



SINGLE PARENTING IS INEVITABLE AND CHALLENGING: But can be Navigated Through

POLICY BRIEF

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Source: <https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/family-relationships/being-a-single-parent-family/>

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

Most study findings indicate death as the common cause of single parenting, which makes it an inevitable phenomenon in human society (UNICEF, 2024). Other causes vary around divorce, separation, unwanted pregnancies and sociocultural practices in which children are born outside the marital union. Single parenting can be a daunting task with negative ramifications for the parents and the children involved, and that is why the increasing trend in single parenting due to marital instability is worrisome. The issues involved and the way forward are examined in this policy brief.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Available data indicate that approximately 11% of Nigerian families are headed by single parents (KAINOS Edge Data Service 2020). The effects of single parenting are widespread, affecting both parents and children. Many children from separated, divorced or widowed parents may not achieve their full potential, while the economic and psychosocial pressure on single parents can be stressful. Parenting a child is the joint responsibility of both parents, each playing useful roles in finance, discipline, etc., that balance the upbringing of the child. While single parenting may be inevitable due to the death of a partner, it is also linked to marital instability. This policy brief examines single parenting in Anambra State, Nigeria, using statistical and interview data drawn from a NISER study in the State.

Findings reveal that there are 73.3% female single parents compared to 26.7% males in the state. The results also show that single parenting is becoming more common due to death divorce (78.9%), death (77.8%), desertion (70.0%), separation (62.2%), and cultural practices (50.0%). What is worrisome, therefore, is that single parenting in the state is largely driven by a combination of marital instability-related factors. Furthermore, respondents unanimously agree that single parenting has negative consequences on children's educational and psychological development. Loneliness, insufficient funds, lack of employment, child custody issues, maintenance of discipline, trauma, and depression among others are reported by respondents as the key challenges faced by single parents.

Key Recommendations:

- ✓ Public and private sector stakeholder organisations, including traditional, religious and community leaders, CBOs and NGOs should intervene by promoting family and marriage values to enhance family and marital stability.
- ✓ Public and private sector stakeholder organisations, led by federal, state and local government agencies in charge of women affairs, should play supportive roles for single parents and their children.

1.1 Background

Single parenting is a social phenomenon that has raised a global concern, which robs many children of the opportunity to reach their full potential. Single parenting is the practice of one parent, usually a mother or father, caring for their children on their own when another parent is not present.



Source: <https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/african-parents-dont-provoke-your-children/>

While child development refers to the physiological, psychological, and emotional changes that take place in people between birth and the end of adolescence as they transition from dependence to growing independence between the time of birth and the end of adolescence. It is assumed that, when both parents are present, the child will receive the best care.



Source: https://www.freepik.com/premium-photo/happy-black-family-parents-kids-park-garden-backyard-relax-bond-enjoy-sunny-day-together-portrait-happy-mother-smile-father-young-african-children-with-love-care-joy_31658281.htm

The effects of single parenting are widespread, affecting both parents and children. Children from separated, divorced or widowed parents may not achieve their potential. Parenting a child is the joint responsibility of both parents, each

playing useful roles in finance and discipline among others. Single parenting is linked to increasing marital instability in Nigeria, which is a challenge to marriage and family life. Globally, there are 320 million children between 0 and 17 years of age living with single parents, and approximately 11% of Nigerian families are headed by single parents (KAINOS Edge Data Service 2020). It is also reported that, globally, nearly 8% of all households are headed by a single parent, with 84% of them mothers, which represents 101.3 million single mothers, and the figures are on the increase (MakeMothersMatter, 2024).

An investigation into the phenomenon is, therefore, crucial given its rising trend across the globe. The following findings are drawn from a NISER study carried out in Anambra State, which is an integral part of the Nigerian society.

2.0 FINDINGS

2.1 Single Parenting by Sex

The results of data analysis show that there are more female single parents in the state (73.3%) compared to males (26.7%). This supports general findings in the literature which indicate that females are the most vulnerable and more likely to become single parents in all societies.

2.2 Determinants of Single Parenting

Results indicate the causes of single parenting in the state as divorce (78.9%), death (77.8%), partner desertion (70%), separation (62.2%), and cultural practices (50.0%). These figures the combination of marital instability-related issues as the leading cause of single parenting in the state (Fig.1).

Fig.1: Causes of Single Parenting in Anambra State, Nigeria

Causes of Single Parenting	Agree %	Disagree %	Undecided %
Divorce	78.9	8.9	12.2
Death	77.8	22.2	00
Separation	62.2	37.8	00
Desertion	70.0	16.7	13.3
No male child	66.7	8.9	24.4
Young widow	50.0	23.3	24.4
Woman marries	47.8	43.3	8.9
Adoption	70.0	16.7	13.3

2.3 Effects of Single Parenting

Respondents unanimously agree that single parenting has negative consequences on children's educational, and psychological development. This supports other findings which indicate that single parents experience financial, emotional, and social issues that cause their children to engage in social vices such as alcoholism, drug and criminal activities.

Results also indicate that loneliness, insufficient funds, lack of employment, child custody tussles, maintenance of child discipline, inability to meet children's financial needs, child isolation, trauma, and depression are key challenges experienced by single parents in the state.

2.4 Conclusion

Single parenting is becoming more common in the society and is largely caused by marital instability, death, divorce, separation and some cultural practices, among others. The majority of single parents are women who face difficult and traumatic situations that require assistance for successful navigation through single parenting.

2.5 Recommendations

- ✓ The federal, state and local governments and relevant stakeholders should adopt the human rights approach in addressing single parenting challenges in which women are the most affected.
- ✓ Relevant governmental agencies at all levels, including traditional, religious and community leaders, NGOs and CBOs should, as a matter of urgency, intervene in promoting family and marriage values and ideals to reduce family and marital instability.
- ✓ The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should embark on regular mass sensitisation campaigns on the causes and dangers of single parenting on the children, the parents, and the society at large.
- ✓ Single parents should establish support groups for sharing experiences, exchange of ideas and for necessary assistance.

Further Reading

Shumaila Khadim Ali and Sarmad Muhammad Soomar (2019) Single Parenting: Understanding Reasons and Consequences. JOJ Nursing and Health Care Juniper Publishers.

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This Policy Brief Draws on A NISER Study on Navigating the Challenges of Single Parenting