

THE EFFECT OF SINGLE PARENTING ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN DODOMA CITY, TANZANIA

ABEL MTWEVE

University of Iringa

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJREHC.2023.4520>

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of single parenting on secondary school students' academic achievement in Dodoma City, Tanzania. The study was guided by two specific objectives which were, to examine the causes of single parenting on student academic achievements, and to assess the impact of single parents on student academic achievements. The researcher employed a case study design using a qualitative research approach. A total of 45 participants including 10 teachers (staff) and 35 students from five selected secondary schools participated in the study. Purposive sampling techniques were used in the selection of participants. Interview and Focus Group discussion methods were used to obtain data from students and teachers. The gathered data were thematically analyzed to generate themes and sub-themes. The findings revealed different causes of single parenting including death, divorce, abandonment, and unplanned pregnancy. It was also revealed that the emergence of street children, early pregnancy as well as physical and social problems are the impacts of single parenting on the academic achievements of single-parent secondary school students. Based on the findings, this study recommends to the government of Tanzania through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology that it provide training and seminars to the teachers on how to help students from single-parent family's deal with various challenges encountered in secondary school for better academic achievements.

Keywords: Parental, parental conflict, secondary school, students, Single, achievement

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

In recent years, the single parenting phenomenon has increasingly become a global concern. Single parenting refers to a situation where mothers or fathers raise their children without the presence of a spouse (Ferrel, 2009). There are different reasons why a person becomes a single parent. They may choose this lifestyle or they may have been in a relationship that they left, or perhaps their partners have died or left them (Benokraitis, 2015).

Developed countries, in particular, experience an increase in single-parent families as divorce becomes more common (Mrinde, 2014). The UK has over one million single-parent families; this gives one family in seven to be a single-parent family. Most single-parent families come into being as a consequence of marital breakdown, separation or divorce, but the increasing proportions are the result of births out of wedlock (Smith, 2008). According to the United States Census, the figure of children who are dependent and live with only one parent rose every year, causing considerable concern among policymakers and the public (Mrinde, 2014).

In developing countries, divorce has not been a common phenomenon but desertion, death, and imprisonment produce single-parent families, primarily headed by women. The rates vary from country to country for example in Kuwait the rate is less than 5 percent while the rate is over 40 percent in Botswana and Barbados. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tobago, more than 25 percent of households are headed by women (Mrinde, 2014).

In East Africa, Uganda has the largest number of single-parent families living in poverty with no state welfare. Among the causes are deaths through HIV/AIDS, malaria, and abandonment (Uganda Reflex, 2011). On the other hand, Tanzania is one of the countries facing a growing rate of single-parenthood and the negative effects of single-parented life. For example, the number of secondary school students who are living in a single-parent household has risen from 149,239 in 2009 to 177,465 in 2012 (BEST, 2012). Experts in children's development have revealed that children who grow up with single parents are likely to experience trauma and develop bad behaviour which may affect such children throughout their lives (Tesha, 2011).

Single-parent families are different from families with two parents living under the same roof. They differ in many ways, but the most common difference is how the parent interacts with the child. In dual-parent families, the mother and father usually decide together how to run the household, while in single-parent households, issues may be more likely to be decided with the children. In some single-parent households, members may unrealistically expect that the family can function like a two-parent family, and may feel that something is wrong when it cannot (Amsalu & Tigabu, 2008).

The single parent may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of juggling between caring for the children, maintaining a job and keeping up with the bills and household chores. Typically, the family's finances and resources are drastically reduced following the parents' breakup. Single-parent families deal with many other pressures and potential problem areas that the nuclear family does not have to face (Amsalu & Tigabu, 2008).

The source of the problems is not necessarily single-parenthood itself, but a combination of economic pressures, family instability and conflict between parents. For example, a single parent with adequate resources may provide a stable, nurturing home in which children thrive just as well as those who have two parents. On the other hand, a single parent who is just scraping by and has little time, energy or skill for parental duties might have children who are at risk for a variety of problems (Suvarna, and Bhata, 2016).

Single parents have experienced even far greater challenges as they have to be both mothers and fathers to raise their children. In such a situation, a single parent is in one way or another obliged to play two roles of being a father and a mother in raising the child and in many cases it becomes a problem for the children. It is evident that parents are the first point of contact for children and when both parents are alive and responsible, the child would derive effective care from the parents which will enable their growth and development in a good manner (Tan-Kuick & Ng, 2011).

Benokraitis (2014) argues that the absence of one parent has serious effects on the child which consequently influence the educational achievement of their children in school. There is a relationship between parenting and students' academic achievement. Parents play a major role

in the academic achievement of children because they can influence their child's thinking and learning during their development (Sulaiman, 2012).

In Nyarko's (2011) study, the findings showed that to alleviate the problems that plague the educational system today the right parenting should be given to children to help raise the standard of quality education. The study revealed that parenting is crucial in developing the right human resources who can take part in national development. If the child's cognition may develop positively or negatively and affect educational attainment, it is based largely on the type of parental care the child is given.

According to McLanahan and Booth (2014) children from mother-only families have poorer academic achievement. These children are likely to have higher absentee rates at school and to drop out of school which as a result may lead to poverty. Further; they are more likely to marry early and to have children at a tender age, both in and out of marriage; to divorce, and to commit delinquent acts such as drug and alcohol usage because they lack a good parenting style of both parents for their academic development.

Perhaps, single-mothers and fathers do not have as much time as required to participate fully in their children's schooling, thus adding to the problems for children of single-parent families. Therefore, children from single-parent households face many challenges throughout their growth and academic achievement (Suvarna, and Bhata, 2016).

Vassar (2000) explains that the family has to carry out its duties and responsibilities as the principal educator and supervisor of morals and character. In that regard, if a single parent heads the family it is often very difficult for the single parent to provide the required children nurturing as per expected moral standards of the particular society. This is due to reasons beyond his or her biological makeup. In most African cultures there is a well-marked social distance between males and females. That means male children would feel more comfortable being guided by fathers while girls would cling to their mothers (Vassar 2000).

Generally, in father-headed families' girls will be unable to open up their hearts to their fathers and their fathers would be in a difficult position to nurture, counsel or guide their daughters into the best societal accepted characters, likewise mothers to their sons. This leads to problems such as psychological distress in the children. Single-parented children are increasing in number in Tanzania. The number of secondary school children with single parents has increased from 149,239 (2021) to 177,465 in the year 2022 (BEST, 2022). This study, therefore, studied effect of single-parent on secondary school students' academic achievement in Dodoma city, Tanzania.

1.1 Research Questions

What is the causes of single parenting on student academic achievements?

What is the impact of single parental on student academic achievements?

2.0 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 Theoretical background

In investigations of the Effect of Single parenting on Secondary School Students' Academic Achievement, Ecological systems theory/human ecology theory, is a theory that was developed by famous Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917). It identifies five environmental systems with which an individual interacts that include the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem, the macro system, and the Chrono-system. Human ecology theory is a way of looking at the interactions of humans with their environments and considering this relationship as a system. In this theoretical framework, biological, social, and physical aspects of the organism are considered within the context of their environments. (Afifi et al., 2006).

This theory provides the framework from which community psychologists and sociologists study the relationships with individuals' contexts within communities and the wider society. This theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex "layers" of the environment, each affecting a child's development. This theory has recently been renamed "bio-ecological systems theory" to emphasize that a child's biology is a primary environment fuelling her development which is important for academic achievement (Afifi et al., 2006).

The interaction between factors in the child's maturing biology, his immediate family/community environment, parenting style and the societal landscape fuels and steers child development. Changes or conflicts in any one layer will ripple throughout other layers. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and her immediate environment but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well.

2.2 Empirical evidence

2.2.3 Causes of single parenting on student academic achievements

Single parenting may crop up as a result of different factors: When a couple separates after cohabitation or marriage and one of the ex-spouses has physical custody of the children. Again single parenting occurs when a woman gives birth to a child and does not live with the child's father or any other partner, male or female (McGadney-Douglass et al., 2005).

Thus single parenting results from non-conjugal births. Single parenting may also occur when a father or a mother is widowed. In this case, the parent assumes sole responsibility for nurturing a child. Further, it may happen when a single (divorced, never-married, or widowed) man or woman adopts a child. Single-parenthood may arise when either the male or the female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock (Materu, 2019).

Single parenting also occurs due to adoption which is a possible option for single people who feel deficient in life. Studies also show that Single parenting has become very common due to donor insemination which is the most contentious preference for building a family in the present day. Donor insemination is the process of accomplishing pregnancy through the injection of semen into the reproductive tract of a female (Sear et al., 2002). Single mothers who choose to conceive children through this option are becoming common, particularly among educated women. Teenage pregnancy also leads to single parenting and raising a child alone during the teenage period is harsh. Teen single parents undergo stress because of their young age and inability to prepare for the future (Eamon, 2005).

According to Sear et al., (2002) divorce being an unwed mother, having a surrogate, adoption by only one person, being widowed, artificial insemination and abandonment are all potential causes of being a single parent. The number of widowed parents falls far behind the other reasons as the cause of single parenting. This is in sharp contrast to the past, as this was once the most-prevalent cause behind single parenting.

As the growing body of research evidence indicates, there is no single cause for the declining well-being of children in single-parent families, but rather many. No single explanation accounts for the differences, and some scientific support exists for each of the five perspectives: economic hardship, loss of parental support and supervision, lack of community resources, parental conflict, and life stress and instability (Ferrel, 2009). Thus, programs and policies are the most applicable ways to be effective if they are comprehensive and multi-faceted, addressing multiple risk factors relating to single parenting and its effects on children (Ferrel, 2009).

2.2.3 Impact of single parental on student academic achievements

Single parenting is faced with many trials. Along are the problems on financial, emotional, and social aspects but even though it is hard to be a single parent. The elements such as financial, emotional and social aspects have been discussed in more detail; where possible each of them should be given enough attention it deserves. It also has a good result when it comes to the relationship between the parent and child: the parent's problems have effects on the children (Kigera, 2022), as it has been discussed below.

Children in single-mother homes are also more likely to experience health-related problems as a result of the decline in their living standards, including the lack of health insurance (Marsigilo and Amato, 2017). Later, as children from single-parent families become adults, are more likely to marry early, have children early, and divorce. Girls are at greater risk of becoming single mothers as a result of non-marital childbearing or divorce. Although the research findings are mixed on long-term effects, the majority of children adjust and recover and do not experience severe problems over time (Eamon, 2005). When a human who is calm, affectionate and mentally healthy raises a child, that child will be the same way. When someone anxious, disorganized, distant, and mentally unstable raises a child, then most likely that child will be the same way. This is not 100% and is not absolute, but it is a pattern since a human brain develops based on how it was parented during childhood (Eamon, 2005).

However, the lack of a male presence may not be as critical as the lack of a male income to the family. The economic deprivation of single-parent family life, in combination with other sources of strain and stress, is a major source of the problems experienced by both parents and children (Marsigilo and Amato, 2001). In sub-Saharan Africa, few studies paid attention to mothers' marital status in their examination of children's nutritional status. Others focused on female-headed households (Materu, 2009). Children in single-mother households were more likely to die than those in monogamous unions, and the relationship was found constant over time. In Clark and Hamplova, (2013), relative to continuously married mothers in Sub-Saharan African countries, children of single mothers (premarital and divorced) were found to be more likely to die before age 5 years.

According to 2012 U.S. Census Bureau information, the number of children reared in single-parent households continues to rise. Children with two parents in the home earning two incomes tend to have better financial and educational advantages. The effects of a single-parent home on a child's behaviour can be far-reaching and impact several areas of life, including academic achievement and social behaviours (Marsigilo and Amato, 2001). Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing steady growth in out-of-wedlock motherhood, marital instability, and widowhood exacerbated by wars and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has resulted in a large number of single-mother families in the region (Clark & Hamplova, 2013).

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the research methodology and designs that were used to carry out the study. Research methodology helps to explain how the study was carried out, and what data was collected with what methods and techniques (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Methods of analysing data are also explained. Kothari, (2004) suggested the contents of the research methodology include the research design, area of study (coverage), sample and sampling techniques, methods for data collection and techniques for data analysis.

3.1 Area of Study

The study was carried out in Dodoma City. This region is located in the central part of Tanzania. Dodoma ranked among regions in Tanzania's mainland. Selection of this area associated with a big number of secondary schools since 2009 (URT, 2012). Also, Dodoma is among the Cities with a big number of single-parent students. Moreover, the researcher's financial and time constraints forced this study to be conducted in Dodoma City.

3.2 Population of Study

A population is any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common and which are of interest to the researcher (Best & Kahn, 2006). The target population for this study involved all single-parented secondary school students in Dodoma City. The population of this study involved secondary school teachers who deal with students' day-to-day affairs and are responsible for children's intellectual, social, physical and moral development in schools. Furthermore, the school's academic master and classroom teachers were involved.

3.3 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research approach is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviour. (Kothari, 1997). A qualitative approach used to collect comprehensive and elaborative in-depth information on the challenges single-parented secondary school students face in Dodoma City. This is because the approach allows interaction between the researcher and the participants, (Kothari 2004). The qualitative approach calls for a comprehensive and elaborative description of events or people necessary to convey the complexity of situations to provide the reader with sufficient information for judging the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon.

3.4 Research Design

A research design can be defined as the conceptual structure within which research is conducted (Kothari, 2004). Research design constituted the plan for the collection, measurement and data analysis. It is further well-known that a research design outfitted an order by arranging steps of activities to find answers to the research questions of the study. Mainly, there is no worldwide or correct design for conducting research rather the design of the research is largely dictated by the nature of the study (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

The study employed case study design which is a qualitative design in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period. Once the participants have been selected for the study, the investigator follows the study to assess the exposure and the outcomes. Using a case study design, the study was conducted relatively faster and inexpensively.

3.5 Sample of the Study

Kothari, (2004) defined a sample as a specimen or part of the whole drawn to represent the rest. Sample refers to a set of participants selected from a larger population for research. Samples are always subsets or small parts of the total number that could be studied (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The sample for this study was drawn from five government secondary schools namely Viwandani Secondary School, Dodoma Secondary School, Umonga, Secondary School, Central Secondary Schools and Jamhuri Secondary School in Dodoma City. The sample comprised forty-five participants of whom thirty-five were secondary school single-parent students (seven single-parent secondary school students from each secondary school selected), also five academic teachers one from each of the secondary schools selected and five classroom teacher is one from each secondary school selected.

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) sampling is the act, process or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population to determine parameters or characteristics of the whole population. The study employed purposive sampling. A purposive sampling procedure was deployed to obtain a sample of five secondary schools to be involved in the study. These five (05) secondary schools were placed into groups sampled out of government secondary schools. Purposive sampling also was used to obtain a sample of thirty-five (35) single-parented secondary school students from five (05) sampled secondary schools in Dodoma City.

Purposive sampling, deliberate sampling or judgmental sampling involves the deliberate or purposive selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represents the universe (Kothari, 2004). Purposive sampling in this study was also used to select one academic teacher and one classroom teacher from each of the sampled secondary schools.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Technique

Data collection is a systematic way of gathering information, which is relevant to the research purpose or questions (Kothari, 2004). This study used two methods of data collection namely

Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and which were used to facilitate the data collection process. Then, the interview was the most appropriate approach for studying complex and sensitive areas as the interviewer had the opportunity to prepare a respondent before asking sensitive questions and explaining complex ones to respondents in person. The researcher collaborated with other sources of information such as focus group discussion as it can provide some backup for the content of the interview.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves organizing data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop expectations, make interpretations, mount critiques or generate theories. Hatch (2002) and Bogdan and Biklen (1992) explain data analysis as a systematic process involving working with data, organizing and breaking them into manageable units. It is a process of synthesizing data, searching for patterns, discovering what is important as well as what is to be learned and deciding what to tell others.

Thematic data analysis technique was used in analysing data in this study. Thematic analysis is an appropriate method of analysis for seeking to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set. Themes are actively constructed patterns (or meanings) derived from a data set that answer a research question, as opposed to mere summaries or categorizations of codes. Themes were generated and the most widely-accepted framework for conducting thematic analysis involves a six-step process: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Given the flexibility of thematic analysis, researchers clearly outline their paradigmatic orientations and assumptions to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings and interpretations (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness in this study was established by four evaluative criteria established by Guba and Lincoln (1994) namely: Credibility, transferability, conformability and dependability. Credibility was ensured through prolonged engagement, and triangulation of data collection methods such as interviews and FGD to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied. Transferability in this study was established through careful selection of sample size, thick description of the context, collecting thick and detailed data for the problem under investigation, and providing detailed descriptions of the phenomena under study. Conformability was ensured through an audit trail, triangulation of data collection methods, the use of participants' verbatim quotes and reflexivity; and lastly, Dependability was established by peer scrutiny and giving the participant's sufficient time to express their opinions.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Causes of single parenting on student academic achievements

This objective sought to find out the causes of single-parented students in Dodoma City secondary schools in Tanzania. To answer this objective, the researcher carried out interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers and students. The findings revealed that

single-parent students may result from parents' choice of single parenting lifestyle, death of partners, unplanned pregnancies, abandonment and divorce/separation of the couple. These findings elaborated below as follows:

4.1.1 Divorce

The interview was carried out with students, and the majority of them reported that divorce was one of the causes of single parenting to them. This occurs when a couple separates after cohabitation or a marriage and one of the ex-spouses has physical custody of the children. Again single parenting occurs when a woman gives birth to a child and does not live with the child's father or any other partner, male or female. They maintained that this caused their learning difficulties and failure in their academic achievement. Respondents further reported that they suffer because of their parent's conflicts or misunderstandings which result in divorce. These findings were evidenced by one of the respondents who state that

In most cases, the single parented students are affected by the divorce of their parents. This affects them in their studies since they lack parental care of both parents. Various social and economic issues are likely to affect students' lives at the school in learning achievement." (Student, from Umonga Secondary School, July 2023).

Another student added

Teachers sometimes call seminars with students and orient them on better ways of adapting to the learning environment. In such meetings, we are advised on how to handle stressful situations both arising from academic demands and social demands that may arise as the results of parents' divorce which results in being single parented". (Student from Umonga Sec School, July 2023).

Divorce is among the causes of single parenting. It is a serious problem since many single-parented students are affected academically. On the other hand, interviews carried out with teachers produced similar responses to those produced by students. A good number of Teachers pointed out that divorce develops a big problem for students in achieving their dreams. For instance, one Classroom teacher reiterated that;

It is our responsibility to make the environment safe for students in a classroom and outside the classroom but still the problem of parents' divorce which results in single parenting affects student learning both psychologically, socially and emotionally." (Teacher from Umonga Sec School July 2023).

From these findings, it is apparent that divorce as among the source of single parenting to students have resulted in affecting students' academic development. Materu (2009) in his study supported the finding that children and youth living with single parents as a result of the increased number of divorce, separation, death and unmarried women. Furthermore, divorce and separation have added challenges to single-parent students because the remaining parent is concentrating on looking after family needs while forgetting other roles of the parent such as being a role model, monitoring, supervising, guiding, counselling and making follow-up on the academic progress of the children. Also, Youngmin (2002) argues that parental divorce or separation has a bearing on youths' academic performance and educational expectations.

4.1.2 Death

The interview with both students and teachers as well as FGDs revealed that death is another source or cause of single parenting. In this effect, during the FGD, students said that;

When one loses his or one of her parents it results in a single parent. Many of the students suffer as a result of lacking parental care. Sometimes students face financial difficulties and lack different support like enough food and shelter.” (FGD with Students from Viwandani Sec Schools. July 2023)

Another student added

After the death of my father, everything collapsed. My mother drops me from private schools to government schools. Uniforms and other needs were also problems since it was not easy for my mother to manage. Sometimes I am supported by the people from church. (Student from Dodoma Sec School, July 2023).

Similarly, during an interview one Teacher added

We are always available for students who lost one of their parents. They are always not comfortable psychologically and seek help on one-to-one sessions counselling, and this has been helpful as some students are not comfortable to talk about their challenges in group counselling sessions but still affects their performance”. (Teachers, from Dodoma Sec School, July 2023).

Another Classroom teacher opined;

Most of the students who lost their parents are not happy during their studies. Many of them are not concentrating on their studies. This affects their studies performance. There is a need to develop a regular timetable to talk with them and advise them.” (Teacher from Umonga Sec School. July 2023).

This was supported by different literature from developing countries which shows that, in developing countries, divorce has not been a common phenomenon but death and imprisonment produce single-parent families, primarily headed by women. The rates vary from country to country for example in Kuwait the rate is less than 5 per cent while the rate is over 40 per cent in Botswana and Barbados. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tobago, more than 25 per cent of households are headed by women (Mrinde, 2014).

In East Africa, Uganda has the largest number of single-parent families living in poverty with no state welfare. The causes of this are deaths through HIV/AIDS, and malaria (Uganda Reflex, 2011). On the other hand, Tanzania is one of the countries facing a growing rate of single-parenthood and the negative effects of single-parent life on secondary school’s student’s achievements.

4.2.3 Unplanned pregnancy

During the interview and focus group discussion, the majority of participants reported that unplanned pregnancy was one of the sources or causes of single parenting. They maintained that many pregnancies develop as a result of lacking proper planning. This is also a source of street children. These findings were evidenced by one of the participants. Who argued that;

Lack of proper planning and undefined love affairs may cause single-parented children who lack good parental care. This is not good for the academic development and achievement of students. Many young men's parents are running responsibilities taking care of family responsibilities. (Classroom teacher from Dodoma Sec School, July 2023).

Another student added

Many students involved in unsafe sex with their boyfriends. This cause girl to get pregnant and they are not in a position to handle it. This results in one parent escaping responsibility and running from parental responsibilities. Many girls are left with children as a result of single parental care. Many students are faced with poor academic performance because of taking care of children at the same time as studies.” (Student from Dodoma Sec School. July 2023).

During FGDs, students supported the idea that:

Unplanned pregnancy is one of the causes of single parenting style since both parents found themselves that they are not ready for the child's responsibility. Generally single parenting results in student's failure in performance in class. (FGD with Umonga Secondary School Students. July 2023).

Therefore, it is true that students who grow up in single parenting are always with bad character. They are not developing in a good manner.

The findings of the current study reported that unplanned pregnancy may result in lacking good care as the results of street children, children with bad manners and bad behaviour which results in poor performance in class.

According to McLanahan and Booth (1991) and Ferrell (2009), children from mother-only families have poorer academic achievement. These children are likely to have higher absentee rates at school and to drop out of school which as a result may lead to poverty. Further; they are more likely to marry early and to have children at a tender age, both in and out of marriage; to divorce, and to commit delinquent acts such as drug and alcohol usage because they lack a good parenting style of both parents for their academic development.

4.2.4 Abandonment

Interviews with teachers revealed that abandonment was one of the causes of single parenting. For example, one of the classroom teachers had this to say:

Most of the abandoned students are suffering most from their studies because sometimes they even lack financial support. Some basic requirements like uniforms and

other school requirements become a problem for the students. All these affect their stabilities in academic achievement and performance.”. (Teacher from Dodoma Sec School. July 2023).

The quotation above implies that most of the students who are abandoned are highly suffering from their studies. Furthermore, the data gathered through FGDs with students revealed that the abandoned students ‘are mainly growing and developing as single-parent ones. For example, students said that:

“Most of the students who are abandoned are not happy in the class. They are thinking too much and are not stable. Sometimes they cry for no reason.” (FGD with Students from Dodoma Sec School. July 2023).

From these findings, it is apparent that abandonment as among the source of single parenting to students has resulted in affecting students’ academic development. A study conducted by Uganda Reflex, (2011) reveals that in East Africa, Uganda has the largest number of single-parent families living in poverty with no state welfare. The causes of this are deaths through HIV/AIDS, malaria and abandonment (Uganda Reflex, 2011).

4.3 Impact of single parental on student academic achievements

This is the third objective of the topic under study. This objective focused on the impact of single parenting on secondary school students in Dodoma City. While conducting interviews and focus group discussions the following sub-themes emerged, namely; development of street children, dropping out from schools, lack of career choice and development of unwanted behaviour like thieving, drug use and robbery.

4.3.1 Development of street children

Under this sub-theme, the impact of single parenting on secondary school students was considered. Many single-parented secondary school students become street children simply because they control themselves. The lifestyles of the family shape the members’ behaviour. This was supported by one of the classroom teachers who had this to say;

Many of the male students who are raised by single parents, especially female parents, become street children. They tend to develop groups which at last they develop unwanted behaviours within the community. This results in the development of street children which is a big problem in various developing towns like Dodoma city”. In Dodoma, many of these children are found at Majengo Sokoni, Changombe, Area A, as well as Hasina (Academic teacher from Central Sec School, July 2023).

Also during focus group discussions with students, they argued that

Many single-parented students drop their studies. After that, they develop a friendship with street children. They are always very stubborn to their fellows and badly behaved”. Most of them become thieves and drug users as well as robbers, (Students from Jamhuri Sec School, July 2023).

Mandara and Murray (2006) in their study findings asserted that single-parent students are more likely to use drugs and alcohol with boys raised by single fathers more affected. Single parents struggle with time management due to double responsibilities. Therefore, whenever parents are less involved with their children, generally children will involve themselves in the use of alcohol, smoking cigarettes as well as marijuana to relieve anxiety and forget their problems.

In connection to lack of discipline at school, and drug and alcohol abuse, single parent children can commit a crime. Mothers who are left alone to raise children use most of their time looking for money and material resources to support their families. They have little time for monitoring the family, leaving a chance and possibility for their children to start misbehaving or committing crimes.

Also, Tan-Kuick and Ng (2011) in their study supported the findings that, Single parents have experienced even far greater challenges as they have to be both mother and father to raise their children. In such a situation, a single parent is in one way or another obliged to play two roles of being a father and a mother in raising the child and in many cases it becomes a problem for the children and develops bad behaviour. It is evident that parents are the first point of contact for children and when both parents are alive and responsible, the child would derive effective care from the parents which will enable their growth and development in a good manner.

4.3.2 Early pregnancies

Early pregnancy was among the problems that developed for single-parent families. These occur simply because many girls require parental care to manage their needs and requirements easily. During the focus group discussion with students, they said that

Many single-parented students are at risk of developing early pregnancies and dropping out of school. Mostly this is caused by being free most of the time. Over-freedom and financial difficulties cause them to be tempted easily and likely to engage in unsafe sex. They cut off their studies after getting early pregnancies. (Focus group discussion from Jamhuri Sec School, July 2023).

The study findings supported the literature of McLanahan and Booth (1991) and Ferrell (2009) that children from mother-only families have poorer academic achievement. These children are likely to have higher absentee rates at school and to drop out of school which as a result may lead to poverty. Further; they are more likely to marry early and to have children at a tender age, both in and out of marriage and to commit delinquent acts such as drug and alcohol usage because they lack the good parenting style of both parents for their academic development.

Benokraitis (2002) argues that the absence of one parent has serious effects on the child which consequently influence the educational achievement of their children in school. There is a relationship between parenting and students' academic achievement.

4.3.3 Physical and social effects

The physical and social effect was also seen among the problems developed to the single parented families. Children in single-mother homes are also more likely to experience health-

related problems as a result of the decline in their living standards, including the lack of health insurance. During the focus group discussion with students, they said that

Many single-parented children are facing different physical and social problems. This is simply because they are involved in different activities including both economic and social issues while they are underage. Sometimes they are involved in issues which their brains cannot manage and control (Focus group discussion from Viwandani sec school, July 2023).

Another classroom teacher added that:

This was supported by the literature (Eamon, 2005), that children from single-parent families become adults, are more likely to marry early, have children early, and divorce. Girls are at greater risk of becoming single mothers as a result of non-marital childbearing or divorce. Although the research findings are mixed on long-term effects, the majority of children adjust and recover and do not experience severe problems over time.

When a human who is calm, affectionate and mentally healthy raises a child, that child will be the same way. When someone anxious, disorganized, distant, and mentally unstable raise a child, then most likely that child will be the same way. This is not 100% and is not absolute, but it is a pattern since a human brain develops based on how was parented during childhood.

REFERENCES

- Afifi, V. (2006). Mental health profiles among married, never-married, and separated/divorced mothers in a nationally. Representative Sample, 41(2), 122– 129.
- Amsalu, S., Tigabu, Z. (2008). Risk factors forever acute malnutrition in children under the age of five case-control studies. Ethiopia Journal Health, 2(2), 21– 25.
- Amsalu, S., Tigabu, Z. (2008). Risk factors forever acute malnutrition in children under the age of five case-control studies. Ethiopia Journal Health, 2(2), 21– 25.
- Benokraitis, R. (2014). Parenting moral teens in immoral times. USA; Concordia Publishing House.
- Benokraitis, R. (2015). Parenting moral teens in immoral times. USA; Concordia Publishing House.
- Best, J. W. (2022). Research in Education (10th end). Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Best, J.W & Khan, J.V. (2006). Research in Education (10th end). Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Eamon, M. (2005). Social- demographic, school, neighbourhood, and parenting influences on academic achievement of Latino young adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescents, 34(2), 163-175.

- Ferrell, R.T. (2009). The effects of single-parent households on student academic success, attendance and suspensions. USA: UMI Microform.
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846–854
- Kigera, M. (2022). Impact of single parent in students' behaviour: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846–854
- Kombo, D.K. & Tromp, D.L.A. (2006). Proposal and thesis writing. Nairobi: Paulines Publication Writing. 168pp.
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology* (2nd ed) New Delhi: New Age International Ltd.196pp.
- Marsiglio, W., Amato, P, Day. & Lamb, M. E. (2017). Scholarship of fatherhood in the 1990s and beyond. In R.M. Milardo (Ed), *Understanding families into the new millennium: A decade in Review* (pp.392-410). Minneapolis, MN:
- Materu, Y. F. (2019). Marital conflict: its effects on children and children's coping strategies. M.A. (Applied Social Psychology) Dissertation, University of Dar e Salaam, Tanzania.
- Mclanahan, S. & Booth, K. (2014). Mother-Only Families: Problems, Prospects, and Politics. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 5:557–580
- Mrinde, N. (2014). Challenges that Single Parented Students face in attaining Secondary School education, M.A Dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Nyarko's, K. (2011). The Influence of Authoritative Parenting Style on Adolescents. *Academic Achievement*, 6 (2), 282-287.
- Smith, W. (2008). What are the Effects on Single Parents? Are children of Single Parent Homes Doomed? Retrieved May 19, 2023, from <http://www.lifescrypt.com/life/family/parenting/what...of-single-parents.aspx>
- Sulaiman, T. (2012). Africa Investment - After Ghana Vote, Investors Turn to Economy. Retrieved on 20TH January 2023 from [http://www.reuters.com/ article](http://www.reuters.com/article).
- Suvarna, V. D., & Bhata, G. (2016). A study on academic achievement and personality of secondary school students. *Research in Pedagogy*, 6(2), 99–108.
- Suvarna, V. D., & Bhata, G. (2016). A study on academic achievement and personality of secondary school students. *Research in Pedagogy*, 6(2), 99–108.
- Tesha, D. (2011). Tanzania: facing the negative effects of single parenthood. <http://allafrica.com/stories/stories/20110419090> (retrieved 15 January 2023)

URT, (2012). Basic educational statistics in Tanzania. Dar –e-s-salaam: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Vassar, R. L. (2000). Social History of American Education: Colonial times to 1860 (Vol.1). Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.