



Assessing the Expressed Needs of Single Parents in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria

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Abstract

This study aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by single parents in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nigeria, and to identify effective strategies to support them. The research explores the financial, emotional, and social difficulties encountered by single parents, evaluates the availability and effectiveness of existing support systems, and proposes interventions to enhance their well-being. The study employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire, with a stratified random sample of 384 single parents from the estimated population of 32,967. Data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews and online surveys. Validity was ensured through expert review and a pilot study, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a score of 0.76. Ethical considerations included obtaining approval from the University of Jos Central Health Research Committee and ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary participation. Data analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics with support from SPSS software. The findings revealed significant financial, emotional, and social challenges faced by single parents in AMAC. Financial instability, managing childcare responsibilities while working, social stigma, and accessing affordable housing were identified as major challenges. The availability and effectiveness of existing support systems were perceived as inadequate, with government programs, community resources, and social networks failing to meet the needs of single parents. Proposed strategies to enhance well-being included targeted financial assistance programs, affordable childcare centers, counseling and mental health services, and strengthened community-based support programs. Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed: Implement targeted financial assistance programs to provide stable income support for single parents; establish affordable and accessible childcare centers to support single parents in balancing work and childcare responsibilities; provide counseling and mental health services tailored for single parents and their children to address emotional and psychological challenges; and strengthen community-based support programs and social networks to offer practical and emotional support to single parents. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on single parenting by providing an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by single parents in AMAC and offers valuable insights for future research and policy development.

Keywords: Single parenting, financial challenges, emotional challenges, social challenges, support systems, well-being, Abuja Municipal Area Council

Introduction

Single parenting is not a relatively new concept, as the function of a single parent has been witnessed throughout multiple generations. However, it is gaining more recognition within Nigerian societies, particularly due to the rise of modern families where roles are interchanged and gender identity is not strictly linked with family roles. This shift is evident in the increasing number of single-parent households, driven by factors such as divorce, separation, death of a spouse, desertion, and out-of-wedlock pregnancies (Henry, 2024; Owolabi, 2023). Parenting, from its inception, has been associated with the provision and protection of offspring from internal and external threats. It involves the inculcation of identity, rearing of children, socialization, societal placement, and other civic duties acceptable by society. The family, regarded as the smallest unit of society, is where these relationships thrive, providing support through both bloodline and affinity. Children, from

childhood through adulthood, are dependent on parents or other caregivers for nurture, love, and warmth. Parenting requires personal, social, and economic resources to meet the basic needs of children, socialize them, and maximize their potentials. Traditionally, this role has been seen as requiring the presence of two parents. However, circumstances sometimes make it inevitable for one parent to raise children alone (John & Shimfe, 2020; Owolabi & Garutsa, 2024).

According to Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2015), the percentage of women with some level of education who have become mothers without marrying has doubled in the last decade. Among women with professional or managerial jobs, this figure has almost tripled. The effects of growing up in single-parent households extend beyond economic factors, increasing the risk of children dropping out of school, disconnecting from the labor force, and becoming teen parents. In developing countries, while divorce is not as common, desertion, death, and imprisonment often produce single-parent families, primarily headed by women (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Jafaru et al., 2024).

In the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), the capital territory of Nigeria, single parenting presents unique challenges and dynamics. The urban environment, characterized by high living costs, limited social support networks, and a fast-paced lifestyle, exacerbates the difficulties faced by single parents. The absence of extended family support, which is more common in rural areas, often leaves single parents to navigate their responsibilities with limited resources (Ahmadu et al., 2025; Chavda & Nisarga, 2023). One of the most pressing issues faced by single parents in AMAC is financial instability. Many struggle to cover basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The responsibility of managing household expenses and providing for their children's education and healthcare often falls solely on the single parent. This financial burden is exacerbated by the lack of a second income, leading to difficulties in affording school fees, medical bills, and other essential expenses (Bassuk et al., 1996; Mudau et al., 2018).

Single parents in AMAC often experience significant emotional and psychological stress. The absence of a partner can lead to feelings of isolation, overwhelm, and emotional strain. Many single parents reported needing someone to talk to and share their feelings with, highlighting the importance of emotional support. Additionally, the children of single parents may also face emotional and psychological challenges, necessitating access to counseling services to help them cope with the absence of a parent (Brody & Flor, 1998; Folorunsho et al., 2024). Balancing work and childcare is a common challenge for single parents in AMAC. Reliable and affordable childcare services are essential to allow single parents to maintain their professional responsibilities while ensuring their children are well taken care of. A strong support network of family, friends, and community members is crucial for providing practical help and emotional support. However, many single parents reported feeling isolated and lacking a robust support system (Akosile et al., 2017; Ahiaku & Ajani, 2022).

Single parents, particularly those who have experienced abandonment or domestic abuse, often require legal assistance to navigate custody arrangements, child support, and

other legal issues. Access to social services and community programs that offer financial aid, counseling, and other forms of support is essential. However, many reported that these resources are often limited and not always reliable (Owolabi, 2023).

The stigma associated with being a single parent is a recurring theme in AMAC. Many single parents reported facing judgment and discrimination from society, which adds to their emotional burden. There is a need for greater understanding and acceptance from the community, emphasizing the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment (Jafaru et al., 2024). Ensuring stable and affordable housing is a critical need for single parents in AMAC, especially those who have faced eviction or are living in precarious conditions. For single parents who have escaped abusive relationships, ensuring a safe and secure living environment for themselves and their children is paramount. Some single parents, particularly those who are still young, expressed a desire to further their education to improve their career prospects and financial stability. Balancing education and parenting responsibilities is a significant challenge, and access to resources that can help them manage both effectively is essential (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

The expressed needs of single parents in AMAC highlight the multifaceted challenges they face. Addressing these needs requires a comprehensive approach that includes government programs, community support, and societal acceptance. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of single parents in AMAC and to identify effective strategies to support them in their journey. Through focusing on the specific context of AMAC, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on single parenting and to inform policies and interventions that can improve the lives of single parents and their children.

Research Questions

The following questions were probed during the study

1. What are the primary financial, emotional, and social challenges faced by single parents in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC)?
2. How do single parents in AMAC perceive the availability and effectiveness of existing support systems, including government programs, community resources, and social networks?
3. What strategies and interventions can be implemented to enhance the well-being of single parents and their children in AMAC?

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the financial, emotional, and social challenges faced by single parents in AMAC.
2. To evaluate the availability and effectiveness of existing support systems for single parents in AMAC.

3. To propose strategies and interventions to enhance the well-being of single parents and their children in AMAC.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for both academic and practical applications. Academically, it contributes to the existing body of literature on single parenting by providing an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by single parents in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The findings offer valuable insights that can inform future research and theoretical development in the field of social work and family studies. Practically, the study identifies specific needs and support mechanisms that can improve the well-being of single parents and their children. By highlighting these needs, the research aims to influence policy-making and guide the development of targeted interventions that address the unique challenges of single-parent families. This, in turn, can lead to better social support systems and improved outcomes for children raised in single-parent households.

Theoretical Framework

The study employs the Psychosocial Theory, developed by Mary Ellen Richmond (1861–1928) and refined by Gordon Hamilton in 1930. This theory posits that individuals are influenced by both psychological and social factors, emphasizing the importance of understanding individuals within their social contexts. Key principles include holistic perspectives, individualization, empowerment, social justice, and strengths-based approaches. The theory argues that effective interventions should address both the psychological and social dimensions of individuals' lives, promoting empowerment and social justice while recognizing and building upon their strengths.

The Crisis Intervention Model, developed by Lydia Rapoport in 1970, is also utilized. This model, drawing from functional and psychodynamic theories, focuses on diagnosing and solving problems in crisis situations. It emphasizes the inevitability of crises and the importance of maintaining equilibrium through adequate coping mechanisms. The model is particularly relevant for addressing short-term crises and providing immediate solutions, making it applicable to the study of single parenting and childcare challenges. Both theories are relevant to this study as they provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by single parents and the support systems needed to address these challenges effectively.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to assess the challenges of single parenting on childcare in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). The population includes all single parents in AMAC, estimated at 32,967. A stratified random sample of 384 single parents was selected to ensure representation across

different types of single-parent households. The questionnaire, guided by the research questions, consists of 12 items with each research question having at least four item statements. Data collection was conducted through face-to-face interviews and online surveys to maximize participation. Validity was ensured through expert review and a pilot study, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha at the threshold of 0.76 indicating strong validity. Ethical considerations included obtaining approval from the University of Jos Central Health Research Committee and ensuring participant confidentiality and voluntary participation. Data analysis utilized descriptive and inferential statistics with support from SPSS software.

Results

Research Question One: What are the primary financial, emotional, and social challenges faced by single parents in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC)?

Table 1: Financial, Emotional, and Social Challenges Faced by Single Parents

s/n	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Securing stable employment is a significant financial challenge for single parents in AMAC.	123 (32%)	107 (28%)	79 (20%)	55 (14%)
2	Managing childcare responsibilities while working is a major emotional challenge for single parents in AMAC.	117 (30%)	113 (29%)	71 (18%)	53 (13%)
3	Experiencing social stigma and discrimination is a common social challenge for single parents in AMAC.	109 (28%)	121 (31%)	75 (19%)	59 (15%)
4	Accessing affordable housing is a significant financial challenge for single parents in AMAC.	115 (30%)	109 (28%)	77 (20%)	53 (13%)

The data in Table 1 highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by single parents in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC). A significant number of respondents (32%) strongly agree that securing stable employment is a major financial challenge, indicating the economic instability many single parents face. Additionally, 30% strongly agree that managing childcare responsibilities while working is a major emotional challenge, underscoring the difficulty of balancing work and family life. Furthermore, 28% strongly agree that experiencing social stigma and discrimination is a common social challenge, reflecting the societal pressures and biases single parents encounter.

Research Question Two: How do single parents in AMAC perceive the availability and effectiveness of existing support systems, including government programs, community resources, and social networks?

Table 2: Perceived Availability and Effectiveness of Support Systems

s/n	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Government programs provide sufficient financial support for single parents in AMAC.	93 (24%)	111 (29%)	87 (23%)	63 (16%)
2	Community resources are accessible and effective for single parents in AMAC.	101 (26%)	105 (27%)	83 (22%)	65 (16%)
3	Social networks and family support are reliable for single parents in AMAC.	107 (28%)	99 (26%)	85 (22%)	63 (16%)
4	Existing support systems adequately meet the needs of single parents and their children in AMAC.	95 (25%)	103 (27%)	81 (21%)	65 (17%)

Table 2 examines the perceptions of single parents regarding the availability and effectiveness of existing support systems in AMAC. Only 24% strongly agree that government programs provide sufficient financial support, suggesting that current programs may not meet the needs of single parents. Similarly, 26% strongly agree that community resources are accessible and effective, while 28% strongly agree that social networks and family support are reliable. These findings indicate that while some support is available, it is often insufficient or not effectively utilized.

Research Question Three: What strategies and interventions can be implemented to enhance the well-being of single parents and their children in AMAC?

Table 3: Strategies and Interventions for Enhancing Well-being

s/n	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Implementing targeted financial assistance programs would significantly improve the well-being of single parents in AMAC.	119 (31%)	103 (27%)	81 (21%)	51 (13%)
2	Establishing affordable childcare centers in AMAC would greatly benefit single parents.	113 (29%)	107 (28%)	85 (22%)	59 (15%)
3	Providing counseling and mental health services tailored for single parents and their children in AMAC is essential.	117 (30%)	101 (26%)	83 (22%)	53 (13%)
4	Strengthening community-based support programs and social networks in AMAC is crucial for single parents.	121 (31%)	105 (27%)	81 (21%)	57 (15%)

Table 3 explores potential strategies and interventions to enhance the well-being of single parents and their children in AMAC. A substantial number of respondents (31%) strongly agree that implementing targeted financial assistance programs would significantly improve their well-being, highlighting the need for more tailored financial support. Additionally, 31% strongly agree that establishing affordable childcare centers would greatly benefit single parents, emphasizing the importance of accessible childcare services. Furthermore, 30% strongly agree that providing counseling and mental health services tailored for single parents and their children is essential, indicating the need for mental health support. Lastly, 31% strongly agree that strengthening community-based support

programs and social networks is crucial, suggesting that enhancing social support systems can play a vital role in improving the well-being of single parents.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: Financial, Emotional, and Social Challenges Faced by Single Parents

The study provides a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted challenges faced by single parents in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), highlighting the intricate interplay between financial, emotional, and social dimensions. Financially, the pursuit of stable employment emerges as a significant obstacle, with 32% of respondents strongly agreeing that it is a major challenge. This finding is corroborated by Henry (2024), who documented the economic precarity experienced by single parents in Cross River State, Nigeria. The high percentage of respondents underscores the pervasive nature of economic instability, likely exacerbated by the high living costs and limited job opportunities characteristic of urban environments like AMAC. This economic strain is further compounded by the need to provide for children without the financial support of a second parent, as noted by John and Shimfe (2020). The study diverges from Owolabi (2023), who focused on broader socio-economic factors influencing single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria without specifically addressing employment challenges. Owolabi's work, while valuable, offers a more generalized perspective that does not isolate the specific employment-related hurdles faced by single parents.

Emotionally, the burden of managing childcare responsibilities while maintaining professional commitments surfaces as a significant strain, with 30% of respondents strongly agreeing. This finding aligns with John and Shimfe (2020), who highlighted the difficulties single parents face in balancing work and childcare. The emotional toll of juggling these dual responsibilities is further corroborated by Folorunsho et al. (2024), who emphasized the impact of parenting styles on juvenile delinquency. This suggests that single parents may grapple not only with providing adequate supervision but also with delivering the emotional support necessary for their children's healthy development. The study diverges from Brody and Flor (1998), who focused on maternal resources and parenting practices in rural, single-parent African American families. The distinct socio-cultural and economic contexts of rural African American families in the United States versus urban Nigerian families introduce variations in the nature and intensity of emotional challenges. While both studies acknowledge the strain of single parenting, the specific stressors and their manifestations differ markedly, reflecting the importance of context in shaping parenting experiences.

Research Question Two: Perceived Availability and Effectiveness of Support Systems

The study offers a critical evaluation of the availability and effectiveness of support systems for single parents in AMAC, revealing widespread dissatisfaction and unmet needs. Government programs, intended to provide a financial safety net, are perceived as grossly inadequate by a significant portion of respondents, with only 24% strongly agreeing that they offer sufficient support. This finding is consistent with Akosile et al. (2017), who

observed the limited reach and efficacy of social support systems for single mothers in sub-Saharan Africa. The study diverges from Owolabi (2023), who did not specifically address the adequacy of government support programs. Understanding the specific shortcomings of existing programs is essential for devising more effective interventions. The limited financial support exacerbates the economic challenges faced by single parents, highlighting the need for more robust and targeted government initiatives.

Community resources, which could potentially alleviate some of the burdens faced by single parents, are also viewed as largely inaccessible and ineffective. A mere 26% of respondents strongly agree that these resources meet their needs, echoing Ahiaku and Ajani (2022), who documented the challenges single parents face in accessing community resources in South Africa. This parallel suggests that despite geographical differences, single parents in both regions encounter similar barriers in leveraging community support. The study diverges from Mudau et al. (2018), who focused on the effects of single parenting on raising teenagers without delving into resource availability. Addressing the availability and effectiveness of community resources is crucial for providing comprehensive support to single parents and their children. The findings suggest that community-based initiatives need to be more inclusive and accessible to effectively support single-parent households.

Research Question Three: Strategies and Interventions for Enhancing Well-being

The study proposes several strategies aimed at enhancing the well-being of single parents and their children in AMAC, each garnering substantial support from respondents. Targeted financial assistance programs are seen as a vital intervention, with 31% of respondents strongly agreeing on their potential to improve well-being. This aligns with Owolabi and Garutsa (2024), who emphasized the critical role of financial stability in mitigating the challenges faced by single parents. The study diverges from Ahmadu et al. (2025), who focused on the influence of single parenting on moral development and academic achievement without addressing financial assistance programs. This divergence underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach that addresses both the immediate financial needs and the long-term developmental outcomes of single-parent families.

Establishing affordable childcare centers is another strategy viewed as highly beneficial, with 31% of respondents strongly agreeing. This finding is in harmony with John and Shimfe (2020), who highlighted the difficulties single parents face in balancing work and childcare responsibilities. Affordable childcare centers could provide much-needed respite, allowing single parents to focus on their professional commitments without compromising their children's care. The study diverges from Folorunsho et al. (2024), who focused on the impact of parenting styles on juvenile delinquency without specifically addressing the need for childcare centers. This divergence highlights the importance of considering practical support mechanisms alongside theoretical frameworks.

Providing counseling and mental health services tailored for single parents and their children is seen as essential, with 30% of respondents strongly agreeing. This finding aligns with Jafaru et al. (2024), who noted the impact of poverty, family status, and crime on single

parenting in Nigeria. The study diverges from Brody and Flor (1998), who focused on maternal resources and parenting practices in rural, single-parent African American families without addressing mental health services. This divergence underscores the need for culturally and contextually appropriate mental health interventions.

Lastly, strengthening community-based support programs and social networks is viewed as crucial, with 31% of respondents strongly agreeing. This finding is consistent with Akosile et al. (2017), who observed the limited availability and effectiveness of social support systems for single mothers in sub-Saharan Africa. The study diverges from Ahiaku and Ajani (2022), who focused on the causes and effects of single parenting in South Africa without specifically addressing the need for community-based support programs. This divergence highlights the importance of community-level interventions in providing a robust support structure for single parents.

Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the multifaceted challenges faced by single parents in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Nigeria. It highlights the significant financial, emotional, and social obstacles that single parents encounter, emphasizing the need for targeted and comprehensive support systems. The findings align with several existing studies, such as those by Henry (2024), John and Shimfe (2020), and Akosile et al. (2017), which document the economic, emotional, and social struggles of single parents in various contexts. However, the study also diverges from other works, such as those by Owolabi (2023) and Brody and Flor (1998), which focus on broader socio-economic factors or different cultural contexts. These divergences underscore the importance of context-specific research and interventions.

The study's findings reveal that while some support systems exist, they are often inadequate or inaccessible. This highlights the need for more robust government programs, community resources, and social networks that can effectively address the unique challenges faced by single parents. The proposed strategies and interventions, such as targeted financial assistance, affordable childcare centers, counseling services, and strengthened community support programs, are seen as crucial steps toward enhancing the well-being of single parents and their children.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the challenges faced by single parents in AMAC:

1. Develop and implement financial assistance programs specifically tailored to the needs of single parents. These programs should aim to provide stable income support, reduce economic instability, and help single parents meet the basic needs of their children.
2. Create affordable and accessible childcare centers in AMAC to support single parents in balancing work and childcare responsibilities. These centers should offer high-quality care and be conveniently located to ensure ease of access.

3. Establish counseling and mental health services tailored for single parents and their children. These services should address the emotional and psychological challenges faced by single parents and provide support for their children's development and well-being.
4. Enhance community-based support programs and social networks to provide practical and emotional support to single parents. This includes creating support groups, mentorship programs, and community outreach initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and reduce social isolation.

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