



Challenges Faced by Single Mother in Supporting their Adolescence Children in Lungrang ‘S’

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ABSTRACT:

This research explores the multifaceted challenges encountered by single mothers in Lungrang ‘S’, Mizoram, as they navigate the complexities of supporting their adolescent children. Through qualitative interviews and surveys, the study delves into the economic, emotional, and societal hurdles faced by these mothers, shedding light on the strategies they employ to fulfill their parenting roles effectively. Additionally, it examines the impact of cultural and geographical factors on the support networks available to single mothers in the region. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and community support systems to alleviate the burdens faced by single mothers and promote the well-being of their adolescent children in Lungrang’ S’, Mizoram.

Keywords: Adolescents; single mothers; psychological challenges; economic challenges; social challenges; cultural challenges.

Introduction

Single mother-parenting is a dynamic process that influences childhood development (Xu, Xu, Simpkins, & Warschauer, 2019; Moitra, Mukherjee, & Chatterjee, 2017; Laursen, 2005; and Mrinde, 2014). Xu, Xu, Simpkins, and Warschauer, 2019) elaborates on this effect, stating that single mother-parenting is a crucial contributing component to childhood development and psychopathology. This effect is due to the fact that parents have a significant influence on their children's mental health, especially throughout their early childhood (Laursen, 2005). Laursen (2005) adds that, while this may vary by continent, single mothers may feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of managing caring for children, working, and keeping up with expenses and domestic tasks.

Single motherhood presents unique challenges, especially when it comes to raising adolescent children. As society evolves, the dynamics within family structures continue to shift, highlighting the importance of examining the experiences of single mothers in navigating the complexities of parenthood during their children's formative years. This research aims to explore the multifaceted challenges faced by single mothers in providing support and guidance to their adolescent offspring. By delving into these challenges, we can gain valuable insights into the ways in which societal, economic, and personal factors intersect to shape the parenting journey of single mothers and its impact on adolescent development. Understanding these complexities is essential for the development of targeted interventions and support systems aimed at empowering single mothers and promoting the well-being of their adolescent children. It is projected that more than half of all children born in the United States are raised by a single mother (Kroese, Bernasco, Liefbroer, & Rouwendal, 2021). Data from Africa suggest that more than 22% of women aged 20-49 have unmarried moms (Ntoimo & Mutanda, 2020). For example, in Namibia, the rate of having a child before marriage among female youths was estimated to be 25.5% in 2014. Many children in East Africa grow up in families with only one biological parent due to a variety of reasons such as death, unmarried status, separation, and divorce.

In the picturesque state of Mizoram, nestled in the northeastern region of India, single motherhood presents a myriad of challenges, particularly in the realm of supporting adolescent children. Single mothers, often the primary caregivers, navigate a complex landscape of socioeconomic, emotional, and psychological hurdles, as they strive to provide for and nurture their growing children. This study delves into the multifaceted challenges faced by single mothers in Mizoram in supporting their adolescent offspring, shedding light on the underlying causes and potential implications for the well-being of both mothers and children.

The prevalence of single motherhood in Mizoram is predominantly attributed to several key factors, with parental divorces or separations leading the roster of causes. In the wake of marital discord, mothers are frequently left to shoulder the responsibilities of child-rearing solo, grappling with the financial strains and emotional upheavals that accompany such transitions. Moreover, births to unmarried women constitute another significant contributor to the demographic landscape of single motherhood in Mizoram. In a society where traditional family structures hold sway, unwed mothers may face social stigma and economic marginalization, exacerbating the challenges of raising adolescent children single-handily.

Tragically, parental death also emerges as a poignant catalyst for single motherhood in Mizoram, leaving widowed mothers to navigate the intricate terrain of parenthood bereft of spousal support. The loss of a partner not only precipitates emotional distress but also imposes practical hurdles in meeting

the material needs of growing children. Additionally, the specter of school pregnancies looms large over the demographic landscape, with young women bearing the brunt of societal scrutiny and familial pressures. Single mothers grappling with the aftermath of adolescent pregnancies must contend with heightened financial strains and disrupted educational trajectories, compounding the existing challenges of single parenthood.

In Mizoram, women emerge as the most impacted demographic group within the cohort of single mothers, grappling with intersecting layers of gender inequities and socio-cultural norms. As primary caregivers, they navigate a labyrinthine terrain of challenges, from economic insecurities to social ostracism, as they endeavor to provide a nurturing environment for their adolescent children amidst the tumult of single parenthood. According to the Women's Legal Aid Centre (2007), more than 1,138 cases linked to marriage breakdown problems were handled in Tanzania between 2006 and 2007, and the number was predicted to increase.

Child conflict is more prevalent in single-mother parenting households because single mothers face unique obstacles when there is no biological father in the family. In Mizoram, approximately one in every four homes is headed by a woman. One in every 10 Tanzanian children is orphaned. The youngster must have lost either one or both parents. At the community level, it is feasible to find a mother ready to care for a kid whose parents have died. Family composition provides an excellent sense of security and stability, which is essential for children. A disruption in family makeup can have a significant impact on children.

It is well understood that the rise in single motherhood has a significant impact on the social, economic, and political backdrop of family life (Mrinde, 2014). Several studies have been undertaken to investigate the issues of single parenthood and the impact of single parent households in both developed and developing countries (Berryhill & Durtschi 2017; Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009; Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2018). However, there is a lack of research on the impact of single motherhood on the development of teenagers. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify the obstacles that single mothers experienced when parenting their teens. The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the primary financial challenges single mothers encounter while supporting their adolescent children, and how do these challenges impact the well-being and development of the children?
2. How do single mothers balance work responsibilities, household duties, and emotional support for their adolescent children, and what are the implications of this balancing act on both the mothers' and children's mental health?
3. What strategies do single mothers employ to overcome the social and emotional barriers they face in raising their adolescent children alone, and how effective are these strategies in promoting positive outcomes for the children's development and well-being?

Methodology

The study used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenological study is a method of inquiry that describes individuals' lived experiences with a phenomenon as stated by participants. This description captures the essence of multiple folks' encounters with the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical foundations and usually entails conducting interviews (Creswell, 2018). The design was used in this study because it was effective at determining subjective experiences, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of common assumptions and conventional wisdom.

Population and sampling techniques

The study's target group was single mothers in Mizoram Lungrang 'S'. Respondents were chosen using the purpose sampling strategy, which selects elements that will provide important information about the research subject under consideration. Forty single-mother participants were found and interviewed.

Data Collection

Single mothers' data was collected using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) procedures. Participatory Rural Appraisal is a participatory data gathering approach that occurs at the community level or with a specific community group of interest (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller). PRA was employed at the key informant interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 single moms.

Statistical and Data Analysis

Data was sorted and transcribed from recording devices into writings that addressed a variety of technical and interpersonal topics in a verbatim oral vs written format (Kvale, 2007). The researcher transcribed and translated the tape-recorded interviews, then read and re-read them in their entirety, reflecting on the interviews as a whole to improve the outcomes. The results were then provided with explanations and direct statements from participants.

Results and Discussion

This section summarizes the results and discusses them. The findings are presented in a style that allows for a coherent flow of ideas as dictated by the research objectives. The primary goal of the study was to investigate the impact of single mother parenting on adolescent development in Lungrang 'S'.

1. Demographics of Respondents:

In this study, a sample size of 40 single mothers was surveyed to understand the challenges they face in supporting their adolescent children. The respondents were diverse in terms of age, education level, employment status, and socioeconomic background. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 60, with varying levels of education ranging from high school diploma to postgraduate degrees. Employment status varied, with some mothers working full-time, part-time, or being unemployed. Socioeconomic backgrounds ranged from low-income to middle-income households.

2. Financial Challenges:

Single mothers face significant financial hurdles in supporting their adolescent children, including limited income, lack of child support, and the high cost of childcare and education. These challenges impact the well-being and development of the children by limiting access to resources such as quality healthcare, education, extracurricular activities, and nutritious food. Financial strain can also lead to stress and anxiety for both the mothers and children, potentially affecting mental health and overall family dynamics.

3. Balancing Work, Household Duties, and Emotional Support:

Single mothers juggle multiple responsibilities, including work, household chores, and emotional support for their adolescent children. This balancing act often results in time constraints, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion for the mothers. As a consequence, they may struggle to provide adequate emotional support and supervision for their children, leading to feelings of neglect or abandonment. Moreover, the constant pressure to fulfill various roles can take a toll on the mental health of both mothers and children, contributing to increased stress, depression, and interpersonal conflict within the family.

4. Strategies for Overcoming Social and Emotional Barriers:

Single mothers employ various strategies to overcome social and emotional barriers in raising their adolescent children alone, including seeking social support from family, friends, and community organizations, prioritizing self-care, and fostering open communication with their children. These strategies can be effective in promoting positive outcomes for children's development and well-being by enhancing resilience, fostering healthy relationships, and providing a sense of stability and security within the family unit.

5. Psychological challenges

As a result, parents and single mothers faced emotional or psychological issues while parenting. They were lonely, depressed, and angry, therefore they raised their children badly. This was reported by one participant who stated, "All children were left for me to care for. They are currently all studying. I'm lonely since there's no one at school to help me meet my adolescent needs. "I wish the father of my children was present" (SM.1). Another parent stated, "I feel lonely and depressed, especially when I fail to meet my children's needs." Anger develops when a youngster requests something and I do not have it. I can beat him, insult him, and even scold him (SM.8). These findings are consistent with Mackay and Ross's (2005) conclusion that marriage separation frequently causes significant emotional damage for child relationships. The results further reflect the findings of Bornstein and Bradley (2014), who said that teenagers may engage.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

It is established that single mothers faced numerous obstacles while supporting their adolescent children. The difficulties ranged from economic, social, cultural, and psychological. The economic problems include financial limits because most single moms' income is restricted and their money-generating activities do not generate enough finances to meet their own and their adolescent children's demands. Single mothers faced social isolation and stigma. They were regarded as outcasts and of lower value in society. In terms of cultural obstacles, single mothers were dispossessed of their property and possessions as a result of cultural traditions that allowed males to take them away. Finally, single women faced psychological challenges, such as the absence of husbands to support their childbearing efforts. This left them feeling insecure and worried.

Recommendations

It is advised that government and non-governmental groups implement support mechanisms to provide single moms with the necessary tools to become economically stable. Social cultural practices that stigmatize and deprive single women of property, so preventing single mothers from supporting their adolescent children, should be discontinued. Social welfare officers should train the community about single mothers' rights to exist, be respected, own land and other property, and be supported. The government and non-governmental organizations should assist single moms in organizing socialization groups and providing counseling programs as intervention measures in their situations.

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