

**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL DISPOSITION OF SINGLE
PARENTHOOD OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK: COUNSELLING
IMPLICATIONS.**

By

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Abstract

This paper identify parent's age, education level, level of income generating capacities of the family and family support system as the psycho-social disposition of single parenthood of children born out of wedlock. There are many factors such as the parent's age, education level, level of income generating capacities of the family and family support system which could influence how children develop in single parent families. Single parenting most certainly affects the child or children and it is up to single mother or single father to be aware of these. Children in single parent families often have to contribute more to the household and family than children with two parents. Children learn to work as a team. This paper concluded that, single-parents household (out of wedlock) found to have less income and lacking support tend to have increase in stress and conflict. Also, they often struggle with time management issues due to balancing of many different areas of life on their own. However this paper suggest that, Since there is little conclusive evidence that single-parent families are harmful, society should stop stigmatizing families headed by single mothers and give them the support they need. Essentially, whether poor mothers are single because they are divorced or because they never married, it is wrong for a society to allow mothers to raise children in poverty and then tell them that it's their fault when their children have deprived lives. Lastly, programs of schools, colleges, and vocational and professional training institutions ought to accommodate a plurality of women's life plans, combining childbearing and child-rearing with other activities.

Keywords: Psychological, Sociological, Single parenthood and Counselling Implication.

Introduction

Parental background is associated with political, social, economic, religious and moral situations prevalent in the society. For instance, involvement in child's upbringing is influenced by material deprivation and parental aspirations. Family background which has much to do with the parenting system that is singled couple or birth out of wedlock and the different levels of socio-economic status of family have been found to influence child's psychological and sociological disposition. The research has also observed that parental involvement in their children upbringing and the family size are particularly important family factors that influence children's psycho-social behaviour. Therefore, family background is the key to the childs' life within and outside the home. It is the most important influence on child and it involves factors such as two-parents versus single-parent households (out of wedlock), material characteristics, socio-economic status, family size and neighborhood, broken home (by divorce), parenting practices and aspirations (Majoribanks, in Barry, 2006). This is buttressed by the fact that the home environment is a primary socialization agent and influences a child's psychological and sociological disposition.

Researches such as Rashmi (2005) and Kusterer (2009) have also shown that children from single-parent households (out of wedlock) do not perform as well in school as the children from two-parent households. Several explanations have been advanced for the existence of this performance gap. For example Kusterer (2009) conducted a research titled "The Impact of Parenting background, Parental Involvement, Personality Factors and Peer Orientation" with a population of 136 students, 72 from university, 64 from high school using a self-designed questionnaire. He found out that single-parent households (out of wedlock) do not perform as well in school as the children from two-parent households. Single-parents household (out of wedlock) found to have less income and lacking support tend to have increase in stress and conflict. They

often struggle with time management issues due to balancing of many different areas of life on their own. It is also evident from the study of Majoribanks cited in Barry (2006) that single-parents are less involved with their children and therefore give less encouragement to have lower expectation of their children than two-parent households.

Jeynes (2002) sees poverty as one of the features of single parenthood (out of wedlock) and has found it to negatively affect children psychologically. He reported that children whose parents were single (out of wedlock) were found to perform poorly. This is because single parents (out of wedlock) can cause a family's socio-economic status level to decrease.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on Erickson theory of psychosocial development. The theory have been propounded to explain possible approaches to the processes involved in the psychosocial disposition of children born outside wedlock.

Theory on Psychosocial Development

According to Harder (2002) Erikson's psychosocial theory of child development can be summarized thus "An individual develops within the society and there is a correlation between personality, growth and parastatal/societal values across the whole life span. His development is in predetermined order and influenced by the interaction of three basic factors (genetically biological and psychological as well as cultural influences i.e. the body, the mind and the environment" (106).

The relationship and relevance of this theory to this study can be drawn from the painstaking involvement of parents in the developmental processes of the child as it relate to the psychosocial behaviour of a child. Child rearing is a correlate of child development phenomenon

which is sequential, that is from simple to complex and takes cognizance of learning, personality growth and life achievement as the child interacts with both internal and external forces such as family members and peer groups which impinged on the social cultural reality of his environment.

The developmental process of the child and personality development which according to this theory, occur at different stages, it demands parents to take systematic measures by making available adequate guidance to motivation the child. This is fundamental to moral development as prerequisite for personality growth and future career development. Thus, the importance of parents at every stage in the developmental process cannot be overemphasized as the parents need to encourage the children through the learning process of corrections and rewards or punishment.

Psychological and Sociological Disposition of Children Born Outside Wedlock

There are many factors such as the parent's age, education level, level of income generating capacities of the family and family support system which could influence how children develop in single parent families. Single parenting most certainly affects the child or children and it is up to single mother or single father to be aware of these. Children in single parent families often have to contribute more to the household and family than children with two parents. Children learn to work as a team. They understand what it means to be needed to help the household run smoothly. This instills a sense of responsibility. Children in a single parent family also are not limited by the antiquated gender specific roles. (Wikipedia, 2011). This therefore, shows that in every disadvantage, there exists, advantages. However, Dankoro in Olusakin (1998) maintained that children from single parents are frustrated, insecure, have anxieties and emotional blocks. This is evident in the study by Ghaemi & Yazdanpanah (2014) compared learners' parental background with their English language scores in the most recent public examination. He found that learners from the two parents consistently outperformed learners from single parent. He suggested that the

positive correlation of intact parents with students' higher levels of proficiency in English may be attributed to their secured, stable emotions and attention received from their parents compared to students from single parent.

Concept of Parenting Style

Parenting styles are different manner of parents' child-relationship. Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviours that work individually and together to influence the child. Although specific parenting behaviours, such as spanking or reading aloud, according to AbdulRahman, Samuel and Hamdalat (2009) may influence the child's development. Looking at any specific behaviour in isolation may be misleading. However there are people who have noted that specific parenting practices are less important in predicting child well-being than in the broad pattern of parenting. Most researchers who attempt to describe this broad parental milieu rely on Diana Baumrind's concept of parenting style (AbdulRahman, Samuel and Hamdalat, 2009). The construct of parenting style is used to capture normal variations in parents' attempts to control and socialize their children (Baumrind, 1991). It is assumed that normal parenting revolves around issues of control. Although parents may differ in how they try to control or socialize their children and the extent to which they do so, it is believed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach, and control their children (AbdulRahman, Samuel & Hamdalat, 2009).

Parenting style captures two important elements of parenting:- parental responsiveness and parental demandingness (Maccoby & Martin, in AbdulRahman, Samuel and Hamdalat, 2009). Parenting responsiveness according to Baumrind (1991) refers to "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individuality, self-regulation, and self-assertion by being attuned, supportive, and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands, express warmth, love, and concern for their children". Parental demandingness (also referred to as behavioural control) refers to "the

claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys” (Baumrind, 1991). In line with this, Arnette as cited in Mezieobi and Jude (2007) explained “demandingness” as the degree with which parents set down rules and expectations for behaviour and require their children to comply with them. Accordingly, AbdulRahman, Samuel and Hamdalat (2009:38) categorized parenting style into four as follows:-

- a. General themes of discipline,
- b. Positive parenting,
- c. Monitoring; and
- d. Problem solving.

According to these authors, discipline theme of parenting style involves the discouragement of behavioural excess or anti-social behaviour. They give three components to good disciplinary practices which are accurate definition of and labeling of certain behaviours and across settings; and the consistent and contingent use of effective but not harsh methods to inhibit those behaviours. Weiss & Schwarz in AbdulRahman, Samuel and Hamdalat (2009) stated that these interactions generally correspond with the general classification of parenting styles as authoritarian, democratic and laizes-faire. They believed that in the authoritarian parenting styles, children are exposed to a kind of master-servant relationship with their parents were overly harsh, punitive with no freedom to the children takes place. In a democratic parenting style, there is a kind of positive parenting where there is mutual interaction between parents and their children. In the laissezfaire parenting style, we have a kind of indifferent or uninvolving parenting where the parents show non-challant attitude to the activities of their children both at home and the school. (Weiss & Schwarz in AbdulRahman, Samuel & Hamdalat, 2009).

Mandara (2006) provides a more comprehensive way of categorizing parenting according to whether they are high or low on parental demandingness and responsiveness. He gives a typology of four parenting styles as indulgent, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved. Each of these parenting styles reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parental values, practices and behaviours as observed by Baumrind (1991). In addition, he stated that this classification gives a distinct balance of responsiveness and demandingness.

Maccoby and Martin in Baumrind (cited in AbdulRahman, Sammuel & Hamdalat, 2009) asserted that indulgent parents (also referred to as “permissive” or “nondirective”) are more responsive than they are demanding. To them, they are non-traditional and lenient, do not require mature behaviour, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation”.

Concept of Single Parenting

Single parenthood is a situation where one parent takes charge of the physical and social development of the child or children as a result of birth outside wedlock, divorce or death of the other parent. It is a terminology mostly used to suggest that one parent is responsible for taking care of the child or children. Similarly, Denga and Denga (2007) opined that single-parent or one parent family is headed by one person either a man or woman. The major reasons for this phenomenon are traceable to the death of one parent, divorce or a social circumstance that may involuntarily cause a man or woman to parent a child without marriage. In most cases, it is women who become mothers without a marriage. According to Wikipedia (2018) single parenthood is widely practiced in the U.K. and U.S.A. It affirms that it is in the best interest of the children to have both parents’ involvement, encourage each parent to respect the other parents in the children’s presence and financial help through child support for the parent that carries the most responsibility when parents separate.

In 2006, it was recorded in US that 12.9 million families were headed by a single parent. 8% of which were headed by a female (Wikipedia, 2018). In South Korea, where societal disapproval of unmarried mother is strong, 1.6% of births in 2007 were to unmarried women, and of those women, 7070 are estimated to have opted for adoption. Similarly, Denga and Denga (2007) affirmed that single parent phenomenon is more prevalent in the U.S.A. However, it is fast gaining prominence in Nigeria and other developing nations. According to Zastrow in Isiguzo (2009) the population of single parent is growing at a rapid pace as three out of four families with young children are now being raised by alone parent. In the same vein, it has been reported by Wikipedia (2018) that most single parents are women. This is one of the reliable facts about single parenting (by death) which apply everywhere, from Africa to America to Europe. Single mothers consistently outnumber single fathers by a ratio of about four to one. There are several types of single mothers. These are:-

- a. The unwed mothers are more often than not, teenage girls who have resulted to keep their babies rather than give them up for adoption. These young mothers are forced to grow up very quickly with the added responsibility of a child to take care of.
- b. The Choice Mother: This refers to unmarried woman who chooses to have a baby, either by artificial insemination or some other means. She is normally financially independent.
- c. The Divorced Mother: Divorced Mother makes up the biggest percentage of single mothers and they often cannot rely on their ex-partner for financial assistance. This is very stressful for the children. (Wikipedia, 2018:5).

According to Denga and Denga (2007) Single parenting has serious negative implications not only for the psychological, social, physical and educational development of the child, but also for the single parents themselves. Moreover, Denga and Denga (2007) asserted that a one parent

family suffers from a lack of double earning which is normally the case with most nuclear families where both spouses contribute in cash and or in kind for the up keep of the children. Thus, there is possibility that children from a single parent may lack material support from their single parent. In addition, these scholars stated that there is also problem of time that can facilitate attention to the children. A female single parent is obviously performing the roles of a father and mother at the same time. The time to combine the important roles effectively and efficiently may not be available. For example, educational supervision of the child or children may not be effective.

Accordingly, Denga and Denga (2007) believed that where divorce is the reason for parents' separation, the child or children's loyalties to parents are divided. Also the parents that are no longer together feel only practically committed to the total welfare of the children. This relatively weak attachment to the children may not elicit sufficient psychological, social, spiritual, economic and educational support needed for congruence. Denga and Denga (2007) stated further that children of the divorced parents on their part cannot assemble enough courage to demand authoritatively from either of the divorced parents. A faint sense of fear to make bold claims makes them suffer some lack in silence.

Single Parenting Models

First and foremost, single parenthood is a parent with one or more children, who is neither married nor living together with his or her partner. Single parents are those living without their partners but take care of one or more children own or adopted. Single parent family can be stressful for both the child and the parent. Such families are faced with the challenges of diminished financial resources. The situation could be as a result of given birth out of wedlock and divorce among other factors. There are two different single parenting models. These are discussed below:-

- i. **Family Deficit Model:** This model is dated back to 1970s, the family deficit model views the nuclear or two parent families as the ideal family structure. According to this model, single parent families (by death) have a negative impact on children simply because they do not have a nuclear family structure. Research using the family deficit models begins with the assumption that single parenting is bad for children. Indeed, some studies using this model minimize or overlooked the influence which economic and other background factors have on academic achievement (Marsh, in Isiguzo, 2009).
- ii. **Risk and Protective Factor Model:** This model was developed in the early 1990s. The risk and protective factors model does not regard single-parent families (by death) as irregular because the foundation for the model is that all families have both strengths and weaknesses. Rather than viewing single parenting (by death) as the cause of negative outcomes for children in the families, the risk and protective factor model describes family structure as one of the many risk factors. Risk factors are either background characteristics of life events that may have negative impact on child development. Protective factors are characteristics and events that positively influence children and help limit the impact risk factors. (Seifer, Shifrer & Langenkamp in Isiguzo, 2009). Deducing from the above models, it is clear that deficit model has negative impact on the family while protective model is the strength of any given family.

Causes of Single Parenting

From the above discussion, the fundamental question is what are the causes of single parenthood? Certainly, there are several factors that are responsible for this. Some of them in the context of this paper are briefly discussed below:-

- i. Child bearing outside Marriage: this occurs through girlfriends/ boyfriends relationship without the fulfillment of marriage rites.
- ii. Death of one of the married couple: At the demise of one of the married partner, the surviving parent (mother or father) is left with the responsibilities of taking care of the child or children in order to make the child or children become useful in the society.
- iii. Divorce: This is another factor or cause of single parenthood. It is a situation where two legally married couples separated and the care of the child or children becomes the responsibilities of any one of the parents (father or mother).

Cause of single parenthood can also be attributed to traditional believe which stresses the authority of the male over the female. Therefore, the inability of the wife to recognize such authority if there is a contending issue or disagreement could make separation inevitable. Another factor that is responsible for single parenthood is the decline of ideal that marriage is for “better for worse”. When marriage is viewed as a sacred commitment that once made cannot be broken, then, there would be stability in the family. Thus, conflict resolution is a fundamental issue in any marriage and the key to its success. However, the concern in this study is single parent by wedlock.

Adegbola in Beatrice (2009) remarked that children from single parent families most often are deprived of their rights. There are several single parent families today, which may either be a single woman parent or a single man parent. These include the following categories of unsupported mother, widows and widowers, deserted, separated and divorced parents. He concluded that this situation is brought by choice or other socioeconomic and cultural circumstances.

Effects of Single-parent Families

According to a growing body of social-scientific evidence, children in families disrupted by divorce and out-of-wedlock birth do worse than children in intact families on several measures of well-being. Children in single-parent families are six times as likely to be poor. They are also

likely to stay poor longer. Twenty-two percent of children in one-parent families will experience poverty during childhood for seven years or more (Atlantic Monthly, April 1993).

A 1988 survey by the National Center for Health Statistics found that children in single parent families are two to three times as likely as children in two-parent families to have emotional and behavioural problems. They are also more likely to drop out of high school, to get pregnant as teenagers, to abuse drugs, and to be in trouble with the law. Compared with children in intact families, children from disrupted families are at a much higher risk for physical or sexual abuse.

Contrary to popular belief, many children do not “bounce back” after divorce or re-marriage. Difficulties that are associated with family breakup often persist into adulthood. Children who grow up in single-parent or stepparent families are less successful as adults, particularly in the two domains of life love and work that are most essential to happiness. Needless to say, not all children experience such negative effects. However, research shows that many children from disrupted families have a harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady job.

Counselling Implications

Parenting can be both difficult and rewarding at the same time. The goal of every parent is to have the child grow up to be a responsible, respectable and resourceful adult in society. According to the Boston University School of Education in Julie (2010) building a sturdy character in your child takes time, parent involvement and unconditional support and love. Julie (2010:22) categorized the task involved in child rearing into five. They are as follows:-

- i. Discipline: Effective discipline is one of the building blocks of child rearing. Discipline is different from abuse. Abuse is wrong and consists of physically and mentally hurting your child. Effective discipline involves punishing with a loving heart and being persistent

about the consequences of right and wrong. Discipline plays an important part in child rearing, because it helps the child to develop an understanding of right and wrong behaviour.

- ii. **Guidance:** Proper guidance helps the child to grow, develop and respond to life in a positive way. Many children learn by example, so it is important for you to have a positive approach. According to the Canadian Childcare Federation, important goals of child guidance include helping your child gain control of his emotions, learn self-discipline, solve problems, gain independence and interact with his peers in a positive manner.
- iii. **Spirituality:** Many families base their everyday lives on spirituality and religious beliefs. If your family is religious, it might be important to you to raise your child with the same beliefs. This includes discussing religion on a regular basis, attending services and enrolling your child in religious classes to learn more about his/ her faith.
- iv. **Education:** Making sure your child gets a good education is an important part of child rearing. Your child needs a good education not only for academic learning, but also to learn how to interact with his/her peers and with authority figures. Raising a good child also means teaching the child to showcase a mutual respect between his/herself and teachers. It is important to follow up with your child on a regular basis about his/ her educational needs. Make sure he or she attends school every day, keeps up with his or her homework, receives proper nutrients and gets plenty of rest.
- v. **Goals:** According to the At Health website (2019), parents might have slightly different goals based on different parenting styles. But in general, most parents want their child to be intelligent, engaged in a broad variety of activities, and independent and respectful of others. Child rearing changes as your child enters different stages of childhood and early

adulthood. No matter what stage, though, staying involved in his life in a supportive and positive manner can help him become a better person.

Conclusion

This paper recaps the concepts of parenting style, concept of single parenting, single parenting models, causes of single parenting and effects of single parenting families. The theoretical framework of this paper was hinged on Erikson theory of psychosocial development. Also, the psychological and sociological disposition of children born outside wedlock. Finally, counselling implications and suggestions were made.

Suggestion

1. Some social scientists and politicians have concluded that only traditional two-parent families are capable of raising children successfully. They blame single mothers both divorced and never married for a variety of social problems that are beyond their control. Since there is little conclusive evidence that single-parent families are harmful, society should stop stigmatizing families headed by single mothers and give them the support they need.
2. Whether poor mothers are single because they are divorced or because they never married, it is wrong for a society to allow mothers to raise children in poverty and then tell them that it's their fault when their children have deprived lives.
3. The programs of schools, colleges, and vocational and professional training institutions ought to accommodate a plurality of women's life plans, combining childbearing and child-rearing with other activities.

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