressing the issues faced by single-parent families is not merely an individual concern; it is a broader societal imperative. Single-parent families play a vital role in the diversity and richness of our communities. By providing the support and resources necessary for their success, society as a whole can ensure that all young adults, regardless of their family background, are given an equal opportunity to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. We confirm that our cooperation and contributions to the study were free from any financial or non-financial biases.

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