

**CHALLENGES OF SINGLE MOTHERHOOD AND ITS EFFECTS ON THEIR
CHILDREN IN KAHAWA AREA, NAIROBI: IMPLICATIONS FOR
COUNSELLING**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
(COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY)**

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Declaration

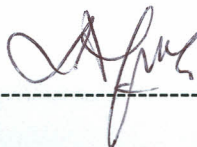
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Date--12/10/2005--

Annread Kamunde

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor



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Dedication

To my exquisite daughters, Fridah Kananu and Linda Muthoni

Acknowledgments

Notwithstanding all the pains I have bequeathed on the execution of this study, I am grateful for the kind assistance I received from my supervisor, Prof. Augustine Nwoye. I do also appreciate the support given to me by Rev. Kirogo; my mother, Faith; my uncle, Kamunde; Mrs. Mbaabu; and, Mr. Bojana. Without their support this work would not have been completed. Finally, I have to appreciate the support given to me by my daughters: Fridah Kananu and Linda Muthoni.

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Abstract

Single mothers, in contemporary times, are exposed to several conflicting, distracting, difficult and stressful situations. In the past, children generally tended to rely on the advice, wisdom and judgment of their elders. In modern times, owing to their exposure to other cultural milieu through mass media, books, travel and to some extent through personal contacts with others, they are often tempted to emulate other modes and patterns of behaviour. Single parenthood is gaining prominence in contemporary society. Such influence sometimes creates distressing problems of adjustments for their children. They appear to be increasingly groping for a meaning in life consonant with their ideas and expectations as they resort to drug abuse, crime, and espousal of the hippie culture among others.

The single mothers who are beset with such problems are not able to function efficiently in any sphere of activity. They have problems with sources of income, childcare, employment status and situation and welfare support. It is thus obvious that the single mothers, as an important section of the community, require counselling assistance.

The main objective of this study, therefore, was to investigate the challenges of single mothers and the effects on their children. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A sample of 353 single mothers residing in Kahawa, Kasarani division, Nairobi, was surveyed. The instruments administered for collecting data from the field included questionnaires and key informant interviews.

Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. Cross tabulation was done to establish the relationship between variables.

Other information from the focused interviews was analysed manually using qualitative methods. The research findings were presented in the form of contingency tables (bivariate frequency and percentage distribution) while other findings in qualitative form were presented as text.

The findings of the study indicate that majority of the respondents were separated from their spouses. The findings also reveal that the single mothers experience a myriad of problems, most of which were financial in nature. The findings further reveal that the respondents were not decisive on what, in their opinion, their neighbours thought of them. The most prevalent positive child outcome attributable to single mothers was established to be their children attending school, completing their education and ultimately securing a job. The negative child outcome talked about by most of the respondents related to their children being affected psychologically. It is, however, imperative to note that majority of the respondents noted that they sought for help from the church. A few of them stated that they had been helped by non-governmental organizations while none stated that they had been helped by community-based organizations. Recommendations made fell on three main areas: prevention, current support and future initiatives.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Those who are single parents have arrived at this destination from many and varied directions. Statistically, one out of two marriages ends in divorce; three out of four families with young children are now being raised by a lone parent; and nearly 50 percent of all children under 18 years of age will spend some time in a single-parent household (Zastrow, 2000).

Several factors contribute to the creation of single-parent homes: divorced parents raising their children alone; parents widowed by the death of the other parent; out-of-marriage birth; single individuals adopting children or serving as foster parents; or widowed grandparents raising their children's children. Divorce, even in religious settings, continues to be high in our society. Reasons for this include the extensive emphasis on romantic love, the changing status of women (who are now increasingly more financially independent), the growth of individualism, the growing acceptance of divorce, and the loss of certain functions in the modern family (Zastrow, 2000).

Growing up in a single-parent family puts children at risk. That does not mean that every child or every single parent will have problems. It may mean, however, that more attention is needed in prevention and support programmes. Although a mother heads single parent families, Weitoft and others (2003), found no difference in risk whether a mother or a father ran a household. Even with the acceptability of fathers obtaining custody of their minor children, more children will continue to reside in a single female-headed household (Pearce, 1987).

Out-of-marriage births are also accounting for the creation of another type of single-parent homes. It is well to note that the dynamics are often quite different for never-married women who bear children than for those who have at least experienced a marriage. A major difference is the attitude toward sexuality, dating, and marriage. Since their sexual activity has never been "sanctioned," never-married single parents may sometimes have more problems dealing with their situation and the responses of those around them. It is often the case that they carry guilt and shame over their pregnancy and subsequent entrance into parenthood. This may exhibit itself in a know-it-all attitude, parental over-protectiveness and/or severe parenting style, or isolation from peers who are married (Zastrow, 2000).

Having never had "permission" to engage in the sex act, they cannot share their joy in feeling fulfilled in this arena nor comfortably seek advice with regard to their ongoing drive for sexual gratification. Other differences for the never-married single parent stem from the challenges of managing alone, for frequently never-married mothers are younger and less mature than their divorced counter parts (Zastrow, 2000). "Normal" dating habits are altered due to childcare responsibilities.

Single women seem to have some sort of stigma; making them the least preferred dating partners. Many African men are unwilling to seriously date single mothers on the assumption that single mothers looking for love are desperate for a husband. The flip side is that women perceive single fathers as burdened men who are only anxious to get someone to help them raise their children. These negative attitudes go beyond dating and affect even single parent families, which are also seen as not functioning as two-parent ones. In some places, single parent families are viewed as abnormal,

incomplete or fragmented. Their homes are called “broken homes” and are in some ways unfairly linked with producing flawed or maladjusted children (Daily Nation, March 19th 2005).

Many newly divorced have a quandary about dating and the children. It seems that some become super mamma and “the children” become “everything” in their lives. They will tell you the reason they haven’t been getting out is on account of “the children.” This “sacrifice” is no benefit to the parent or the children’s welfare, either one. Others have a dire need to be with other adults that their children become low on the priority totem pole.

What is needed is sort of a middle ground. Mother or Dad should have time to take care of their needs and the children should be given extra time and attention to their needs at other times. Children feel that they are going through a divorce, too, and the parents need to give them attention and reassurance than usual. However, that does not mean length of time; it means taking a few minutes each day and really giving them 100% attention – quality of time and attention, not length of time.

Concern about the numbers of teenage births has resulted from an increasing number of research studies, which have indicated negative consequences of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing. One of the major concerns has been the consistent finding of an increased risk of poverty and welfare dependency among unmarried adolescent parents (McCashin 1996: Wilson 1999). McCashin (1993), found that when income data for households of different types were analysed to calculate risks of poverty, unmarried lone parents emerged as the highest risk category. He found that over 90% of unmarried lone parents’ households received 80% or more of their gross income

from social welfare payments (McCashin, 1993). In addition, research in the UK and the US has shown that adolescent childbirth is associated with low educational achievement, lack of employment opportunities, low socio-economic status and low self-esteem, all of which contribute to the likelihood of early pregnancy as well as to the consequences of it (Phoenix 1993; Lawson and Rhode 1993).

With shifting views about whether single mothers with young children should be required to work outside the home, there is pressing need to understand the conditions under which employment by such mothers might result in favourable child outcomes. Single mothers are disproportionately represented among the very poor and the welfare dependent (Duncan, 1991; Wilson, 1987). Since sparse research has examined employment among poor single mothers, the impact of requiring these mothers to work outside their home is not well understood, either for the mothers or for the children (Eden, 1991; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 1986; Jenks, 1992; Wilson, Elliwod, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). At the same time, large literatures address the effects of maternal employment and childcare on mothers and their children. These effects may be moderated by parental, child and family characteristics (Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991; Desai, Chase- Lansdale, & Michael, 1989; Hoffman, 1989; Vandell & Ramanan, 1992).

There is evidence that maternal employment in the child's first year may have negative effects for both boys and girls, poor and non-poor (Baydar & Brooks-Gunn 1991; Desai *et al.*, 1989). However, employment after the first year is usually not found to result in negative effects (unless moderating or mediating factors are taken

into account). Some evidence even suggests that employment during preschool and elementary-school years may have positive effects, at least for girls.

Scholars have proposed two conflicting views concerning the effects of maternal employment on children from low-income families. One is that maternal employment, poverty, and single parent status function as cumulative burdens on families, thereby resulting in poorer development outcomes among low-income children of employed mothers. The other is that the financial and psychological benefits associated with maternal employment are so considerable that children whose mothers are employed demonstrate better social and academic outcomes than low-income children whose mothers are not employed (Vandell & Ramanan, 1992; Desai et al., 1989). Policies mandating employment for welfare recipients with young children are based on the assumption that maternal employment has positive effects in low-income families. This assumption, while plausible (Vandell, 1991), is largely untested (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; McLoyd, 1993; Vandell & Ramanan 1992).

Given the high risks for poverty, depression, and associated strains in single parent families (Belle, 1990; McLoyd, 1990), it is plausible that maternal employment may be more advantageous to low-income children than staying at home with non-employed single mother after the infancy and the toddler years (McLoyd, 1993; Vandell, 1991). Although there is some support for this assumption (Cherry & Eaton, 1997; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986; Woods, 1972), some have argued that such findings should be interpreted with caution, inasmuch as employed mothers may differ a priori from mothers who are not employed (Hoffman, 1984). Also, studies have found congruence between actual and preferred employment status with

positive outcomes for mothers and children (Hock & DeMeis, 1990; Jackson, 1992, 1993; Ross, Mirowsky, & Huber, 1983).

A large body of evidence documents the negative effects of poverty on children's development (Danziger & Danziger, 1995; Huston, 1991; Huston, McLoyd, & Garcia Coll, 1994). But very little is known about how young children are affected by their mothers transitions from welfare to work. Research has documented the importance of high-quality substitute care (Haskins, 1989; Lee, Brooks-Gunn, Sxhnur, & Liaw, 1990; Ramey & Campbell, 1994). There is also evidence that alternative forms of childcare can be a positive force in the lives of young low-income children (Vandell & Ramana, 1992). Although debate continues about the effects of childcare on children in the first three years of life, the paucity of data on the effects of childcare quality on low-income children in the maternal employment situation is frequently noted in the literature (Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991; McCartney & Rosenthal, 1991; Scarr, 1991; Vandell, 1991). It is probable that the adequacy of childcare arrangements is critical not just for children, but for the psychological functioning and employment success of their mothers as well.

In examining the interplay among work, welfare, income and childcare use as antecedents of maternal psychological wellbeing and child developmental outcomes in a sample of economically disadvantaged families headed by single mothers, this study is concerned with how the transition to self-sufficiency, especially self-sufficiency in low-wage market, is managed by poor mothers and children. Taking an individual difference approach, our conceptual model is based, in part, on the work of Conger and his colleagues (1992), Elder (1974), and McLoyd (1990, 1991, 1993) which posits

that children living in poverty are likely to be exposed to environmental risks such as female headship, maternal depression, unemployment, low maternal social supports, and less supportive parenting. These factors have been associated with adverse child outcomes. However, the study will focus only on mothers with young children and on the interplay among work, income sources, and childcare.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is a large literature that seeks to measure the importance of family structure in determining child/youth outcomes. These studies show that children raised in single parent homes tend to perform more poorly in school, and are more likely to become sexually active, commit illegal acts, and use illegal drugs at young ages (Painter and Levine 2000, Comanor and Phillips 1998, Wu 1996, Garasky 1995, Mansky *et al* 1992, Astone and Mc Lanahan 1991, Flewelling and Bauman 1990, and Matsueda and Heimer 1987). Various myth have also been espoused on single mother parenthood that *inter alia* relate children from single parents with indiscipline, unsound social and family values, failure to relate with other people and that their children are spoilt (Daily Nation, March 19th 2005). While these types of studies demonstrate the correlation between family structure and the youth outcomes, the direction of causation is far from clear. For example, unobserved maternal ability may be associated with both poor parenting and family structure. According to Zastrow (2000), it is the presence of a “father figure” rather than the presence of a “biological father” that affects youth participation in deviant behaviour. In a similar vein, one might be concerned that changes in child support payments are also an important determinant of youth outcomes. Indiscipline, immorality, low academic achievement and anti-social behaviour are not a preserve of children from single parent families.

The reality is that there are many other children out there who are disorderly, yet they come from two parent families. This study, therefore, undertakes to assess the effects of single parent motherhood on child outcomes in Kahawa area, Nairobi.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to the current debate about the impact of family structure on youth outcomes. In particular, the study examines the influence of single mother parenthood on youth participation in smoking, drinking, sexual intercourse, drugs, and crime.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research project had a number of objectives. These were to:

1. Document the experiences and current situation of single mothers in Kahawa area, Nairobi;
2. Identify the child outcomes that are associated with single parent motherhood in Kahawa area, Nairobi;
3. Explore the possible role of voluntary organizations and community groups in initiatives to improve the quality of life of single mothers and that of their children.

1.4 Research Questions

The study provided data that enabled the researcher to address the following research questions and policy concerns:

1. What are the experiences single mothers face up to in Kahawa area, Nairobi?
2. Is single parent motherhood highly thought of by the community in Kahawa, Nairobi?

3. What are the child outcomes associated with single parent motherhood in Kahawa area, Nairobi?
4. What are the links between three aspects of single mother's lives (i.e., employment statuses, childcare use, and sources of income) and their reasons for being single?
5. What are the links between education, religion and ethnicity of single parents and their reasons for being single?
6. Do voluntary organizations and community groups play a vital role in improving the quality of life of single mothers and that of their children?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study would be of relevance for family life educators, academic and career counsellors, higher education professionals, family therapists, youth workers, social workers, two-parent families and single parent families. Because of the increasingly large number of single parent homes in Kenya, it is evident that many practitioners would most likely work with single parent families in some capacity. Sharing information that teaches individuals which parental factors are important or have a strong positive influence upon youth outcomes can enable teachers and practitioners to encourage these qualities in parents or to work toward these qualities for themselves.

1.6 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The study was carried out in Kahawa area, Kasarani Division, Nairobi, Kenya, among single mothers. It was limited to the answers given to the questions set and information derived from the key informant interviews. Due to insufficiency of time and money, the study only covered Kahawa area and this, therefore, limited

generalizations across other areas. It also only targeted those present at the time of data collection. Caution was, therefore, taken in generalizing to other parts of the country.

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

1. The single mothers had been exposed to various methods of counselling the youth
2. The results and recommendations arising from this study would be applied to single mothers in other parts of the country.
3. The information given by the respondents in the questionnaires was true and the respondents did not influence each other in answering the questionnaire items.
4. Children living separately from their parent due to various reasons were being taken care of by the parent.

1.8 Operational Definition of Significant Terms.

Youth: refers to childhood, adolescence, formative years, infancy, early life or early stages of life.

Single mother: refers to the marital status of a woman with children and is split into four main categories, that is, never married, widowed, divorced and separated.

Voluntary organizations: refers to charitable organizations, well wishers, religious organizations, non governmental organizations, community based organisations

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is organised in five chapters. The first chapter highlights the background and the statement of the problem under study, purpose, objectives, research questions, significance, limitations, de-limitations, basic assumptions and definitions of significant terms of the study. The second chapter presents a review of literature on the

challenges of single mothers its effects on child outcomes in order to provide the major highlights underlying this study. Literature is discussed under the following sub-heading; single parenthood, role of parenting style, problems of single parents, identifying youth with problems, strategies to single mothers determined to raise good youth despite the myths of doom and gloom and summary of the literature review. The section ends with a conceptual framework. The third chapter focuses on the research methodology that was employed. The chapter describes the research design, the target population, sample and sampling techniques, reliability of research instruments and validity of the instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques. The fourth chapter presents the data analysis, interpretation and findings. The major findings of the study are analysed in this section, which are then corroborated with the information obtained from the focused interview. The fifth chapter presents a summary of the research findings, conclusions and the recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This section presents literature review on the effects of single mother parenthood on youth outcomes. The review is organised under the following sub-headings; deciding to be a single parent, role of parenting style, problems of single parents, identifying youth with problems, strategies to single mothers determined to raise good youth despite the myths of doom and gloom and summary of the literature review. The section ends with a conceptual framework

2.2 Single Parenthood

Everyone's experience of being a single parent is different. However, the growing social acceptance of single parents has made life more bearable. Prior to 1930, every state law in the United States of America provided for dissolution of marriage only when there was malfeasance by the other spouse (Weitzman, 1985). This legal environment began to reverse in the late 1960s when states began allowing the 'irretrievable breakdown of the marriage' to constitute grounds for divorce. Most of these reforms, broadly labelled no-fault divorce, do not require mutual consent; either party to a marriage can dissolve it at any time (Weitzman, 1985).

Many states have also moved towards no-fault based property division and alimony rules. Using a panel of divorce rates from 1968 to 1988, Friedberg (1998) shows that liberalized divorce laws lead to rising divorce rates. Over this period, the divorce rate rose from three per thousand people to five per thousand people (Wolfers, 2000). Gruber (2000), however, argues that in unilateral divorce laws are not valid instruments for the following reasons: unilateral divorce laws can (1) lead to a

decrease in the incidence of separation, (2) increase the incidence of marriage, and (3) change the nature of the bargaining relationship between husbands and wives.

In Kenya, there are a considerable number of women living in single parent households (see appendix IV). While 4,135,547 women are in monogamous households, 869,109 are in polygamous households and, 4,379,249 women live in single parent households. Majority of women are currently married (59 percent), 12 percent are formerly married, and less than one-third are never married (see appendix V). Although the prevalence of marriage in the slums is similar to the national average for Kenya, it is low compared to the prevalence for most countries in Eastern and Southern Africa where 66-75% of the women are currently married (Ezeh, 1998).

Formal education is associated with increased chances of having never been married but reduced chances of experiencing marital disruption in the slums. There is little variation in marital status by religion. However, strong ethnic differences are evident. Over one-third of Kikuyu women are in the never married category (36 percent), a substantially higher percentage of never-married than is evident among other ethnic groups (Ezeh, 1998).

2.3 Role of Parenting Style

Parenting style may have an impact on a child's behaviour. Many experts distinguish among permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles. These parenting styles are associated with different combinations of warmth, support, limit setting, and supervision for children.

The permissive style tends to emphasize warmth and neglect limit setting and supervision; the authoritarian style tends to emphasize the latter and not the former;

while the authoritative style is one in which parents offer warmth and support, limit setting and supervision. When the authoritative parenting style is used, the youth may be more likely to experience academic success. Authoritative parents are warm and responsive but are also able to establish and enforce standards for their children's behaviour, monitor conduct, and encourage communication. Authoritative parents make clear that they expect responsible behaviour from their child or adolescent when their teen seems to be having difficulty.

It is imperative to remember that the youth need their parents not only to set appropriate expectations and boundaries, but also advocate for them. Teachers can ease a parent's concerns by including the parent as part of the student's educational support team.

2.4 Problems of Single Parents

Youth's academic achievement is influenced by behaviours directed to them by their parents (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Darling, 1992; Ryan, Adams, Gullota, Weissberg, & Hampton, 1995; Snodgrass, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbush, & Darling, 1992). Research has shown that, on average, adolescents in single parent families do not do as well academically as adolescents in two parent families (Demo & Acock, 1988; Kurdek & Fine, 1993; Mulkey, Crain, & Harrington, 1992; Zimiles & Lee, 1991). Studying the parental factors that influence adolescents' academic achievement can provide insight to parents about how to enhance their behaviours towards their adolescents so that they make the most of their academic experience. Understanding how behaviours and resources of single parents affect adolescents in these households is important for families, school/home partnership, and serve as a basis for more appropriate family life education (Schaefer, 1991). A study by Fluty

(1997) examined single parent behavioural control, involvement, and interpersonal and educational resources in relation to adolescents' achievement test scores and found that certain parental factors influence adolescents' academic achievements.

2.5 Identifying Youth with Problems

Understanding the factors that may put the youth at risk of academic failure will help parents to determine if their youth is in need of extra support. Above all, parents need to persevere. The teen years do pass and most youth do survive them, in spite of the bumps along the way. Being aware of common problems can help parents to know when it is important to reach out and ask for help before a difficult time develops into a more serious situation.

Most youth experience a time when keeping up with schoolwork is difficult. These periods may last several weeks and may include social problems as well as a slide in academic performance. Zastrow (2000), suggests that problems are more likely to occur during a transitional year, such as moving from primary to secondary school, or secondary to university. Some adolescents are able to get through this time with minimal assistance from their parents or teachers. It may be enough for a parent to be available simply to listen and suggest coping strategies, provide a supportive home environment, and encourage the child's participation in school activities.

When the difficulties last longer than a single grading period, or are linked to a long-term pattern of poor school performance or behaviour problems, parents and teachers may need to intervene. Indicators of youth who are at risk of failure may represent persistent problems from the elementary school years for some children. Other students may overcome early difficulties but begin to experience related problems in

secondary school. For others, some of these indicators may become noticeable only in early adolescence. To intervene effectively, parents can be aware of some common indicators of youth at risk of school failure, including:

1. Attention problems – where the youth have a school history of attention issues or disruptive behaviour.
2. Repetition – where the youth is retained in one grade for one or more years
3. Absenteeism – where the youth is absent five or more days per term
4. Lack of connection with the school – where the youth is not involved in sports, music, or other school-related extracurricular activities.
5. Behaviour problems – where the youth may be frequently disciplined or show a sudden change in school behaviour, such as withdrawing from class discussion.
6. Lack of confidence – where the youth believes that success is linked to native intelligence rather than hard work, and believes that his or her own ability is insufficient, and nothing can be done to change the situation.
7. Limited goals for the future – where the youth seems unaware of career options available or how to attain those goals.

When more than one of these attributes characterizes the youth, he or she will likely need assistance from both parents and teachers to complete his or her educational experience successfully. Sitting back and letting these youth “figure it out” or “take responsibility for their own learning” may lead to a deeper cycle of failure within the school environment.

2.6 Strategies to Single Mothers Determined to Raise Good Youth Despite the Myths of Doom and Gloom

Zastrow (2000), espouses various intervention measures that single mothers can take on to come up with positive child outcomes.

1. Single mothers should start with a positive attitude and focus on the benefits of single parenting, such as less conflict and tension in the home. Many single parents treasure their new-found autonomy and independence and feel hopeful about the future.
2. Single mothers should establish firm, clear boundaries that leave no doubt that they are the bosses in the home and use consistent discipline that provides clear expectations and guidelines for behaviour and rely on natural and logical consequences. Learn to say, "I love you enough to say NO to you".
3. Single mothers frequently feels overwhelmed by the responsibility, tasks, and emotional overload associated with raising children alone. It is extremely important to manage time wisely and to ask for help when necessary. Assign children appropriate chores and tasks.
4. No matter how loving and competent the single mother is, she is one person and she does a job most agree is meant for two people. They should not allow their children to manipulate them by making them feel guilty about the situation. They should remind children that they are a team and have to work together.
5. Nurturing is a high priority, but children also crave stability and security. While this is important for children, it is especially crucial for children who have suffered a loss of stability due to divorce or death of a parent. Children need to

feel secure and protected, and it is the job of the single mother to create a nurturing environment where they can thrive.

6. Part of creating stability and security in the home involves establishing predictable schedules and routines for children. Single mothers should not be rigid and inflexible, because children need to learn that life is not always predictable.
7. It is critical for children's wellbeing for the single mother to take care of herself. They can ask other single parents to trade babysitting or hire a mother's helper. They should pay special attention to diet, exercise, stress management, and getting a good night's sleep. They can learn relaxation, yoga, meditation, visualization or whatever healthy coping skills allows you to relieve stress and tension. Alternatively, they can take a walk, read a book, call a friend or take a nap.
8. Single mothers should develop a wide network of people who can provide them with emotional support, companionship, help in emergencies and, childcare reality checks. They should be selective and choose caring, reliable, trustworthy people who should be there for them in times of need. Single parents with healthy support systems usually feel better mentally and physically and demonstrate to their children that it is ok to ask for help. Support groups for single parents offer excellent opportunity to socialize and share with others in similar circumstances.
9. Single mothers should not confide in their children as though they are peers, regardless of how mature the children appear to be. This is a common mistake made unintentionally by many single mothers who turn to their children for emotional support and don't realize they are hurting the child until after the fact. Children should be allowed to be children, and find other adults for companionship and support.

10. Single mothers should focus on success and not on failure. They should set realistic goals as a family and work together to accomplish these goals. They should decide what is important and prioritise accordingly, have family meetings on regular basis and allow children to have input. They should learn to effectively communicate and solve family problems together while still demonstrating that they are the bosses.

2.6.1 Common Professional Interventions

Barker (1981), challenges pastors and other church leadership to recognize and deal with both the issues that single mothers experience and the role of the church in disciplining and nurturing this population. Some of the uncertainty centres on:

1. **Failure to recognize single-parent issues:** Being aware that the concerns that are often attributed to being in a single-parent home are not generic to single parents. These troubles may include anger, loneliness, uneven parenting, lack of role models, limited resources, and floundering faith experiences. Strategies one might use to address these issues in the two-parent family are often just as appropriate where there is only one parent available.
2. **Home visits and office consultation:** making it a rule never to visit persons of the opposite sex alone-whether single or married. (There is certainly a value in having elders of both genders). Whenever possible, male pastors should be accompanied by a female elder when serving women; when serving men, a male elder, as well, should accompany female pastors. This certainly decreases the possibility of conveying unintended messages. When one views life through his/her trials, perceptions are often distorted.

3. **Perpetuating stigmas, myths and stereotypes:** Single parents are not all the same. Usually, the most that they have in common are their challenges. Do not base your appreciation of them merely on their marital status. Recognize, allow, and even encourage them to make contributions to the church. Utilize their skills and provide a forum for their input. Provide opportunity for their leadership. Make them officers in the church.
4. **Resources:** Making one to be aware of her community. The church may not be able to augment regularly the needs of the single-parent population, so discover what other resources are in your community. What resources are already in place? Are there after-school programmes? Food banks? Recreational opportunities? Public transportation? Employment opportunities? Support groups? Being aware of the challenges and sharing resources while addressing each individual situation/person is a must.
5. **Ignoring the population:** Due to lack of knowledge about family issues, resources and services needed, as well as the dynamics of one-parent households, single-parent families are minimally recognized and rarely validated in any way. Too often single families feel ignored, isolated, and invisible. Rather than continuing to prejudge the person based on the label and relegating the single parent to a non-person status, listen for the strengths and help the person to build on them (Barker, 1981).

2.7 Summary of the Review

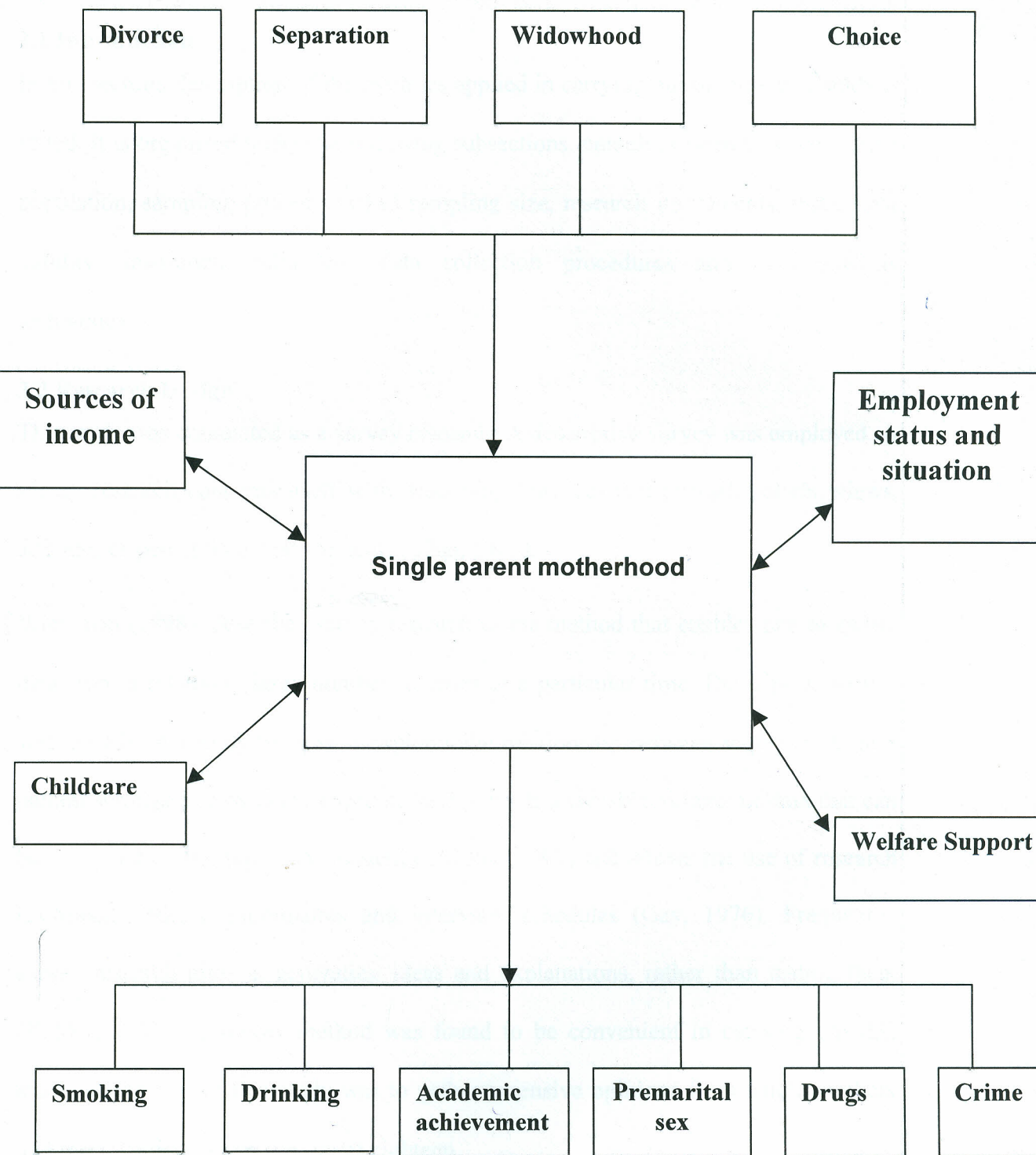
In this study, literature was reviewed on challenges of single mothers and their effects on their children. The concept of single mother parenthood was brought to the fore with a view to showing the broad and wide scope of parenting. Some of the challenges

single mothers face up to have been highlighted. The role of voluntary organisations in helping single mothers to cope with psychological distress, wellbeing, coping and parenting have been discussed. From the literature reviewed, it is apparent that data on single mothers in Kenya are scanty. Other than the religious organisations, very few voluntary organisations have set out to help the single mothers. This study, therefore, strives to assess the challenges facing single mothers and its effects on their children in Kahawa area, Nairobi.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Fig 2.1) illustrates how some elements under study relate with, and influence others. Four aspects of single mother parenthood, that is, employment statuses and situations, welfare, childcare and, sources of income interact with each other and lead to child outcomes that *inter alia* include smoking, drinking, academic achievement, sexual intercourse, drugs and, crime. These outcomes are deemed to be favourable when voluntary organizations and community groups provide the requisite counselling to the single mothers and their children

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section, description of the methods applied in carrying out the research study is stated. It is organized under the following subsections, namely; research design, target population, sampling procedures and sampling size, research instruments, instrument validity, instrument reliability, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Design

This study was conducted as a survey research. A descriptive survey was employed. A survey research concerns itself with describing practices that prevail, beliefs, views, attitudes or perceptions that are held (Julian, 1969).

Wiersman (1998), describes survey research as the method that enables one to gather data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. Descriptive survey was used in this study because it explores the relationship between variables in their natural settings as they occur (Sproul, 1998), yields a sizeable volume of data that can be classified by the type and frequency (Miller, 1991) and allows the use of research instruments like questionnaires and interview schedules (Gay, 1976). Frequently, survey research aims at generating ideas and explanations, rather than testing them (Kidder, 1981). A survey method was found to be convenient in carrying out this study, as the aim of this study was to gather extensive opinions from single mothers and their children under the age of eighteen.

3.3 Study Area

The study was carried out in Kahawa, Kasarani division, Nairobi, Kenya. Kahawa was chosen because the area has equal distribution of middle, lower and upper class residents, which is requisite in this study.

3.3.1 Physical Description

Nairobi city extends between $36^{\circ} 4^{\prime}$ and $37^{\circ} 10''$ and between $1^{\circ} 9''$ and $1^{\circ} 28''$ south. It covers an area of 696.1 km^2 . It shares common borders with Kiambu to the north, Machakos district to the east, and Kajiado district to the south. Administratively, it is both a district and a province. The area is divided into eight divisions, namely; Kasarani, Embakasi, Makadara, Starehe, Westlands, Dagoreti, and Kibera. Kahawa is in Kasarani division.

3.4 Target Population

Borg (1998), defines the target population as all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, events or objects to which the researcher wishes to generalize the results of the research study. The population involved in this study comprised all the single mothers living with their children in Kahawa area, Nairobi. Table 3.1 shows the population distribution by sex, number of households, area and density (Persons per square km).

Table 1: Population by sex, number of households, area and density

Region	Male	Female	Total	Households	Area	Density
Kenya	14,205,589	14,481,018	28,686,607	6,371,370	581,677.0	49
Nairobi	1,153,828	989,426	2,143,254	649,426	696.1	3079
Kasarani	183,320	155,605	338,925	109,149	85.7	3955
Kahawa	16,676	15,239	31,915	9097	14.7	2171

Adapted from: 1999 Population and Housing Census

From Table 3.1, it is evident that the population in the target area consisted of 16,676 male and 31915 female. In addition, there were 9,097 households in Kahawa, which encompass single parent households, and two-parent households.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sample was restricted to single mothers residing with their children in Kahawa area, Nairobi during their entire first eighteen years of life. The study was restricted to single mothers living with their children throughout their life because the number of children raised by single fathers and care-givers was too small to reliably analyse. Since the data available from the 1999 Population and Housing Census did not indicate the number of single parent households in Kahawa, the distribution of women by marital status in Table 3.2 was used to estimate the number of single mother households in Kahawa division, Nairobi.

Table 2: Comparison of current marital status, NCSS 2000 and KDHS 1998

Sample	Current marital status				
	Never married	Currently married	Widowed	Divorced/separated	Number of cases
Nairobi slums (NCSS)	28.6	59.3	3.0	9.1	3256
National (Kenya) (KDHS)	30.1	61.3	3.7	4.9	7881
Rural Kenya (KDHS)	28.5	63.2	4.1	4.2	6415
Other urban areas (KDHS)	32.9	56.8	2.1	8.2	1047
Nairobi (KDHS)	38.7	53.0	2.1	6.2	419
Kasarani (NCSS)	28.0	61.2	2.8	8.0	575

Based upon: KDHS (1998)

Table 3.2 compares the distribution of marital status for women in the Nairobi Cross-Sectional Slum Survey with those of different samples of women in the 1998 KDHS. The proportions of women who were currently not married comprised 38.8% of the number of cases surveyed. This percentage proportion was applied to the total number of households in Kahawa division to determine the number of single mother households in the same region, that is, 3530. According to Gay (1999), a sample of 10% of the accessible population is enough for a descriptive study. Therefore, the sample in this study involved 353 single mothers in Kahawa division, Nairobi Province, Kenya.

The divisional social services officers and social workers from voluntary organizations and community groups were purposively sampled for the focused interview in this study because of their status and the role they play in counselling single mothers in the target area.

3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria

1. Those who had given informed consent
2. Those who had been residents of Kahawa, Kasarani division, Nairobi for the last one year
3. Those who were at least eighteen years of age by the time of data collection.

3.5.2 Exclusion Criteria

1. Those who did not have to give informed consent
2. Those who were less than eighteen years of age by the time of data collection

3.6 Ethical Considerations

1. Informed consent was sought from the respondents
2. Confidentiality was also guaranteed and numbers instead of names were used.
3. Before the research was done, permission was sought from relevant government authorities.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection and Research Instruments

The principal investigator conducted the data collection. Pre-testing of the data collection instruments was done before the actual research was carried out to ascertain the feasibility of the research instruments. This was to determine if the questions were acceptable, askable, answerable, and to enable the principle investigator to discern, alter or modify the questions in order to enable the answering of the research questions. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The instruments administered for collecting data from the field included questionnaires and focused interviews.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

The principal researcher administered questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants to all the sampled single mothers residing in Kahawa area, Nairobi.

The respondents were selected randomly and purposively from those who were willing to participate in the study. The questionnaires had two parts. Part I sought demographic data while Part II sought information related to the actual study.

3.7.2 Focused Interview

The researcher also carried out focused group discussions with social workers and twelve women with a view to gathering a wide range of information on the effects of single mother parenthood on child outcomes in Kahawa area. The social workers were drawn from voluntary groups and community groups in Kahawa area while the twelve women comprised two women from a polygamous household; two from a monogamous household; two, who never married; two, who were widowed; two, who were divorced; and, two, who had separated from their husbands.

3.8 Data Management and Analysis

Information from various sources was written down, quantified and coded then categorized and generalized for analysis. Data entry was done continuously during the course of the study. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data to meet the objectives of the study. The frequency of occurrence and prevalence amongst the respondents were determined. Simple statistical analysis of the quantitative aspects was done to generate appropriate inferences. The number of percentages of those favouring the responses in comparison to secondary data determined the significance of any response. Cross tabulation was done to establish the relationship between variables and the chi-square was used to test for the relationship between the variables. The statistical analysis method was used to determine the trends and the extent of the outcome. In addition, the researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme to analyse data collected.

Information from the key focused interviews was put into categories, meanings extracted and coded to establish patterns of responses. The research findings were presented in the form of tables and other findings in qualitative form were presented as text.

Problem	Frequency	Persons
1. Lack of interest in the subject	17	17
2. Lack of motivation	13	13
3. Lack of understanding of the subject	12	12
4. Lack of resources	10	10
5. Lack of time	9	9
6. Lack of support from family and friends	8	8
7. Lack of confidence	7	7
8. Lack of information	6	6
9. Lack of skills	5	5
10. Lack of financial resources	4	4
11. Lack of social support	3	3
12. Lack of self-discipline	2	2
13. Lack of role models	1	1
14. Lack of encouragement	1	1
15. Lack of feedback	1	1
16. Lack of recognition	1	1
17. Lack of praise	1	1
18. Lack of appreciation	1	1
19. Lack of respect	1	1
20. Lack of honor	1	1
21. Lack of glory	1	1
22. Lack of fame	1	1
23. Lack of power	1	1
24. Lack of influence	1	1
25. Lack of authority	1	1
26. Lack of respectability	1	1
27. Lack of reputation	1	1
28. Lack of status	1	1
29. Lack of prestige	1	1
30. Lack of honorability	1	1
31. Lack of respectability	1	1
32. Lack of honorability	1	1
33. Lack of respectability	1	1
34. Lack of honorability	1	1
35. Lack of respectability	1	1
36. Lack of honorability	1	1
37. Lack of respectability	1	1
38. Lack of honorability	1	1
39. Lack of respectability	1	1
40. Lack of honorability	1	1
41. Lack of respectability	1	1
42. Lack of honorability	1	1
43. Lack of respectability	1	1
44. Lack of honorability	1	1
45. Lack of respectability	1	1
46. Lack of honorability	1	1
47. Lack of respectability	1	1
48. Lack of honorability	1	1
49. Lack of respectability	1	1
50. Lack of honorability	1	1

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.0 Introduction

Presented in this section are the findings of the data analysis of the study together with their interpretations. All of the data presented in this chapter were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. The presentation will be organised around the key research questions investigated in the study, starting with Research Question 1.

4.1 Experiences single mothers face up to

To find out the experiences single mothers face up to, the respondents were also asked to outline the problems they experienced as single mothers. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 3: Problems experienced

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Lack of money for school fees	156	73.2
Lack of money for food	137	64.3
Lack of money for clothing, households and medicare	123	57.7
Lack of money to pay rent	118	55.4
Stress/emotional problems	55	25.8
Loneliness/lack of company from partner	39	18.3
Few friends/ couples do not visit/ viewed as wife snatcher/ men fear visiting/ lack of respect from agemates	25	11.7
Counselling the children	21	9.9
Lack of land for inheritance/ children asking questions about the whereabouts of the father	20	9.4
Getting somebody to take care of the children	13	6.1
School visits/ visiting the children who stay with their father	7	3.3
Not having time for the children	4	1.9

N = 213

Presented in Table 1 are some of the problems that bedevil single mothers in Kahawa area, Nairobi. The results connote that most of the respondents experienced financial

problems like lack of enough money for paying school fees for their children (73.2 %), lack of enough money to buy food (64.3 %), lack of enough money for the children's clothing, households and medicare (57.7 %), and lack of money, sufficient to pay rent (55.4 %).

4.2 Opinion of neighbours on single parent motherhood

The single mothers were asked to state, in their opinion, if their neighbours speak well of them as single mothers. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 4: Opinion of neighbours on single parent motherhood

Opinion	Frequency	Percent
Do not speak well	89	41.8
Speak well	81	38.0
Non response	43	20.2
Total	213	100.0

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 89 (41.8 %) of the single mothers were of the opinion that their neighbours did not speak well of them, sentiments that were also echoed by the single mothers who were interviewed. When asked to state the reasons why they were highly regarded by their neighbours, 34 (16.0 %) stated that they were envied due to their determination and hard work that had seen them raise their children to prosperity, while 19 (8.9 %) stated that they were well spoken off due to their devotion to Christianity.

It is also evident from Table 2 that 81 (38.0 %) of the single mothers stated that they were of the opinion that they were not well spoken of by their neighbours. The reasons put forth by 33 (15.5 %) of the single mothers is that they were despised as poor, lonely and always seeking for favours, while 32 (15.0 %) stated that they were

disparaged by their neighbours. Others, 21 (9.9 %) of the single mothers, said that they were viewed as ‘threats’ to other people’s husbands.

4.3 Child outcomes associated with single parent motherhood

Single mothers were asked to outline child outcomes associated with their single parent motherhood. Presented in Table 3 are the achievements of children that the single mothers attributed to their contribution.

Table 5: Achievements of children attributable to single parent motherhood

Achievement	Frequency	Percent
Completing school, schooling, working	79	37.1
Good performance in school	56	26.3
Respect, obedience	55	25.8
Discipline	50	23.5
Good health	47	22.1

N = 213

The results in Table 3 indicate that majority of the single parents (37.1 %) singled out their ability to take their children to school, complete schooling and ultimately getting employment as their greatest contribution to their children’s welfare. Good performance of children in school (26.3 %), respect and obedience (25.8 %), discipline (23.5 %) and good health (22.1 %) were also credited to the contribution of the single mothers. The rest stated that their children were still too young, and as such, could not point out any achievements. Responses from the focused interview pointed to achievements, similar to those pointed out by the single mothers who responded to the questionnaire items.

Respondents were also asked to outline the shortcomings of their children they attributed to their single parent motherhood. Presented in Table 4 are the findings.

Table 6: Shortcomings of Children Attributable to Single Parent Motherhood

Shortcomings	Frequency	Percent
Children affected psychologically	65	30.5
Children lacking respect, obedience	21	9.9
Children tacking drugs and other substances of abuse	19	8.9
Children not having proper medical attention	16	7.5
Children engaging in pre-marital sex/ teenage pregnancy	8	3.8
Children engaging in criminal activities	2	0.9

N = 213

It is evident from Table 4 that majority of the respondents, 65 (30.5 %), stated that their children were affected psychologically; an issue they attributed to their single parent motherhood. One single parent stated that one of her children was traumatized by the problems they were going through after the departure of their father and ended up getting mentally ill. Responses from other single parents indicate that some of the children felt different from other children who had both parents, some were lonely, evasive and over-quiet, some called every man they met 'daddy,' some asked so many questions on the whereabouts of their father, some became hyperactive, and others became physically distressed when duties supposed to be taken care-of by their father were not fulfilled.

The findings in Table 4 also show that lack of respect (9.9 %), engagement in drug and substance abuse (8.9 %), lack of proper medical attention (7.5 %), teenage pregnancies (3.8 %), and, engagement in criminal activities (0.9 %), were

acknowledged by the single parents as shortcomings resulting from their single parent motherhood. One respondent who was interviewed stated that after separating from her husband, she distributed her relatives to obviate her from financial problems she was facing. Moving from one home to another, she added, made her children to acquire queer habits.

4.4 The links between three aspects of single mothers' lives (i.e., employment statuses, childcare use, and sources of income) and the reasons for their being single

The study sought to find out if there was a significant relationship between employment status of the respondents and their reasons for being single. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 7: Relationship between employment status of the respondents and their reasons for being single

Employment	Reasons for being single				Total
	Divorce	Separation	Widowed	Not married	
Employed	6	47	32	38	123
Not employed	6	25	23	16	70
Total	12	72	55	54	193

$\chi^2 = 0.868; df = 1; p = 0.351$

The findings put into Table 5 reveal that there was no significant relationship (p = 0.351) between the employment status of the single mothers and their reasons for being single. It is however worth noting that most of the single women (123) were employed.

The study also sought to find out if there was a significant relationship between childcare use and the reasons for the respondents being single. The findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 8: Relationship between childcare and reasons for being single

Childcare	Reasons for being single				Total
	Divorce	Separation	Widowed	Not married	
Self	12	62	39	42	155
Relatives	-	3	11	4	18
House-boy/ house-girl	-	7	2	3	12
Parents	-	-	1	-	1
Total	12	72	53	49	186

$$\chi^2 = 0.351; df = 1; p = 0.554$$

It is evident from Table 6 that there existed no significant relationship ($p = 0.554$) between childcare and the reasons for the respondents to be single. It is, however, obvious that majority of the single mothers took care of their children alone.

The study also sought to find out if there was a significant relationship between the single parents' sources of income and the reasons for their being single. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 9: Relationship between the single parents sources of income and the reasons for their being single

Sources of income	Reasons for being single				Total
	Divorce	Separation	Widowed	Not married	
Voluntary organisations	-	6	4	4	14
Income from employment	2	36	21	30	89
Income from self-employment	10	25	23	19	77
Father to my children	-	1	4	-	5
My parents	-	2	-	2	4
Total	12	70	52	55	189

$\chi^2 = 0.499$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.480$

The analysis in Table 7 show that single parents' source of income did not play a major role ($p = 0.480$) in bringing about single parent motherhood. Most of the single mothers earned their own income, as 89 were employed and 77 were self-employed. Only 23 single mothers stated that they got financial assistance from well wishers, the father to their children and from their parents.

4.5 The links between education, religion and ethnicity of single parents and their reasons for being single

The study sought to find out if there was a significant relationship between education of the respondents and their reasons for being single. The findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 10: Relationship between education of the respondents and their reasons for being single

Education	Reasons for being single				Total
	Divorce	Separation	Widowed	Not married	
Attended school	12	71	55	49	187
Not attended school	-	1	-	3	4
Total	12	72	55	52	191

$$\chi^2 = 2.558; df = 1; p = 0.110$$

The findings in Table 8 indicate that there existed no significant relationship ($p = 0.110$) between the single mothers who had attended school and their reasons for being single. Having attended school was found not to influence the respondents to be single. Conversely, majority of the single mothers (187) stated that they had attended school, while only 4 stated that they had not attended school.

The study also sought to find out if there was a significant relationship between religion of the respondents and their reasons for being single. The findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 11: Relationship between the religion of the single parents and the reasons for their being single

Religion	Reasons for being single				Total
	Divorce	Separation	Widowed	Not married	
Christian	12	64	56	51	183
No religion	-	2	-	4	6
Muslim	-	6	-	-	6
Total	12	72	56	55	195

$$\chi^2 = 18.896; df = 6; p = 0.004$$

Examination of the data in Table 9 reveals that there was a significant relationship ($p = 0.004$) between the religion of the single mothers and their reason for being single. Nevertheless, the results could have been attributed to the fact that Kahawa area has a negligible population of Muslims and Atheists. Buddhists and those who practise traditional African rites were not recorded.

The study also sought to find out if there was a significant relationship between ethnicity of the respondents and their reasons for being single. The findings are presented in Table 10.

Table 12: Relationship between the ethnicity of the single parents and the reasons for their being single

Ethnicity	Reasons for being single				Total
	Divorce	Separation	Widowed	Not married	
Luo	4	11	3	6	24
Luhya	2	8	10	3	23
Kikuyu	2	34	33	31	100
Kamba	4	-	3	5	12
Kisii	-	4	-	-	4
Kalenjin	-	4	-	-	4
Mijikenda	-	-	-	2	2
Embu	-	2	3	1	6
Meru	-	6	4	5	15
Refugee	-	3	-	2	5
Total	12	72	56	55	195

$$\chi^2 = 0.760; df = 1; p = 0.383$$

The results in Table 10 reveal that no significant relationship ($p = 0.383$) was found between the ethnicity of the respondents and their reasons for being single. The findings also show that most of the single mothers studied (100) were from the Kikuyu ethnic group.

4.6 Role played by voluntary and community groups in improving the quality of life of single mothers and that of their children

The single mothers were asked to indicate if non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and religious organizations helped them improve their quality of life. Presented in Table 11 are the findings.

Table 13: Role played by non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and religious organizations to improve the quality of life of single mothers.

Role	Frequency	Percent
Coping with psychological distress	44	20.7
Ensuring wellbeing	26	12.2
Managing family matters	14	6.6
Coping with parenting problems	12	5.6

N = 213

The results in Table 11 indicate that 44 (20.7 %) of the single mothers were helped by the non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and religious organizations to deal with the suffering, sorrow, agony, misery and grief arising from single parent motherhood. At the same time, 48 (22.5 %) of the respondents stated that religious organizations helped them cope with psychological distress, a point also noted by the respondents interviewed. Four (1.9 %) respondents stated that women organizations/associations helped them to cope with psychological distress.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

Presented in this section are the discussion, implications and recommendations of the study. The discussions of the findings of the study are conducted around each of the research questions investigated, starting with research question 1. The section ends with suggestions for further research.

5.1 Discussion

The study analysed three issues, namely; to document the experiences and current situation of single mothers in Kahawa area, Nairobi; identify the child outcomes that are associated with single parent motherhood in Kahawa area, Nairobi; and explore the possible role of voluntary organizations and community groups in initiatives to improve the quality of life of single mothers and that of their children. Literature was reviewed on deciding to be a single parent, role of parenting style, problems of single parents, identifying youth with problems and strategies to single mothers determined to raise good youth despite the myths of doom and gloom.

The study used information gathered from single mothers who reside with their children in Kahawa area, Nairobi. Information was also gathered from social service officers from Kasarani Division and social workers from voluntary organizations and community groups. Data were collected through administration of questionnaires and focused interviews. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The significance of responses was determined by the percentage of those favouring the response in comparison with secondary data.

The findings of the study indicate that majority of the respondents separated from their spouses due to infidelity, long absence of the spouse, drunkenness and lack of financial support from the spouse. These findings are concomitant with those of Weitzman (1985) and Friedberg (1998), who delineated cases of no-fault divorce where either party to a marriage could dissolve it at any time.

The findings also reveal that the single mothers experienced a myriad of problems. Most of the problems stated are financial in nature, and included lack of money for school fees, food, medicare, clothing and households, findings that are related to those of Fluty (1997). In spite of this, the single mothers receive an enormous amount of support from their families. Poverty is an issue for these mothers. They are attempting to manage on low levels of income and the majority of them found it difficult to cope particularly when extra demands were made on them at particular times. None of the single mothers who had either separated or divorced rely on maintenance from fathers of their children.

The single mothers interviewed also outlined several challenges that bedevil them as single mothers. Most of them stated that they were not respected in the community. Their efforts were hardly recognised. The community, one of them stated, knows that the child of a single parent cannot be a good child, a fact which concurs with the findings of Demo & Acock (1988); Kurdek & Fine, (1993); Mulkey, Crain, & Harrington, (1992); and, Zimiles & Lee, (1991), who aver that the adolescents in single parent families do not do as well academically as adolescents in two parent families. Even when their children are getting married, another single mother added, the in-laws say that their son cannot be married to '*mtoto wa mama*', that is, a girl

from a single mother. Another single mother interviewed gave an account of a case whereby she was bundled out of the leadership of the mothers union in church when her husband passed on. One of her adversaries, she quoted, said that, '*unatuambia nini na hauna bwana*' (what can you tell us and you do not have a husband). The respondents also took issue with 'couples meetings' in church, which left them out, while at the same time, there were no meetings for single parents.

Other problems outlined by the single mothers who participated in the focused interview include among other things, being traumatised after the death of their husbands, friends shying away from them after the death of their husbands, loneliness, management of finances, lack of finances, ridicule from peers, being taken advantage of by some men, difficulty in getting into another marriage, inheritance of property, and, psychological distress.

The findings further reveal that the respondents are not decisive on what, in their opinion, their neighbours think of them. Whilst 41.8 % of the respondents stated that single parent motherhood was well spoken of, 38.0 % of the respondents stated that single parent motherhood was not well spoken of by their neighbours. The most prevalent positive child outcome attributable to single mothers was established to be their children attending school, completing their education and ultimately securing a job. The negative child outcome talked about by most of the respondents related to their children being affected psychologically.

The findings are concomitant with those of Painter and Levine (2000), Comanor and Phillips (1998), Wu (1996), Garasky (1995), Mansky et al (1992), Astone and Mc Lanahan (1991), Flewelling and Bauman (1990), and Matsueda and Heimer (1987),

whose studies show that children raised in single parent homes are more likely to become sexually active, commit illegal acts, and use illegal drugs at young ages. The findings of these researchers, in addition, show that children raised in single parent homes tend to perform more poorly in school, which does not concord with the findings of this study. The findings of this study show that the respondents were in no doubt that the best that had come out of their children was success in school based on hard work and performance.

In addition, 20.7 % of the respondents stated that voluntary organizations helped them to cope with psychological distress arising from their single parent motherhood, 12.2 % of the respondents stated that voluntary organizations ensure their wellbeing as single parents and those of their children, 6.6 % of the respondents stated that voluntary organizations help them to manage family matters as single parents and 5.6 % of the respondents stated that voluntary organizations helped them to cope with parenting problems arising from their single parent motherhood. It is, however, imperative to note that majority of the respondents noted that they sought for help from the church. A few of them stated that they had been helped by non-governmental organizations while none stated that they had been helped by community-based organizations.

The findings further indicate that there existed no significant relationship ($p = 0.110$) between the single mothers who had attended school and their reasons for being single. Having attended school was found not to influence the respondents to be single. Conversely, majority of the single mothers (187) stated that they had attended school, while only 4 stated that they had not attended school. The findings of this

study concur with those of Ezeh (1998), who associated formal education with increased chances of not getting married.

Majority of the respondents stated that the voluntary did not help them cope with psychological distress. The respondents, who were interviewed, however, alluded to the existence of associations for single ladies, for instance, The Single Ladies International Ministries. Others stated that they were not helped by the charitable organizations with, 13 (6.1 %) of the respondents stating that their parents and other relatives help them cope with psychological distress, and 7 (3.3 %) of the respondents stating that friends helped them to cope with psychological distress.

Results from Table 4.21 also connote that 26 (12.2 %) of the single mothers stated that they were helped by the charitable organizations to ensure their happiness, comfort, health, interests or safety and that of their children. While 19 (8.9 %) stated that church members ensured their wellbeing, 5 (2.3 %) stated that welfare groups/associations guaranteed their wellbeing and 2 (0.9 %) stated that non-governmental organizations ensured their wellbeing. Others, who were not helped by the charitable organizations, pointed at parents and relatives (9.9 %) and friends (3.3 %) as the people who ensured their wellbeing.

As illustrated in Table 4.21, 14 (6.6 %) of the single parents stated that the charitable organizations assisted them to handle, supervise or run family matters. Twelve (5.6 %) single mothers stated that the church helps them manage family matters. Others were of the view that the charitable organizations do not help, and singled out their parents/relatives (24.4 %) and friends (3.8 %) as the people who help them manage family matters.

Table 4.21 also reveals that 12 (5.6 %) of the single mothers stated that the charitable organizations assisted them to cope with parenting problems arising from their single-parent motherhood. The church was the only charitable organization cited with 8 (3.8 %) single mothers, while 7 (3.3 %) stated that friends helped them sort out parenting problems and 40 (18.8 %) stated that parents and relatives played a vital role in helping them cope with parenting problems. These findings are similar to those of Barker (1981), who enumerated the role of the church in recognising and dealing with issues that single mothers experience.

5.2 Conclusions

This study sheds some light on the challenges of single motherhood and its effects on their children. The results imply that, to a large extent, majority of the respondents separated from their spouses due to reasons that could otherwise be precluded through counselling. The findings also imply that most of the problems that bedevil the single motherhood are financial in nature. It is clear from the findings that single mothers are concerned and caring about their children and do the very best they can using their limited resources. The findings further suggest that single mother parenthood is an acceptable phenomenon in the contemporary world. The single mothers do not feel stigmatised, nor do they feel that their children suffer from being part of a one-parent family.

In as much as there is low level of educational attainment among the single women included in the study together with early school leaving, majority of them harbour positive attitudes to school and single out educational attainment as the most significant positive child outcome resulting from their single parent motherhood. Nonetheless, majority of the single women who participated in the study stated that

their children were affected psychologically, implying that there was lack of counselling and support. In general, the single mothers have made little use of the statutory and voluntary services in Kahawa area, Nairobi, again highlighting the important role of families in supporting these mothers.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study give rise to a number of recommendations, which fall into three main areas: prevention, current support and future initiatives.

Prevention

1. It is recommended that every effort should be made to encourage the single mothers to ensure that their children remain in education and use that education to obtain good employment. The children should also be prepared for the eventual loss of the single mother.
2. It is recommended that community counselling/social work service should be established to meet the needs of mothers in general, not just those who are single.
3. It is recommended that voluntary agencies should provide centres in Kahawa area in Nairobi to make available locally based women's services.
4. It is evident from the results of the study that there are no community based organizations that deal issues concerning single mothers in Kahawa area. It is, therefore, imperative that such organizations be set-up and the personnel be trained on loss and grief counselling with a view to addressing the challenges facing single motherhood.

Support

1. The single mothers expressed that there was limited support for them in the community, as a particular group. It is recommended that support groups for single mothers should be established to provide opportunities for socializing and also the opportunity for parenting courses.
2. The few agencies in Kenya, which offer support to single mothers, are based at the city centre. It is recommended that voluntary and statutory agencies should open local facilities in order to maximize the opportunities for the single mothers to utilize the services offered.
3. Some of the single mothers were at high risk of long-term poverty. While employment offers a means of supplementing income, not all the mothers would choose to be employed, preferring to remain at home to care for their children. It is, therefore, important that they should have sufficient income from other sources. It is recommended that welfare associations/groups for single women be established to empower them to be self-employed. Micro-finance should be established and the single mothers trained in business skills.

Future initiatives

1. It is recommended that more accurate information should be collected about single mothers to guide proper planning and decision-making.
2. The single mothers should attend individual therapy sessions to take them through loss and grief counselling with a view to helping them cope with their losses and formation of new identity.

3. The single mothers should also be taken for psychological debriefing as a group with the aim of making them ventilate out their pent-up emotions, help them have cognitive reorganization of their experiences, make meaning of the events they are experiencing, and, access their resources and the resources of the group through sharing.
4. The single mothers who separate from their spouses should be taken through crisis counselling and diffusion to help them have cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional reorganization of their experience.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Since the research was carried out in an urban setting, the researcher suggests that a similar study be carried out in a rural setting to compare the findings of the study with those of this study. The study can also be replicated with adjustments in the scope and the variables to determine any similarities with the findings of this study given that not so much has been done in this field.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Note on Response Rate

The questionnaires were administered to a sample of 353 respondents out of which 213 responses were usable. A focused interview schedule was administered to 14 respondents to corroborate the information obtained from the questionnaires.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Presented in this section is information relating to the respondents such as their year of birth, their highest level of education completed, employment status, their sources of income, religion and ethnicity.

Year of Birth

The respondents were asked to indicate the year they were born. The findings are categorized in Table 4.1.

Table 14: Respondents year of birth

Year of Birth	Frequency	Percentage
1971 - 1980	82	38.5
1961 - 1970	50	23.5
1951 - 1960	35	16.4
1981 - 1990	24	11.3
1941 - 1950	10	4.7
1931 - 1940	2	0.9
Non response	10	4.7
Total	213	100.0

From the analysis in Table 4.1, it is evident that 38.5 % (82) of the respondents were born between 1971 and 1980, 23.5 % (50) were born between 1961 and 1970, while 0.9 % (2) of the respondents were born between 1931 and 1940. The findings, therefore, indicate that majority of the respondents were in the category whose age ranged between 25 years and 34 years.

Education

Respondents were asked to state if they had ever attended school. Presented in Table 4.2 are the findings.

Table 15: Number of single mothers who have gone to school

Category	Frequency	Percent
Attended school	203	95.3
Not attended school	6	2.8
Non response	4	1.9
Total	213	100.0

The respondents who stated that they had attended school were as well asked to state the highest level of education they had completed. The findings are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 16: Respondents' highest academic level

Highest level of education they completed	Frequency	Percent
Secondary	81	38.0
Primary	76	35.7
College/ campus	41	19.2
Adult education	12	5.6
Non response	3	1.4
Total	213	100.0

The results in Table 4.3 show the highest academic level of the respondents, where 38.0 % (81) of the respondents stated secondary, 35.7 % (76) stated primary, 19.2 % (41) stated that they had gone up to college and 5.6 % (12) stated that they had gone through the adult education programme.

Employment Statuses and Situations

The respondents were asked to state whether they were employed or not. The findings are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 17: Employment status of the respondents

Employment	Frequency	Percent
Employed	130	61.0
Not employed	81	38.0
Non response	2	0.9
Total	213	100.0

The findings in Table 4.4 reveal that majority of the respondents (61.0 %) earned money for themselves. However, 81 (38.0 %) stated that they did not earn money for themselves. The results imply that majority of the respondents strive to earn money for themselves to take care of their families.

The respondents were also asked to outline their sources of income. The findings are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 18: Sources of income

Source of Income	Frequency	Percent
Employment	94	44.1
Self-employment	82	38.5
Voluntary organisations	16	7.5
Father to the children	9	4.2
Parents	6	2.8
Non response	6	2.8
Total	213	100.0

The results in Table 4.5 indicate that the main sources of income for the single mothers were from employment (44.1 %) and self-employment (38.5 %). It is also evident that 16 (7.5 %) of the single mothers stated that they get some income from charitable organisations and well-wishers, and 9 (4.2 %) stated that they get some income from their parents. The findings point to the fact that majority of the respondents (82.6 %) engage in some form of employment as a source of income instead of being dependant on charitable organizations, the fathers to their children and their parents.

Childcare Support

The single mothers were asked to state those who help them take care of their children. The findings are illustrated in Table 4.6.

Table 19: Childcare support

Who takes care of your children	Frequency	Percent
Self	171	80.3
Relatives	18	8.5
House-boy/ house-girl	12	5.6
Parents	3	1.4
Non response	9	4.2
Total	213	100.0

The findings in Table 4.6 show that majority of the single mothers (80.3 %) took care of their children themselves. The rest of the single mothers got support from their relatives (8.5 %), house-helps (5.6 %), and parents (1.4 %).

Residence

The single mothers were asked to state for how long they had lived in the target area.

The findings are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 20: Duration of residence in Kahawa

Length of stay	Frequency	Percent
More than 6 years	79	37.1
4 - 6 years	50	23.5
1 - 3 years	44	20.7
Less than one year	35	16.4
No response	5	2.3
Total	213	100.0

The findings in Table 4.7 indicate that 79 (37.1 %) of the single mothers had resided in Kahawa area for more than 6 years, whilst 50 (23.5 %) had resided in the area for between 4 and 6 years, and 44 (20.7 %) had resided in the area for between 1 and 3 years. Only 35 (16.4 %) of the single mothers had resided in the area for less than one year.

Religion

The single mothers were asked to indicate their religion. The findings are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 21: Religion of the single mothers

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Christian	201	94.4
Muslim	6	2.8
No religion	6	2.8
Total	213	100.0

The findings in Table 4.8 reveal that majority of the single mothers stated that they were Christians (94.4 %) while 6 (2.8 %) stated that they were Muslims. None of the respondents stated that they were Buddhists or practised Traditional African religion.

Ethnicity of the respondents

The single mothers were also asked to indicate the ethnic group they belong to. The findings are as illustrated in Table 4.9.

Table 22: Ethnicity of the single mothers

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Kikuyu	113	53.1
Luo	24	11.3
Luhya	23	10.8
Meru	16	7.5
Kamba	12	5.6
Refugee	7	3.3
Embu	6	2.8
Kisii	6	2.8
Kalenjin	4	1.9
Mijikenda	2	.9
Total	213	100.0

The findings in Table 4.8 show that majority of the single mothers belonged to the Kikuyu ethnic group (53.1 %). There was also a sizeable number of Luo (11.3 %), Luhya (10.8 %) and Meru (7.5 %).

The respondents were also asked to state their reasons for being single. The findings are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 23: Reasons for being single

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Separation	72	33.8
Widowed	56	26.3
Not married	54	25.4
Divorce	12	5.6

N = 213

From Table 4.9, it is evident that 72 (33.3 %) of the single mothers separated from their husbands. While some of the respondents did not give reasons for separating from their spouses, others separated due to lack of payment of dowry, alcoholic husbands, infidelity, husband marrying another woman, long absence of the husband, and, husbands who are a 'liability,' that is, those who do not generate any income. Some of the single mothers who participated in the focused interview, however, outlined other reasons for separating from their spouses. While one of them stated that she separated from the husband because he lied to her that he was not married, and he was, another single mother stated that she separated from the husband because the husband kept on insisting that one of the children was not his, and refused to pay his school fees. A different single mother narrated that she separated from the husband due to frustrations from the parents-in-law.

It is also apparent that 56 (26.3 %) single mothers were widowed, while 54 (25.4 %) stated that they were not married. Those who were not married stated that they did so by choice, as a result of a rape ordeal, and, due to teenage pregnancy. Single mothers interviewed also gave the same reasons for not having got married, just but for the fact

that some decided not to be married by choice. The rest, 12 (5.6 %), stated that they divorced from their husbands. None of the single mothers interviewed stated divorce as the reason for their being single. The findings, therefore, imply that most of the respondents were single due to separation from their spouses.

104 Unit of administration

105 Name of respondent

106 Questionnaire completed on

107 Introduction

My name is Annesah. I am a social worker at the Department of Social Work, Kenyatta University. This questionnaire is designed to collect information on the reasons for being single. It is absolutely confidential. The information you give me may help to identify any respondent. You do not have to give your name. I assure you that you do not have to answer. We would greatly appreciate your response to this survey. Thank you for taking the time to do this.

Section A: Demographic information

1. Reason for being single

Male

Female

2. In what month and year were you born

Month

Year

Don't know

No response

Appendix II: Questionnaire for the single mothers

- 001 Questionnaire identification number.....
- 002 Region.....
- 003 Site.....
- 004 Date of administration.....
- 005 Name of research assistant.....
- 006 Questionnaire checked by principal researcher
- Date.....
- Signature.....

Introduction

My name is Annread. I am a master student in counselling at Kenyatta University. The questionnaire is designed for this research purpose only, therefore the response shall be absolutely confidential and anonymously given. No name shall be required from any respondent. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer. We would greatly appreciate your response to this survey. Would you be willing to participate?

Yes..... No.....

Section A: Background characteristics

1. Record sex of the respondent

Male.....

Female

2. In what month and year were you born?

Month

Year

Don't know.....

No response

3. Have you ever attended school?
 - Yes.....(1)
 - No.....(2)
 - No response.....(3)
4. What is the highest level of education you completed?
 - Primary.....(1)
 - Secondary.....(2)
 - None.....(3)
 - College/campus.....(4)
 - No response.....(5)
5. Do you work to earn money for yourself?
 - Yes.....(1)
 - No.....(2)
 - No response.....(3)
6. What are your sources of income?
 - Charitable organizations/well-wishers(1)
 - Income from employment.....(2)
 - Income from self-employment.....(3)
 - Father to my children.....(4)
 - No response.....(4)
7. Who takes care of your children?
 - Myself.....(1)
 - My relatives.....(2)
 - Houseboy/house girl.....(3)
 - Children's home.....(4)
 - Other (specify).....
8. How long have you lived here in Kahawa?
 - Less than one year.....(1)
 - 3 years.....(2)
 - 4 – 6 years.....(3)
 - More than 6 years.....(4)

Don't know..... (5)

No response (6)

9. What religion are you?

Christian (1)

Buddhist (2)

No religion..... (3)

Muslim (4)

Traditional (5)

Other (specify).....

10. To which ethnic group do you belong?

Luo..... (1)

Luhya (2)

Kikuyu..... (3)

Kamba (4)

Kisii (5)

Kalenjin (6)

Mijikenda (7)

Embu (8)

Meru (9)

Somali..... (10)

Mixed ethnicity..... (11)

Don't know..... (12)

No response (13)

Other (specify).....

Section B

Now am going to ask you some personal questions about you and your children. Remember we are asking these questions to learn more about how single mothers like you feel about parenting. Please answer the following questions honestly. Remember your name is not written on this questionnaire.

11. Please state the reasons that led to your being a single parent.

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.....
.....

12. What are some of the problems you experience as a single parent?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

13. In your opinion, do your neighbours speak well of you as a single mother?

Yes/NO...Explain

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.....

14. Among the achievements of your children, which ones do you attribute to your contribution as a single mother?

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15. Among the shortcomings of your children, which ones do you attribute to your limitation as a single mother?

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16. Do non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and religious organizations help you to cope with psychological distress arising from your single parent motherhood? Yes/No...Explain

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17. Do non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and religious organizations help you to ensure your well being as a single parent and those of your children? Yes/No...Explain

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.....
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.....

18. Do non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and religious organizations help you to manage family matters as a single parent? Yes/No...Explain

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19. Do non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and religious organizations help you to cope with parenting problems arising from your single parent motherhood? Yes/No...Explain

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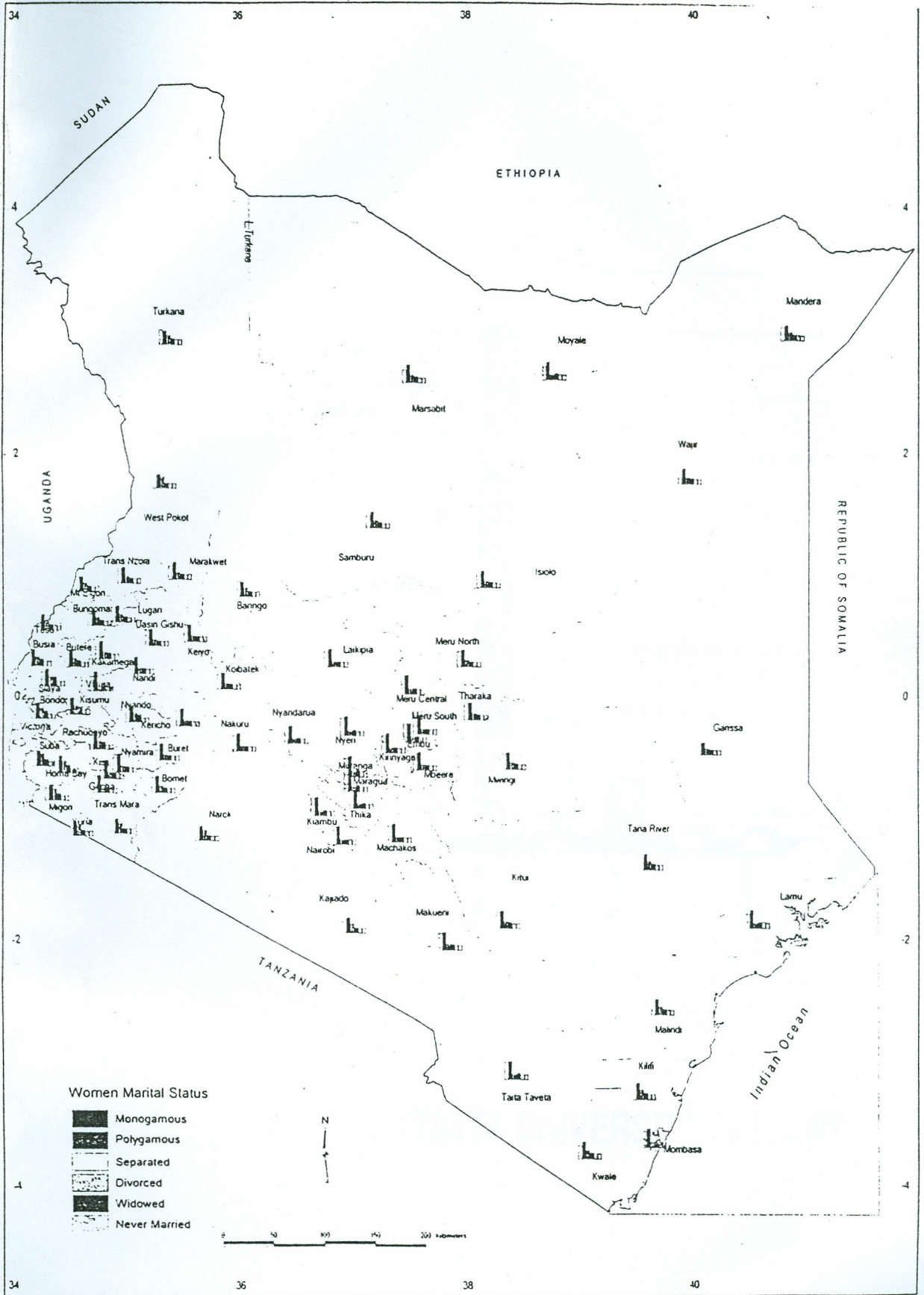
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Appendix III: Guide to focused interview

1. What are the challenges that are presently being experienced by single mothers?
2. In your opinion, is single parent motherhood highly thought of by the community?
3. What are some of the child outcomes associated with single parent motherhood?
4. Is there an association between child outcomes and maternal employment, welfare, childcare and sources of income?
5. Is there an association between child outcomes and single mothers' level of education, religion, and ethnicity?
6. What role does voluntary organizations and community groups play in improving the quality of life of single mothers and their children?

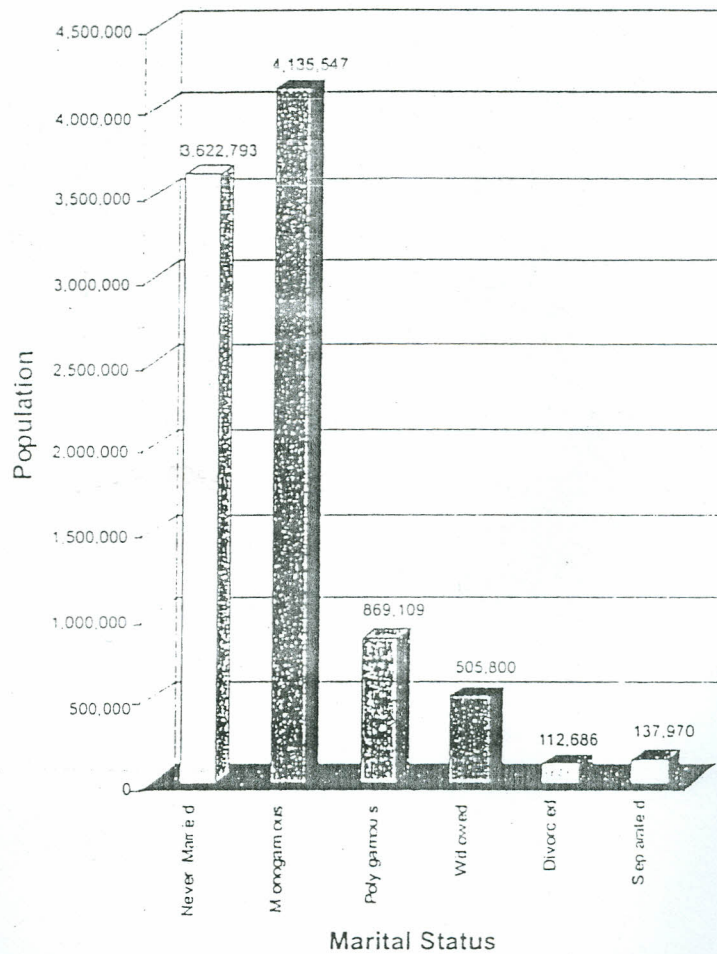
Appendix IV: Distribution of women by marital status



Source: 1999 Kenya Population and Housing Census

Prepared by Central Bureau of Statistics

Appendix V: Current marital status of women



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