

Implications of Single Motherhood on Primary Education in Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRAK

Ibu tunggal dapat memengaruhi pendidikan dasar dengan membatasi dukungan akademis anak-anak dan meningkatkan tantangan emosional, yang berpotensi menyebabkan masalah perilaku dan kinerja akademis yang lebih rendah. Studi ini menyelidiki implikasi dari ibu tunggal pada pendidikan dasar di Negara Bagian Anambra, Nigeria. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian survei deskriptif, studi ini menargetkan guru sekolah dasar di seluruh Negara Bagian Anambra sebagai informan utama karena peran mereka dalam mengamati dan mendukung perkembangan siswa. Dengan menggunakan metode pengambilan sampel acak sederhana, 400 guru dipilih, dan data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur. Validitas kuesioner dikonfirmasi melalui tinjauan ahli, dan uji coba menghasilkan skor reliabilitas 0,71. Data dianalisis menggunakan rata-rata dan deviasi standar untuk mengidentifikasi tren dan pola. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa anak-anak dari rumah tangga ibu tunggal sering mengalami bimbingan orang tua yang berkurang, tantangan emosional, dan masalah perilaku yang memengaruhi perkembangan akademis dan sosial mereka. Namun, ikatan ibu-anak yang kuat dan layanan dukungan masyarakat diidentifikasi sebagai pengaruh positif yang dapat mengurangi beberapa tantangan ini. Studi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya dukungan yang disesuaikan untuk rumah tangga dengan orang tua tunggal, dengan menekankan strategi perawatan diri, sumber daya masyarakat, dan komunikasi terbuka antara orang tua dan anak. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pemangku kepentingan pendidikan dan pembuat kebijakan harus memprioritaskan sumber daya dan program yang memenuhi kebutuhan unik anak-anak dalam keluarga dengan ibu tunggal, sehingga tercipta lingkungan pendidikan yang lebih inklusif.

Keyword: Ibu Tunggal; Pendidikan Dasar; Prestasi Akademik; Tantangan Emosional; Perspektif Guru

ABSTRACT

Single motherhood can impact primary education by limiting children's academic support and increasing emotional challenges, potentially leading to behavioral issues and lower academic performance. This study investigated the implications of single motherhood on primary education in Anambra State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study targeted primary school teachers across Anambra State as key informants due to their role in observing and supporting students' development. Using a simple random sampling method, 400 teachers were selected, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity was confirmed through expert review, and a pilot test yielded a reliability score of 0.71. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to identify trends and patterns. Findings revealed that children from single-mother households often experience reduced parental guidance, emotional challenges, and behavioral issues that impact their academic and social development. However, strong mother-child bonds and community support services were identified as positive influences that can mitigate some of these challenges. The study underscores the importance of tailored support for single-parent households, emphasizing self-care strategies, community resources, and open parent-child communication. The findings suggest that educational stakeholders and policymakers should prioritize resources and programs that address the unique needs of children in single-mother families, fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

Keyword: Single Motherhood; Primary Education; Academic Performance; Emotional Challenges; Teacher Perspectives

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1. INTRODUCTION

Single motherhood refers to the condition of a woman raising one or more children without the presence or support of a partner or spouse. This family structure can result from various circumstances, including divorce, separation, the death of a partner, unintended pregnancy, or a personal choice to parent independently (Owolabi & Garutsa, 2024). Single mothers often assume full responsibility for providing emotional, financial, and social support to their children. This unique parenting role can involve challenges, as single mothers must balance work, child-rearing, and household responsibilities on their own, potentially affecting the socio-emotional and educational outcomes of their children (Gilson et al, 2018). The impact of single motherhood on primary education pupils in Nigeria has drawn significant attention in recent studies, with research often exploring how the structure of single-parent households affects children's academic outcomes, socio-emotional well-being, and overall development.

Single motherhood in Nigeria is typically associated with challenges such as economic instability, social stigma, and limited parental involvement, which, in turn, influence a child's educational experiences and achievements. A major theme in the literature is the economic difficulties often faced by single mothers, which can adversely affect children's access to educational resources. Single mothers in Nigeria frequently encounter financial constraints due to the limited income sources and inadequate support from extended family networks or government programs (Chawla, 2015). This limited financial capacity restricts their ability to provide school materials, pay school fees, or offer supplementary educational experiences that support academic success (Agrawal & Sharma, 2022). Studies indicate that children in such households may struggle to keep up with their peers academically, particularly in environments where resources are essential to effective learning, such as urban or private schools (Hyseni-Duraku, 2023).

For instance, Gobena et al, (2024) found that children from single-mother households often have lower attendance rates and higher dropout tendencies due to these economic challenges. This instability can contribute to lower performance in critical subjects like mathematics and literacy, impacting future educational and career trajectories. Consequently, financial hardship becomes a core determinant of how children in single-mother households experience primary education in Nigeria. The literature also highlights the reduced parental involvement that children of single mothers may experience (Elliott et al, 2015). Nigerian culture often expects mothers to provide both emotional and academic support to children, but single mothers managing employment and household responsibilities simultaneously may struggle to engage fully in their children's schooling (Chasson & Taubman-Ben-Ari, 2021). Studies suggest that inadequate parental involvement in education correlates with lower academic achievement among primary school pupils (Cui et al, 2022). For instance, single mothers may be unable to participate in school activities or assist with homework regularly, leading children to feel unsupported in their studies (Salin et al, 2023).

Furthermore, the emotional strain on single mothers, especially those dealing with divorce or bereavement, can affect their children's emotional health, making it difficult for the child to focus on schoolwork (Sutton & Stack, 2013). Children may experience feelings of loneliness, abandonment, or low self-esteem, which impacts their engagement and motivation in school settings (Jacobs, 2019). In fact, studies have shown that children from single-parent households tend to exhibit behavioral issues such as truancy and aggression, which may further hinder academic progress (Saleha, 2023). In Nigeria, single motherhood can carry a social stigma, affecting both the mother and her children. Research indicates that children from single-mother households may experience discrimination from peers, teachers, or other members of society, potentially affecting their school experience and performance (Sukhawathanakul et al, 2024). For example, some schools, particularly those with strong religious affiliations, may view children of single mothers as being from "broken homes," which may lead to biased treatment or negative labeling (Ntoimo & Odimgwu, 2014). Such stigmatization can adversely affect children's self-concept and their ability to build positive relationships with peers.

Children subjected to social discrimination may internalize negative stereotypes, which can diminish their academic aspirations and self-worth, thus hindering their educational progress (Kim & Kim, 2020). The

literature stresses that teachers' attitudes toward single-parent families in Nigeria require attention, as their perceptions can influence the classroom dynamics and overall inclusivity for these children (Obiakor & Ezenwagu, 2020). Studies indicate that children from single-mother households tend to have lower academic achievements, higher dropout rates, and more behavioral issues than their peers in two-parent households (Hyseni-Duraku et al, 2023). The economic strain frequently faced by single mothers limits their ability to provide educational materials and participate in school activities, further affecting children's educational experiences.

However, there is limited research focusing specifically on the effects of single motherhood on primary school pupils in Anambra State, a region characterized by a unique mix of urban and rural settings and significant cultural expectations regarding family structure. This gap in the literature highlights the need to examine how the socioeconomic conditions, emotional support, and social stigma associated with single motherhood impact primary education in Anambra State. This research is crucial as it seeks to bridge an important knowledge gap and offer actionable recommendations to enhance the educational experiences of primary school pupils affected by single motherhood.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the implications of single motherhood on primary education in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population consisted of primary school teachers across the state, selected as key informants based on their interactions with students. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select a representative sample of 400 teachers from different educational zones, ensuring diverse perspectives. A structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, focusing on teachers' observations regarding the academic performance, social behavior, and classroom engagement of children from single-mother households. Content and face validity checks were conducted with educational experts to ensure relevance, and a pilot test with 20 teachers confirmed the instrument's reliability, achieving a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.71. Data collection occurred over four weeks, facilitated by research assistants who distributed and collected the questionnaires. Analysis involved calculating the mean and standard deviation of responses, providing a clear summary of observed trends related to single motherhood's impact on education. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured from participants, with confidentiality and anonymity maintained throughout the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the causes of single motherhood in Anambra State?

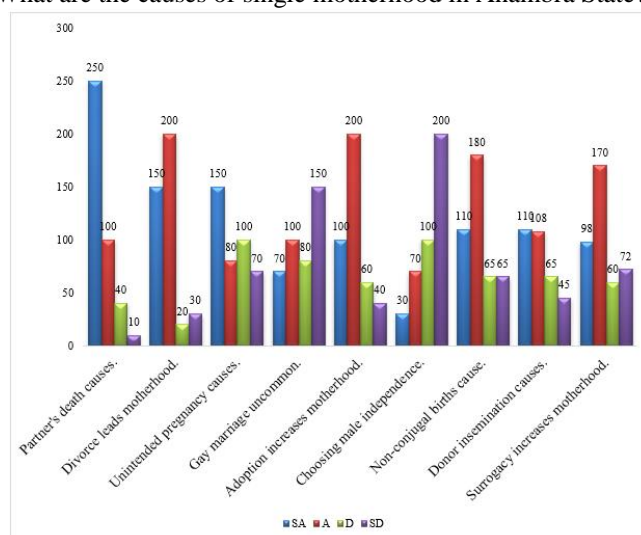


Figure 1. Likert based responses on causes of single motherhood in Anambra State

Figure 1 presents Likert scale responses on the causes of single motherhood in Anambra State. The highest agreement (Strongly Agree) is for partner's death, with 250 respondents, followed by divorce (150) and unintended pregnancy (150). Notably, 200 participants agree that choosing male independence contributes to single motherhood. Adoption and non-conjugal births also receive significant acknowledgment, with 200 and 180 agreeing, respectively. Responses on gay marriage and donor insemination show less consensus, indicating varied perceptions. Surrogacy also garners mixed responses, with 170 agreeing it increases single motherhood.

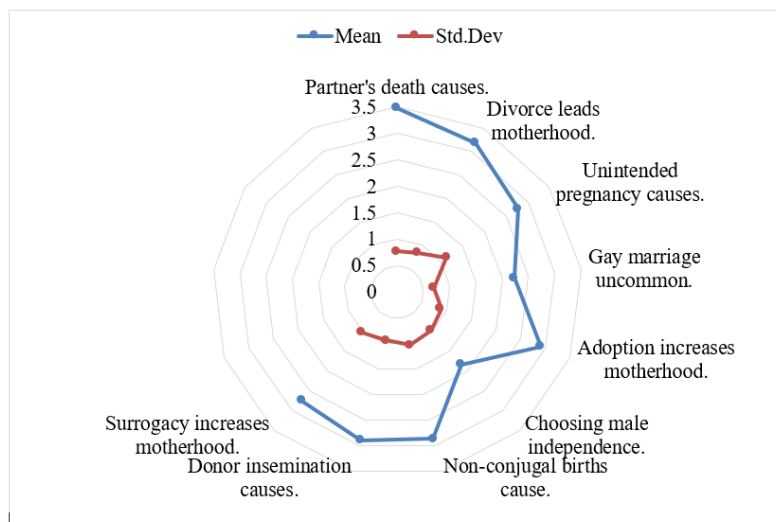


Figure 2. Mean and Standard deviation of responses on causes of single motherhood in Anambra State

Figure 2 displays the mean and standard deviation of responses regarding the causes of single motherhood in Anambra State. The highest mean score is for "partner's death causes" at 3.48 (0.77), indicating significant agreement among 250 respondents. "Divorce leads to motherhood" follows with a mean of 3.18 (0.83) from 200 participants. In contrast, "choosing male independence" has the lowest mean at 1.83 (0.97), suggesting minimal agreement among 200 respondents. Other items like "unintended pregnancy" (2.78, 1.13) and "gay marriage" (2.23, 0.69) show lower levels of consensus. The standard deviations, ranging from 0.69 (gay marriage) to 1.13 (unintended pregnancy), reflect varying degrees of agreement, highlighting the diverse perspectives on these significant issues.

Research Question 2: How does single motherhood influence the education of their children?

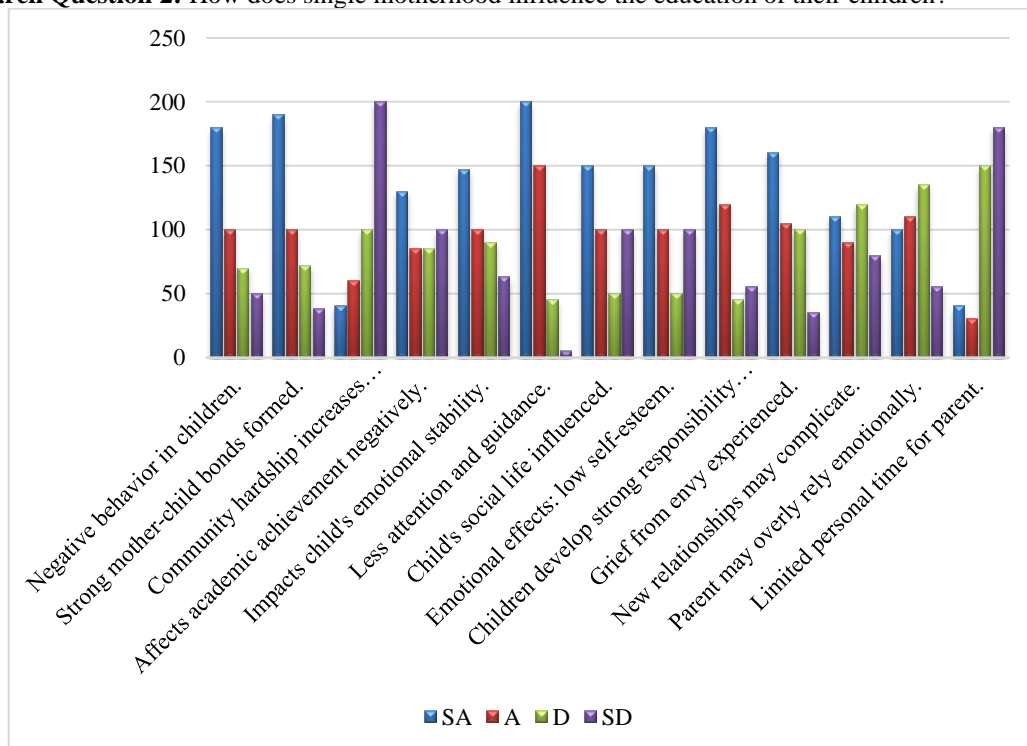


Figure 3. Likert based responses on the influence single motherhood has on their children.

Figure 3 presents Likert scale responses on the influence of single motherhood on children. The highest agreement is seen in "less attention and guidance," with 200 respondents strongly agreeing (SA) and a total of 400 responses. Similarly, "strong mother-child bonds formed" received 190 SA responses. In contrast, "community hardship increases significantly" has the lowest SA count at 40, reflecting less consensus on this issue. Other significant influences include "negative behavior in children" (180 SA) and "emotional effects:

low self-esteem" (150 SA). Variability is evident in responses about new relationships and personal time, indicating diverse perceptions of single motherhood's impact on children's lives.

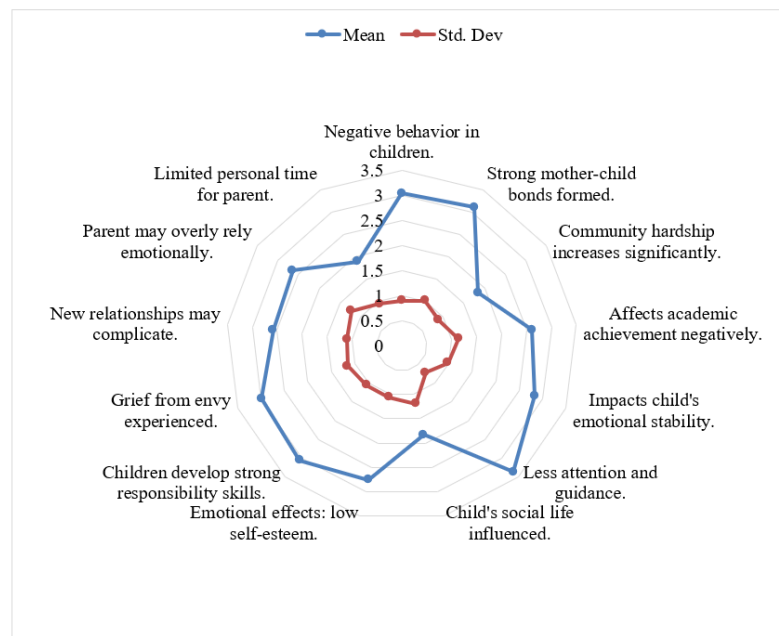


Figure 4. Mean and standard deviation responses on the influence of single motherhood to their children

Figure 4 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of single motherhood on children. The highest mean score is for "less attention and guidance" at 3.36 (0.72), indicating strong agreement. "Strong mother-child bonds formed" follows closely with a mean of 3.11 (1.01). In contrast, "community hardship increases significantly" has the lowest mean at 1.85 (0.89), suggesting minimal perceived influence. Other items, such as "negative behavior in children" (3.03, 0.90) and "children develop strong responsibility skills" (3.06, 1.05), also show notable agreement. The standard deviations range from 0.72 to 1.22, reflecting varied responses among participants regarding the impacts of single motherhood on children's experiences.

Research Question 3: What are the possible strategies to alleviate the effects of single motherhood parenting on primary education?

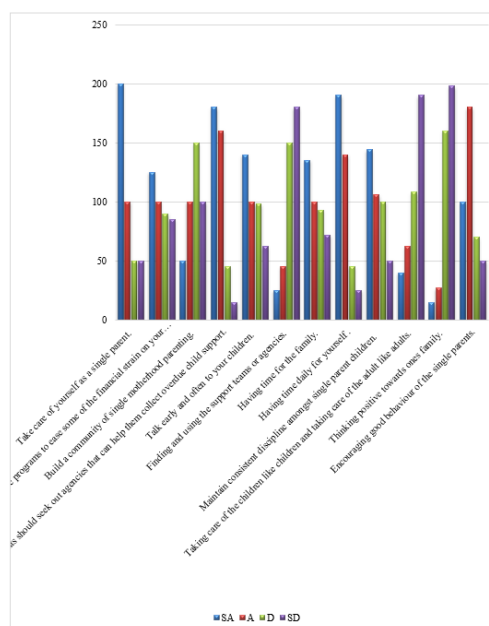


Figure 5. Likert Scale based responses on the strategies for alleviating the effects of single motherhood parenting on primary education

Figure 5 presents Likert scale responses on strategies for alleviating the effects of single motherhood on primary education. The most endorsed strategy is "take care of yourself as a single parent," with 200 respondents strongly agreeing (SA). "Having time daily for yourself" follows closely with 190 SA responses, highlighting the importance of self-care. Conversely, "thinking positive towards one's family" received the lowest SA count of 15, indicating less agreement on this approach. Other notable strategies include "single parents should seek out agencies for child support" (180 SA) and "talk early and often to your children" (140 SA). The responses reveal diverse opinions on effective strategies to support single parents and their children's education.

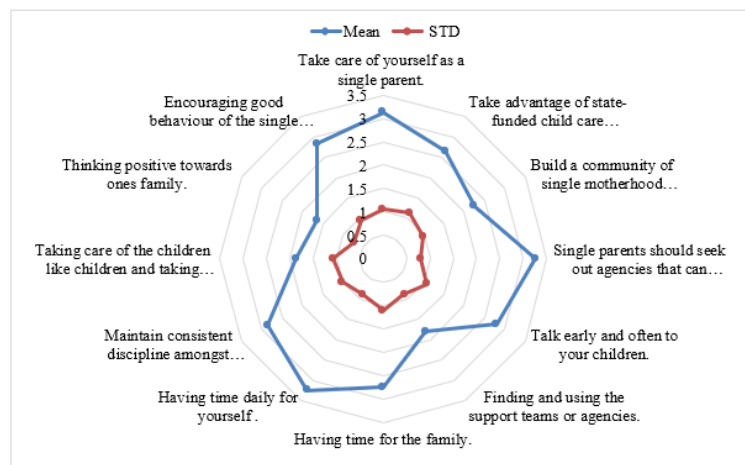


Figure 6. Mean and standard deviation of responses on the strategies for alleviating the effects of single motherhood parenting on primary education

Figure 6 presents the mean and standard deviation of responses regarding strategies for alleviating the effects of single motherhood on primary education. The highest mean score is for "single parents should seek out agencies that can help them collect overdue child support" at 3.26 (0.80), indicating strong support for this strategy. Following closely is "having time daily for yourself" with a mean of 3.24 (0.88). Conversely, "thinking positive towards one's family" has the lowest mean at 1.65 (0.72), reflecting minimal agreement on this approach. Other notable strategies include "take care of yourself as a single parent" (3.13, 1.05) and "encouraging good behavior of single parents" (2.83, 0.95). The standard deviations indicate varied levels of agreement among respondents on these strategies.

DISCUSSION

Single motherhood in Anambra State stems from various factors, as shown by Figure 1. The death of a partner is the most agreed-upon cause, aligning with findings from Ntoimo and Odimegwu (2014), who also observed high rates of single motherhood due to partner loss among similar demographics in Nigeria. In contrast, research by Kim and Kim (2020) found that divorce was a predominant factor in urban areas, where economic instability often strains marriages. Unintended pregnancy also emerged as a significant cause, with Obiakor and Ezenwagu (2020) noting a similar pattern in rural Anambra communities, where limited access to contraception plays a role. In a related study, Chasson and Taubman–Ben-Ari (2021) highlighted the role of personal choice in single motherhood; specifically, 200 respondents cited "male independence" as a factor, albeit with minimal consensus. Responses on gay marriage and donor insemination, with relatively low mean scores, show less agreement, contrasting with the strong views on adoption and non-conjugal births. These findings collectively reflect the complex socio-cultural influences shaping single motherhood in the region.

Single motherhood impacts children's education in various ways, as seen in Figure 3. The highest agreement is on "less attention and guidance," indicating that children may struggle academically without sufficient parental oversight. This finding aligns with Elliott et al, (2015), who observed that children of single mothers often lack consistent academic support, affecting their school performance. In contrast, in a related study, Gobena et al, (2024) found that "strong mother-child bonds," could enhance emotional security, indirectly supporting academic success. However, this study also indicated that emotional burdens from single motherhood, such as "low self-esteem", can detract from children's focus in school, agreeing with findings by Hyseni-Duraku et al, (2023) that highlight emotional challenges as a barrier to educational achievement among children in similar demographics. The responses on "community hardship increases significantly," with the lowest mean, suggest that community dynamics may not universally affect children of single mothers, contrasting with the views of Agrawal and Sharma (2022), who noted significant community-driven support in rural areas. This diverse set of influences underscores that while single motherhood can negatively impact

education through limited guidance and emotional effects, strong mother-child bonds and, in some cases, community support may serve as counterbalancing factors.

Strategies to alleviate the impact of single motherhood on primary education emphasize self-care, resource support, and communication. "Take care of yourself as a single parent" received strong support, agreeing with findings by Cui et al, (2022) that self-care enhances parental resilience, positively influencing children's academic engagement. In a related study, Salin et al, (2023) highlight the importance of daily personal time for single parents, as it enables stress management and focus on children's educational needs. In contrast, "thinking positively towards one's family" had minimal endorsement, diverging from Sutton and Stack (2013), who found that positive outlooks can foster family unity and improve children's school experiences. Another effective strategy, "seek out agencies for child support", aligns with findings by Jacobs (2019), who notes that accessing community resources aids single parents financially and emotionally, benefiting children's education indirectly. Furthermore, "talk early and often to your children" complements these strategies, as regular communication was found by Saleha (2023) to build trust and educational commitment in children. These strategies reflect the multifaceted approach needed to support single-parent households in primary education.

A. Implication for primary education

The findings suggest significant implications of single motherhood on primary education in Anambra State, Nigeria. Children in single-mother households face educational challenges, such as decreased academic support and emotional strain, which can hinder their learning and school performance (Sukhawathanakul et al, 2024). Limited parental guidance, reported as a prevalent issue, often leads to lower academic engagement, as children may lack the structure and support needed to excel academically. Emotional challenges, including low self-esteem and increased behavioral issues, also impact these children, potentially creating further obstacles to their learning experience (Kyomugisha, 2022). Despite these challenges, the findings reveal some positive implications. Strong mother-child bonds in single-mother households can promote resilience, emotional security, and even strengthen children's social skills, indirectly benefiting their educational journey (Chawla, 2015). Additionally, access to community support services and child welfare programs can offer single mothers valuable resources, enhancing their capacity to address their children's academic needs (Gilson et al, 2018). These findings suggest the importance of community and policy support tailored to single-mother households to foster a more supportive educational environment for affected children. Educational stakeholders should focus on providing resources that can bridge gaps in guidance and emotional support, enhancing outcomes for children of single mothers.

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlights complex challenges and varying degrees of impact on children's educational experiences. Key findings show that children from single-mother households may encounter obstacles like reduced parental guidance and emotional difficulties, which can influence their academic performance. However, strong mother-child bonds and community support play significant roles in offsetting some of these effects, stressing the importance of supportive networks and positive family dynamics. Effective strategies—such as self-care for single mothers, access to community and agency resources, and consistent parent-child communication—are essential in building resilience for both single mothers and their children. These approaches strengthen the mother's capacity to support her child's education and address the child's emotional and developmental needs, promoting better educational outcomes. The study suggests a need for policy interventions and community programs that focus on supporting single mothers in their dual role as caregivers and providers. Such initiatives could help create a more inclusive learning environment that considers and responds to the unique challenges faced by children of single mothers in Anambra State.

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