



Single Parenting: Understanding the Reasons and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The foundation of a person's life and the most significant social institution is thought to be the family. However, it has become more evident over time that single parenting is common and that each parent is in charge of raising their children by themselves. For a variety of reasons, the two spouses cannot perform the same tasks together. It may seem powerful, but in the end, it impacts children. By relating to some parenting theories, this essay aims to highlight typical contextual causes and effects of single parenting.

Introduction

The term "family" has been defined by a number of sociologists and anthropologists. In 1949, American anthropologist George Murdock, who had studied about 250 different societies, defined a family as a social group that is characterized by procreation, shared housing, and economic cooperation. Adults of both sexes who own or adopt one or more children and have at least two sexually acceptable relationships make up this group. Rao (2001)

A family, according to MacIver and Page, is a group that is characterized by a sexual relationship that is accurate and durable enough to support childbearing and childrearing. Rao (2001) Family brings out certain characteristics:

1. The relationship is based on marriage and requires marriage. When two people mate and have children, it is created.
2. The ancestry hierarchy can be ascertained using this method.
3. A family must have sufficient funds to cover its essential expenses and desires associated with having and raising children.
4. Regardless of whether they own it all or share it with others, every family should have a place to call home.

One type of family is a single-parent household. Due to changing family structures and societal shifts, single parenting has become more common. To build effective social support networks, it is critical to understand its causes and effects. Single parenting can result from a variety of internal, social, and external factors, such as divorce, unwanted pregnancies, widowhood, or personal preference. Even though it presents social, emotional, and financial challenges for both parents and children, strong support systems and coping strategies can mitigate the negative effects. Bhatt and Chauhan (2024)

The parent raising the children alone is the main goal of single parenting. This is one of the phenomena that is studied throughout. However, 320 million children worldwide—one in seven—live with a single parent, usually a mother. (Park and Hong, 2012)

Literature Review

Single parenting highlights its effects on children's emotional health, academic success, and social development. Studies indicate that children in single-parent households often encounter educational difficulties, emotional struggles, and limited supervision. It demonstrates resilience and independence. Public perceptions of single parents, especially mothers, often revolve around financial difficulties and social discrimination, while single fathers face scepticism about their caregiving abilities. Both parents and children experience considerable emotional stress, leading to anxiety and other challenges. Despite these obstacles, well-designed policies and social support programs can help reduce the negative impacts. Providing financial, educational, and emotional assistance is essential to enhancing the well-being of single-parent families (Suman & Wangmo, 2022).

Single parenting has been widely studied for its effects on children's emotional, social, and academic development. As family structures evolve, the rise in single-parent households has presented unique challenges for child upbringing. It indicates that children in these families often experience emotional distress, social difficulties, and academic setbacks, though some develop resilience. Emotionally, children from single-parent homes frequently struggle with anxiety and depression due to financial hardships and a lack of stability. Socially, children may face stigma, bullying, and difficulties forming peer relationships, impacting their confidence and trust in others. Academically, financial constraints and reduced parental involvement often contribute to lower performance and decreased motivation. Single parenting can also lead to behavioural issues in children, including emotional withdrawal and difficulty adapting to new environments. Economic hardships further exacerbate these challenges, limiting access to education, healthcare, and extracurricular activities (Bisht, 2025).

One of the major causes that lead to single parenting is teenage or unintended pregnancy. Every year, 7.3 million young girls get pregnant, which eventually leads to forceful marriages, and these marriages usually don't stay for the long term, thus leading to separations, which consequently result in single parenting. Death of a spouse due to any illness or other cause and maternal morbidities and mortality also lead to single parenting. (Bisht, 2025).

Related Theories

Attachment Theory (John Bowlby):

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory holds that emotional and psychological growth is shaped by early interactions with main carers. Children in single-parent homes may relate to their carer in many ways, which could affect their capacity to have good relationships later in life. Bharambe, 2020

Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura):

Bandura's Social Learning Theory holds that kids acquire behaviours by means of observation and imitation. A youngster in a single-parent household may have less exposure to role models, hence restricting their social learning opportunities. Bharambe, 2020 Social skills, emotional control, and self-esteem are three areas in which this could affect the child's growth.

Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory

Famous psychologist Erik Erikson created psychosocial theory. Covering all the stages of a person's life—from infancy to late adulthood, this idea comprises eight stages. These stages are trust versus distrust, autonomy versus shame/doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identification versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair. Every one of these phases has conflict that affects a person's character in good and bad ways. Erikson referred to these disputes as crises requiring resolution prior to advancing to the following stage. The single parent's kid may go through crises at any stage. For example, in the first stage of infancy, the infant wishes for their carer to be kind to feed them, reduce their worry, and make them smile. Bharambe, 2020 But single parent cannot meet their needs and put them in difficulty. All these disappointments could cause despair and other psychological issues including hopelessness.

Consequences

Compared to those kids who live with two parents, that is, both mother and father, children of single parents may lead quite difficult lives. Many studies have been done showing that single parenting harms a child's health and has several consequences on their academic performance, financial situation, and social life. Most of the lone parents struggle mostly with financial instability or financial crises. Single parents can be strong against their children's feelings. Children raised by single parents tend to be careless or less focused in school and may frequently drop out or leave before particular qualification. If they finish their schooling, they did not express interest in jobs or work, therefore they ended up unemployed. That once again influences their emotional and behavioural growth. Single parents often do not give their children quality time. Such as hearing children's worries, knowing their emotional and psychological needs, and supporting them with their homework, inquiring about their academics. Schmuck, 2013

Busy juggling many parenting responsibilities and financial or economic reasons or crisis, single parents cannot complete all these duties. Along with financial and social concerns, children with single parents frequently struggle with health-related matters. Lack of health insurance, low living standards, and nearly little or lower quality of care from single working parent raise stress in the child's life. All these problems and explosive elements of single parenting affect a child's psychological well-being as well as feelings of violence, anxiety, sadness, rage, loneliness, lack of social interaction, bad self-perception, and occasionally suicidal thoughts. Muslihat and Listiana, 2021 Thus, the child could participate in inappropriate or unconstructive activities including drug usage, smoking, crime, harming others, and suicide attempts to relieve stress or for sense of alleviation from their emotional suffering.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Determining and resolving the problems experienced by individuals is greatly influenced by society. Instead of only condemning single parents and their children, the community should help them satisfy their requirements, therefore improving their quality of life and offering a basis for a happy life. At first, for the sake of their children's future, parents should do all in their power to keep consistency inside their relationship. But, both parents should equally share responsibilities in rearing their children if keeping stability is difficult so that their emotional and intellectual growth is supported.

Higher powers like non-governmental groups, counselors, and psychologists must also actively provide the required assistance and tools by doing so. Social workers and parent-teacher groups should schedule sessions to instruct and train single parents on how to handle the obstacles that come their path. Seminars, media, and workshops can help parents to understand their duties.

Conclusion

Although solitary parenting can be a strong reaction to trying circumstances, it is clear that it can significantly influence a child's growth. Examining these difficulties using accepted parenting theories can help us to better understand how single parenting affects the emotional, psychological, and social development of children. To minimize the possible negative effects, it is crucial to give both single parents and their children help as society norms change.

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