

The impact of single parenting on the development of the child in Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, Northern Region Sierra Leone

Ijatu Sesay

Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology Sierra Leone, Makeni Campus

ijatusesay2@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Single parenthood is a phenomenon that has always been in existence and is as old as mankind. According to Dowd Nancy in (1997), a single parent is a parent, not living with spouse or partner who has most of the day to day responsibilities in raising the child or children.

The socialization of children is very important for the community continuity of any culture. The family is said to be most important agent of children's socialization, especially for children. Children in most communities are raised in a highly structured and disciplined manner by their parents. Parents help to instill and inculcate strong basic moral, spiritual, social, physical and cognitive principles in their children.

The African system of raising children in an extended family pattern has changed a great deal with the advent of industrialization and disrupted with the rapid social change that comes with globalization. Many of the old customs and traditions which were taught and practiced for several years are becoming obsolete today. The modern culture has changed and outgrown values and benefits that were taught to be the core beliefs and values of our society. What was unacceptable in the olden days is now becoming a fast and rapidly rising trend.

In Sierra Leone, the existence of single parenthood was unknown, and where they existed, they were ignored as exceptional cases. However, presently, they are fast-growing family patterns both inside and outside Sierra Leone, and have become even more common than the 'Nuclear family', consisting of a mother or father and the children.

Factors such as divorce, separation, death of a parent, unintended pregnancy or birth to unmarried couples, and single parent adoption are the major causes of single parenthood in our society today. In Sierra Leone, among the Krio's parental roles are culturally determined and

distributed. The maternal roles are that of child rearing, how training and playing of complementary responsibilities and discipline of children. The morally, mentality upright and emotionally balanced when caring responsibilities are carried out by both parents. When children are brought up by single parents, it makes life more demanding and challenging on the parent. If this phase of the child's life is not well managed, it might lead to maladjustment in life.

When the subject of single parenthood is been discussed, it would almost certainly involve women since women are usually considered the primary care givers. Apart from being the primary care giver, she becomes the bread winner and head of the family.

The demographics of single parenting show a general increase Worldwide in children living in single parent homes. Single parenting has become an accepted norm in the United State of America and is an accepted trend found in many other Countries. Debates concerning issues bothering on single parent households, and more have risen. Recently, the numbers of single parent families gaining a global dimension. Hamburg (2004) open that marital separation commonly involves major emotional distress for child relationship. About twice as many children from one parent families compare to two parent families dropout of school.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are stated in two folds, a general objective and a specific objective. The general objectives of the study is to examine the effect of single parenting in the development of the child.

Specifically, the research intends to find out the following:

1. To examine the prevalence of problem faced by children in single parent homes as against a comparable simple from dual parent family background
2. Is there any significant difference in problem faced by boys in single parent homes compared to girls in single parent homes.
3. Is there any significant relationship between problems faced by children in single parent homes and age of the child at time of separation?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research design that was used in this work is survey design. This design aims at collecting samples from the population in order to examine the distribution, incidence and introduction of sociology and psychological variables. Surveys are oriented towards the determination of the status of a given phenomenon rather than towards the isolation of causative factors are experimental research seek after. Parenting or child upbringing is a practical social situation. Using survey design will afford the research the opportunity to answer the research questions and also test the hypothesis in the work. Thereafter, suggestion for improvement will be made.

STUDY POPULATION

Considering the fact that it is practically impossible for the research to study all the children in Masuba community Health Centre due to time and finance constraints one hundred and fifty (150) children were purposively selected to participate in the study base on convenience to the research.

SAMPLE SIZE

A sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) children was selected for the study in other for the test of statistical significance to be viable, a sample size must be large enough to allow for comparism, of sample statistics and population parameter.

The one hundred and fifty (150) children constitute ten percent (10%) of the population within the age range of twelve (12) to seventeen (17) years of age in Masuba community Health Centre, and this is considered large enough to permit test of statistical significance and hypothesis testing.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The purposive sampling technique was employed to arrive at the sample size. Purposive sampling is the common name most authors have given to quota and judgment sampling. Quota sampling given a semblance of representativeness. Thus, quota sampling is to non probability what stratified random sampling is to probability sample, because both select

sample subject to conform to some control measures detected by some inherent characteristics of populations of interest.

The sample size for this study constitutes equal member of boys and girls. In other words the sample of children from single parent homes comprises thirty seven (37) boys and thirty eight (38) girls, same is applicable for those from dual parent families.

DATA COLLECTION

There are many methods of collecting data in social sciences. These includes the questionnaire methods, sciences. These includes the questionnaire methods, interview techniques, observation method comprising both participant and non participant method, etc. However, in this research, data were collected both through primary and secondary services, the survey method was adopted with the researcher going to the field himself. Questionnaires were administered to respondents and completed. Data collection through secondary sources includes; data collected from text books, journals and internet with references show in the bibliography. All the questions asked are close ended. This facilitate coding and allow for comparism and responses. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) were administered. The choice of self respondents are literates. Among basis for the selection of adolescent respondents is because of their cognitive maturation and capacity to retrieve stored data for exercises such as this one.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

This study adopted the simple percentage and kendell's measures of concordance. These techniques are used because they are easy to comprehend and considered adequate for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The socio-demographic characteristic of adolescent that were relevant to the study include their sex, age type of home they came from, the biological studying with only one biological parent, age (range) at time of separation, how long biological parents were separated and the occupation of their parents separated and the occupation of their parents.

Children of single parent home were required to answer all these questions, while those from dual parent families were limited to the first three questions and the last question.

4.1 TABLE1: SHOWING FREQUENCIES OF SEX

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS (N=120)

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES			DUAL PARENTS FAMILIES		
SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	30	25%	Male	30	25%
Female	30	25%	Female	30	25%
Total	60	50%	Total	60	50%

SEX DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Out of the one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires retrieved from respondent, sixty (60) represent 50% were girls. Out of sixty (60) representing boys, thirty (30) representing twenty five percent 25% were from dual parent families. The same division is done for the girls. This is shown in table 4.1

4.2 TABLE 2: SHOWING FREQUENCY OF AGE GROUP OF RESPONDENT (N-120)

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES			DUAL PARENTS FAMILIES		
AGE GROUP	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	AGE GROUP	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
12 – 14	30	25%	12 – 14	30	25%
15 – 14	30	25%	15 – 17	30	25%
Total	60	50%	Total	60	50%

Source: Research survey 2019

On the age distribution of respondent, twenty five (25%) of the respondents from single parent families were between the age of twelve to fourteen (12 – 14), twenty five percent from dual parents families were also between the age of twelve to fourteen (14). The twenty

five percent (25%) from single parent families is also applicable to those within the age of fifteen to seventeen (15-17). This is shown in table 4.2

4.3 TABLE 3: SHOWING THE FREQUENCY OF BIOLOGICAL PARENTS CHILDREN ARE LIVING WITH

BIOLOGY PARENTS	BOYS	%	GIRLS	%	GRAND TOTAL	%
Mother	18	60%	25	80%	43	70%
Father	12	40%	5	20%	17	30%
Total	30	100%	30	100%	60	100%

The numbers of boys living with their mothers were eighteen (18) constituting sixty percent (60%) while those staying with their fathers were twelve (22) constituting forty percent (40%). On the other hand, girls staying with their mothers were twenty five (25%) constituting eighty percent (80%) while those living with their father were five (5) constituting twenty percent (20%). In totality, forty three (43) children constituting seventy percent (70%) were living in single parent homes run by mothers, while seventeen (17) children constituting thirty percent (30%) were living with single fathers. This is a reflection of the findings of statistics in 2019 which states that “following separation, a child will end up with the Primary caregiver, usually the mother, and a secondary caregiver, usually the father”.

4.4 TABLE 4: SHOWING CAUSES OF SINGLE PARENTING IN BOMBALI SHEBORA CHIEFDOM

CAUSE OF STAYING WITH ONE BIOLOGICAL PARENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Death	18	30%
Separation	31	51.7%
Desertion	4	6.7%
Unintended pregnancy	7	11.7%
Total	60	100%

Out of the sixty (60) respondents from single parent homes, eighteen (18) of them were living with only one biological parent as a result of death of the other parents, thirty-one (31) of them said it was due to separation, four (4) was due to desertion while the remaining seven (7) respondents stated unintended pregnancy as a cause of staying with one biological parent.

Data gathered from the respondents indicated the separation was a major cause of single parenting within Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, contributing 51.7% of single parenting and followed by death of parent representing 30% while unintended pregnancy contributed 11.7% of single parenting, only 6.7% was attributed to desertion.

The above findings are in sharp constraint with the findings of Amato P (2000), where they stated that death of parent was a major cause of single parenting.

4.5 TABLE 5: SHOWING FREQUENCY OF THE AGE (RANGE) OF CHILDREN AT THE TIME OF PARENTAL SEPARATION

RESPONDENTS AGE AT TIME OF PARENTAL SEPARATION (YEARS)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1-5	30	50%
6-10	24	40%
11-15	5	8.33%
16+	1	1.67%
Total	60	100%

Out of the sixty (60) respondents from single parent home, those that fall within the (range) of 1-5 were thirty (30) representing fifty percent (50%) those that fall within the age (range) of 6-10 were 24 representing 40%. Five (5) of them representing 8.33% fall within the age of 11-15, while only one (1) representing 1.67% falls within the age (range) of 10 and above.

4.6 TABLE 6: SHOWING DURATION OF PARENTAL SEPARATION

DURATION OF PARENTAL SEPARATION (YEARS)	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1-5	8	12.3%
6-10	26	43.3
16+	24	40%
Total	60	100%

Children whose parent has separated for a period of 1-5 years were 8 representing 13.3%. Those whose parents have separated for 6-10 years were 26 representing 43.3%. Those whose parent has separated for 11-15 years were 24 representing 40%. Lastly, those that fall within 16 years and above were two (2) representing 3.3%.

4.7 TABLE 7: SHOWING A FREQUENCY OF THE KIND OF WORK PARENTS IN BOMBALI SHEBORA CHIEFDOM DO FOR A LIVING

OCCUPATION OF PARENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Civil Servant	49	39%
Trading	28	22.4%
Professional	34	27.2
Others	14	11.2%
Total	125	100%

Out of the 120 respondents from single parent homes and dual parents homes, studied, those whose parents were civil servant were 49. Representing 39.2%, those whose parent were traders were 28 in numbers representing 24.4%. 34 representing 27.2% were professional parents while the remaining 14 representing 11.2% were doing other works ranging from cleaners to electricians, international networking etc.

DISCUSSION

Based on the responses of the respondents from single parent families, the researcher found out that single parent have negative effects on children. Generally children face problems or challenges just the same way adult do. The challenges they faced are however, equal to their age. These problems are social problems, psychological problems, educational problems, behavioral problems etc. children in single parent families however, face significantly greater problems than those raised in dual parent families.

Children raised by one biological parent face worse on a lot of social and economical measures that children raised by both biological parents.

The findings of the study further reveals that boys in single parent families face greater problems than girls in single parent families. Also, the severity of problems faced by children in single parent homes depends on the age of the child at time of parental separation. From

the study it was established that younger children are more affected by the trauma of single parenthood. The findings of their study concluded that the effects of marital dissolution or single parenthood are more severe for boys than girls, and marital dissolution or single parent is more traumatic for children who are younger at the time of separation.

The study, thus, reveals that apart from economic problems, single parenting has a negative effect on children psychological, social, behavioral and education well being.

SUMMARY

The main concern of this study focuses on “The effect of single parenting on the Sierra Leone Child using Bombali Shebora Chiefdom as a case study”. The specific objectives of the study include examining the prevalence of problem faced by children in single parent homes as against a comparable sample of children from dual parent family background, finding out if boys face greater problems in single parent families than girls, and finding out if age of child at the time of parental separation affects the severity of problems children face. In order to place the study within the appropriate perspectives, various works of different scholars in the area were considered.

The study adopted the survey research design. The target population consisted of all children between the ages of twelve (12) to seventeen (17) who were living in single parent and dual parent homes in Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, while the sample size consisted of 150 respondents. This purposive sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample size. However, questionnaires were used to elicit information from respondents as primary source of data, and the secondary sources as text, journals and internet. The response rate was high as the researcher retrieved 120 questionnaires from the respondents. The findings of this study were presented, analyzed and discussed using the simple percentage and Kendall's method. From the findings, the study found that children in single parent families face significantly greater problems than children in dual parent families, boys in single parent home face greater problems than girls in single parent homes, and also age of child at the time of parental separation affects the severity of problems children face. In other words younger children face greater problems than children that are a little bit mature due to the training they face.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of single parenting on the Sierra Leone child using Bombali Shebora Chiefdom as a case study. Having carried out this work through careful observation, administration of questionnaires, and the review of relevant literatures, the researcher concludes that single parenting has adverse effect on children. Although other factors may contribute to aggravating the problems children face, generally speaking, children in single parent homes often face greater problems.

On the contrary, some children in single parent families fare better than children in dual parent families.

A careful look at the table confirms the above statement, but when data from the different samples of children (single parent children and dual parent children) are compared, samples from single parent families always have a higher toll of problems.

Finally the research also found out that, boys in single parent faces greater problem than girls in single parent houses.

RECOMMENDATION

Base on the result of the study, it is therefore recommended that parents stay together with their children to ensure that their welfare is properly catered for. Government should provide free and compulsory education without social family support and help the less privileged parents with financial support by empowering them. Public enlighten on issues of parental skills, family planning, family values and child discipline could be done regularly, as this would make for an intact family.

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