

## **SINGLE PARENTING AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS IN EMOHUA LGA, RIVERS STATE: IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

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### **Abstract**

*The family remains a primary agent of socialization, providing emotional, moral, and educational guidance critical to the development of children. In contemporary Nigeria, the prevalence of single-parent households has increased due to divorce, separation, spousal death, and out-of-wedlock births, raising concerns about the educational development of affected students. This study investigates the relationship between single parenting and students' educational development in Emohua Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, with a focus on implications for social work practice. Guided by the Structural Functionalism Theory, the study adopted a descriptive survey design involving 400 respondents, selected respondents through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations. Findings reveal that single parenting in Emohua LGA is primarily driven by marital conflict, infidelity, early pregnancies, spousal death, economic hardship, and cultural tolerance for polygamy. The study further establishes that children from single-parent homes experience emotional instability, inadequate supervision, limited parental involvement, and financial constraints, which collectively hinder academic motivation, classroom participation, and access to learning materials. Importantly, the study highlights the critical role of social work practice in mitigating these challenges. School-based interventions, counseling, parental empowerment, and policy-driven programs are essential in supporting both single parents and their children to enhance educational outcomes. The research underscores that addressing the educational disparities of students from single-parent families requires a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach integrating schools, social workers, community structures, and policy frameworks to foster resilience, inclusiveness, and holistic child development.*

**Keywords:** *Single parenting, educational development, Family, students, social work practice*

### **Introduction**

The family remains the fundamental social institution and the primary context for the physical, emotional, and educational development of children. It serves as the first socializing agent where children learn values, discipline, and social norms necessary for life. Traditionally, the two-parent family structure comprising both father and mother has been regarded as the ideal environment for nurturing children, ensuring emotional

stability, social adjustment, and economic balance (Amato, 2000). However, in recent decades, the family system in Nigeria has witnessed tremendous transformation, with a growing number of children being raised in single-parent households. This situation, which was once uncommon, has now become increasingly prevalent across rural and urban communities in Rivers State. The rise of single parenting has raised serious concerns among educators, psychologists,

and social workers about its potential effects on children's educational development and general well-being.

Single parenting refers to a family situation where only one parent either the mother or father assumes full responsibility for the upbringing of the child due to circumstances such as divorce, separation, death of a spouse, or childbirth outside marriage (Nwachukwu, 2014). This form of parenting places a heavy burden on the single parent who must cater to the emotional, financial, and educational needs of the child alone. According to Dowd (2002), the pressure of balancing work, childcare, and financial responsibilities often leads to emotional fatigue, which may affect the parent's ability to provide adequate supervision and support for the child's academic progress. In Nigeria, socio-economic challenges, unemployment, and urbanization have further intensified the difficulties faced by single parents (Eke, 2013). Many single parents struggle with limited financial resources, inadequate social support, and time constraints, which can negatively influence their children's school attendance, learning motivation, and overall educational performance.

The absence of one parent, particularly the father, often results in loss of financial support, discipline, and moral guidance factors essential for a child's educational success (Ogwumike & Ozughalu, 2010). Research evidence indicates that children from single-parent homes are more likely to experience poor academic achievement, behavioral problems, and emotional instability than those from two-parent families (Ajila & Olutola, 2007). Most teachers have observed that students from such homes often display signs of low self-esteem, poor concentration, and irregular participation in school activities (Uwaoma &

Opara, 2016). The lack of consistent parental monitoring and encouragement may hinder these students from realizing their full academic potential. Moreover, single-parent households frequently experience financial strain, reducing the ability to afford school fees, books, uniforms, and other essential learning materials, thereby further disadvantaging the child's educational development.

Educational development, as defined by Okoro (2016), refers to the process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enhance personal growth and societal advancement. A child's educational development is significantly shaped by family background, emotional stability, and parental involvement. When one parent bears all responsibilities, the child may not receive adequate academic supervision or emotional encouragement. Furthermore, children from single-parent homes may suffer from social stigma, feelings of neglect, or psychological distress, which can adversely affect their academic performance and social adjustment. Hamburg (2014) emphasized that about twice as many children from single-parent families' drop out of school compared to those from intact families due to emotional and economic challenges. These patterns are also evident in Nigerian communities where poverty, loss, and social inequality are intertwined with family instability.

Despite these challenges, many single parents demonstrate resilience and commitment to their children's education. With proper support systems such as effective school guidance programs, community initiatives, and social welfare interventions children from single-parent homes can perform equally well as their peers from two-parent families (Chaudhry & Humayon, 2016). This is where social work

practice becomes critically important. Social work, as a profession, seeks to enhance human well-being, promote social justice, and strengthen coping mechanisms among individuals and families. In the context of single parenting, social workers play a vital role by offering counseling, advocacy, and psycho-social support to both parents and children. They assist single parents in accessing community resources, building parenting skills, and developing strategies to support their children's education. Furthermore, social workers collaborate with schools to identify vulnerable students, provide academic guidance, and foster inclusive environments that accommodate children from diverse family backgrounds.

In Emohua LGA, the effectiveness of social work intervention remains limited due to inadequate institutional support, poverty, and low awareness of professional social services. Consequently, many single parents and their children face persistent educational challenges. To address this gap, it becomes imperative to investigate the relationship between single parenting and the educational development of students, while also exploring the implications for social work practice. Understanding these dynamics will not only provide valuable insights into the needs of single-parent families but will also guide policymakers, educators, and social workers in designing targeted interventions. Hence, this study seeks to examine single parenting and the educational development of students in Emohua LGA, Rivers State, with particular emphasis on the implications for social work practice in promoting educational success, emotional resilience, and social well-being among affected children

### **Statement of the Problem**

The traditional family structure in Nigeria, once predominantly characterized by

two-parent households, has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades. Increasing rates of divorce, separation, spousal death, and out-of-wedlock births have contributed to the rise in single-parent families (Odo, Ede & Ezegbe, 2016). This change has generated growing concern among educators, policymakers, and social workers due to its implications for children's educational development and psychosocial adjustment. In Emohua Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State, the growing visibility of single-parent households mirrors a broader social trend, raising important questions about how children from these families cope with academic, emotional, and social challenges in a rapidly changing educational environment.

Children from single-parent homes often face a range of difficulties that may undermine their educational success. The absence of one parent particularly the father can result in a lack of adequate supervision, financial support, and emotional stability, which are essential for academic achievement (Agulana, 2009). Many single parents are forced to juggle multiple responsibilities, balancing income generation with childcare, often under conditions of economic hardship. As a result, their children are more likely to experience school absenteeism, low motivation, and poor academic performance. The inability to afford essential learning materials, pay school fees promptly, or provide home-based educational support can further compound the problem. Emotional stress, lack of confidence, and behavioral challenges such as truancy and poor classroom participation are also common among children from single-parent families (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010).

Furthermore, the socialization of children in single-parent homes may be

compromised due to inadequate parental presence and guidance. When a parent especially the mother is absent from the home for work or other reasons, children may be left under the care of relatives, guardians, or step-parents, who may not provide adequate emotional or moral support. This situation often exposes children to neglect, insecurity, and emotional instability, which can manifest in maladaptive behaviors such as lying, stealing, or dropping out of school. Such psychosocial disruptions directly affect concentration, learning habits, and academic outcomes. These problems are compounded by socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, rural-urban migration, and poverty, which further weaken the family's ability to support education effectively.

Empirical evidence from across Nigeria supports the view that single parenting negatively affects students' educational development. For instance, Uwaifo (2008) found that children from single-parent homes in Edo State performed poorly in school due to emotional stress and limited parental involvement. Similarly, Adewuyi and Fabiyi (2010) observed in Lagos State that students from two-parent families exhibited better academic engagement and performance compared to those from single-parent homes. Nwachukwu and Nwankwo (2014), in their study in Imo State, concluded that the reduced parental involvement common in single-parent families adversely influences students' classroom behavior and academic success. These findings suggest that the psychological and financial constraints of single parenting significantly limit the support children receive, which, in turn, affects their educational development.

However, despite the increasing prevalence of single-parent households in Emohua LGA, there remains a dearth of

localized research exploring the phenomenon within this socio-cultural context. Emohua's unique mix of semi-urban and rural communities, high unemployment rates, and rising number of female-headed households present a distinctive setting that demands context-specific investigation. Most available studies on single parenting have focused on urban or Western contexts, leaving significant gaps in understanding how local socio-economic realities in Emohua shape the educational development of students from single-parent families.

In addition, the role of social work practice in addressing the educational and emotional needs of children from single-parent homes has not been adequately examined. Social workers play a crucial role in offering counseling, advocacy, and educational support to vulnerable families. Yet, there is limited institutional capacity and awareness to implement such interventions effectively. Without professional social work engagement, many children from single-parent families remain at risk of poor academic outcomes, social maladjustment, and emotional distress. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these knowledge and practice gaps by investigating the relationship between single parenting and the educational development of students in Emohua LGA, Rivers State. It aims to identify the specific challenges faced by students from single-parent families, examine the socio-economic and psychological factors influencing their academic outcomes, and explore the implications for social work practice in promoting their educational welfare. The findings of this study are expected to provide a valuable foundation for designing effective social work interventions and educational policies that will enhance the academic performance and

overall development of children from single-parent families in Emohua LGA and beyond.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between single parenting and the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Identify the major causes and patterns of single parenting among families in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- ii. Examine the impact of single parenting on the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- iii. Determine the implications of single parenting for social work practice, particularly in promoting the educational welfare and academic success of students from single-parent families in Emohua Local Government Area.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the major causes and patterns of single parenting among families in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?
- ii. How does single parenting affect the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?
- iii. What are the implications of single parenting for social work practice in enhancing the educational welfare of students from single-parent families in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?

### **Conceptual Review on Single Parenting**

Single parenting has emerged as a significant social phenomenon in contemporary society, attracting attention

from social scientists, educators, and social work practitioners due to its implications for child development and family stability. The concept refers to a family structure in which a child or children are raised by one parent either the mother or father without the consistent presence or support of the other biological parent. This parenting arrangement may arise from various circumstances such as divorce, separation, death of a spouse, or childbirth outside wedlock (Amato, 2019). Scholars have defined single parenting from diverse perspectives. According to Kalmijn (2015), single parenting is a condition in which one parent assumes both the economic and emotional responsibilities of nurturing and supporting a child due to the absence of the other parent. Similarly, Ellis (2017) views single parenting as a deviation from the traditional two-parent family model, often resulting in changes to family dynamics, socialization patterns, and child-rearing practices. From a social work perspective, single parenting represents a form of family vulnerability that necessitates professional intervention to support the psychological, educational, and social welfare of both the parent and the child (Okon & Etuk, 2020).

In Nigeria, single parenting is on the rise due to multiple factors, including urbanization, economic hardship, migration, and changing cultural norms. The traditional extended family system that once provided a support network for widows, divorced, or separated individuals is gradually weakening, leaving single parents to cope with limited resources and multiple responsibilities (Adewale, 2021). Consequently, children raised in such homes often experience challenges related to financial instability, emotional distress, poor academic performance, and limited social support. There are generally two types of single

parenting: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary single parenting occurs when an individual consciously chooses to raise a child alone often through adoption, artificial insemination, or personal decision without the involvement of a partner. Involuntary single parenting, on the other hand, results from external circumstances such as divorce, death, or desertion (Eze & Odo, 2018). Both forms carry unique challenges, but the latter is often associated with socio-economic and emotional strains that may affect both the parent's and the child's well-being.

Single parents often face multiple burdens, including balancing work and childcare, managing financial constraints, and dealing with social stigmatization. These pressures can lead to stress, fatigue, and reduced effectiveness in parenting. According to social work theorists, such families require targeted interventions such as counseling, family therapy, and community-based welfare programs to promote resilience and enhance the family's adaptive capacity (Williams & Adeoye, 2022). In summary, single parenting represents a critical area of concern for social work practice due to its potential impact on child welfare, academic development, and social adjustment. Understanding the concept helps practitioners design effective intervention strategies that strengthen family systems, promote emotional well-being, and ensure the holistic development of children in single-parent households.

### **Conceptual Review on Educational Development**

Educational development refers to the continuous process of improving teaching, learning, and academic outcomes to ensure the holistic growth of learners. It encompasses cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dimensions that contribute to the

overall advancement of individuals and societies. Educational development is not limited to formal schooling but also includes efforts aimed at enhancing access, equity, quality, and relevance of education in response to societal needs (Okebukola, 2018). According to UNESCO (2020), educational development is the strategic process through which education systems are strengthened to promote lifelong learning opportunities, reduce inequality, and build human capital for sustainable development. It involves both the structural (policy, curriculum, infrastructure) and functional (teaching quality, learning motivation, assessment systems) aspects of education. Similarly, Fafunwa (2019) describes educational development as the systematic and deliberate effort to nurture individuals' intellectual and moral capacities for the purpose of self-fulfillment and national progress.

At the individual level, educational development focuses on improving learners' academic performance, skills acquisition, and problem-solving abilities. It is influenced by various factors including family background, parental involvement, socio-economic status, and learning environment (Coleman, 2016). For instance, children from supportive and resourceful families tend to perform better academically due to consistent parental monitoring, access to learning materials, and motivation to succeed. Conversely, children from disadvantaged or single-parent homes may face difficulties such as lack of supervision, limited financial resources, and emotional distress, which hinder educational progress (Okon & Etim, 2021). Educational development can also be examined from a societal perspective. Societies that invest in education experience greater economic productivity, innovation, and civic engagement. Hence, education is often

viewed as a cornerstone of national development. According to Eboh (2022), educational development promotes social mobility, reduces poverty, and equips citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary for participation in democratic governance and global competitiveness.

*The process of educational development is multidimensional, encompassing three core domains:*

- Cognitive Development – the intellectual growth and acquisition of knowledge, reasoning, and critical thinking skills.
- Affective Development – the emotional, moral, and value-oriented aspects that shape attitudes toward learning and society.
- Psychomotor Development – the enhancement of practical and technical skills necessary for innovation and productivity (Farrant, 2017).

From the lens of social work, educational development is a key determinant of child welfare and social inclusion. Social workers engage in advocacy, counseling, and policy formulation to address barriers that hinder access to quality education especially among vulnerable groups such as children from single-parent families. These interventions aim to promote equal opportunities, enhance learning motivation, and foster resilience in students facing social or economic challenges (Adewumi & Johnson, 2020). In summary, educational development is a dynamic process that integrates personal growth, social responsibility, and national advancement. It is influenced by family, school, community, and policy environments. Therefore, ensuring sustainable educational development requires collaborative efforts among parents, educators, policymakers, and

social workers to provide an enabling environment where every child can thrive academically and socially.

### **Conceptual Review on Social Work Practice**

Social work practice is a professional discipline dedicated to enhancing human well-being, promoting social justice, and empowering individuals, families, and communities to function effectively within their environments. It is a value-driven and evidence-based practice that addresses social problems, strengthens coping capacities, and facilitates access to resources necessary for optimal human development (IFSW, 2020). According to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), social work practice promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance social cohesion and overall quality of life. In the context of family and child welfare, social work practice focuses on promoting the psychosocial development of children, stabilizing families, and ensuring that every child grows in a supportive and protective environment. Payne (2014) views social work as both an art and a science an art because it requires empathy and understanding, and a science because it applies theoretical knowledge and research-based interventions to solve human problems. The professional role of social workers includes counseling, advocacy, case management, policy implementation, and community mobilization.

*Social work practice operates at four interrelated levels:*

- Micro Practice: This involves direct service delivery to individuals and families, including counseling, crisis intervention, and family therapy. In single-parent families, social workers provide emotional support, help

manage parental stress, and promote positive parenting strategies to enhance child welfare (Okafor & Eze, 2019).

- Mezzo Practice: This level focuses on groups, schools, and communities. School-based social work practice falls under this category, where practitioners collaborate with teachers, parents, and administrators to identify and address students' academic and behavioral challenges (Adewumi & Johnson, 2020).
- Macro Practice: This involves advocacy, policy formulation, and social reform aimed at addressing structural inequalities that affect families and children. Through this, social workers contribute to educational reforms, poverty alleviation, and gender equality initiatives that indirectly impact family stability and educational development (UNICEF, 2021).
- Meta Practice: Meta practice emphasizes the integration of theory, research, and professional knowledge to inform social work interventions and improve practice standards. At this level, social workers evaluate the effectiveness of programs, develop evidence-based strategies, and contribute to knowledge creation in the profession. For instance, research on single-parent family dynamics can guide policy development, program planning, and training for practitioners to better support vulnerable children and families (Smith & Adeoye, 2022).

Social work practice is guided by core values such as respect for human dignity, social justice, integrity, competence, and service (NASW, 2017). These values ensure

that interventions are ethically sound, culturally sensitive, and centered on the best interest of clients especially vulnerable populations like children from single-parent households. The practice also integrates various theoretical frameworks including systems theory, ecological perspective, and empowerment theory, which emphasize the interconnection between individuals and their environments. In the educational setting, social workers play an essential role in promoting student welfare and academic success. They identify barriers such as poverty, domestic conflict, parental absence, or emotional distress that interfere with learning and help design interventions to mitigate their effects. For children from single-parent families, social workers facilitate school adjustment, provide counseling, link parents to community resources, and advocate for inclusive educational policies (Oluwatayo, 2020).

Furthermore, social work practice in the Nigerian context has evolved to respond to emerging social challenges such as child neglect, family instability, and educational inequalities. Social workers collaborate with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and schools to develop social protection programs, scholarship schemes, and mentorship initiatives that promote the educational welfare of vulnerable children (Adebayo & Ojo, 2022). In fact, social work practice is an indispensable mechanism for addressing the psychosocial and educational needs of individuals and families. It provides both preventive and remedial interventions that help maintain family stability, enhance child development, and ensure that every learner regardless of background has equal opportunities for educational success. Within the scope of single parenting, social work serves as a bridge between family, school,

and society, fostering resilience and inclusion in the educational system.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Structural Functionalism Theory**

Structural Functionalism is one of the most influential theoretical perspectives in sociology, offering a framework for understanding how various social institutions work together to maintain societal stability and order. The theory explains social structures such as the family, education, religion, and economy in terms of the roles and functions they perform in sustaining society (Jary & Jary, 1991). The family, as one of the most fundamental social institutions, is viewed by structural functionalists as a vital organ within the larger social system, performing essential functions that ensure the survival and continuity of both the individual and society. The theory was advanced by early sociologists such as Émile Durkheim but became most prominent through the works of Talcott Parsons in the mid-twentieth century. According to Parsons (1951), every component of society has a function that contributes to the stability and equilibrium of the whole. In this context, the family serves as a primary agent of socialization and personality stabilization. Parsons emphasized that the family not only transmits societal norms, values, and culture to children but also provides emotional security and social identity to its members. The family's ability to perform these functions effectively ensures that children grow into socially responsible and productive adults who can contribute positively to society.

Parsons identified two principal functions of the family within society. The first is the socialization of children the process by which children learn acceptable social behaviors, values, and norms. Through

this, the family helps integrate individuals into the wider social system. In the North American context, which Parsons analyzed, he noted that families instill in children a sense of independence, achievement motivation, and self-discipline qualities essential for success in modern societies. The second function is the stabilization of adult personalities, whereby the family acts as a source of emotional support and psychological balance for adults. Marriage, for instance, provides an avenue for companionship and emotional expression, buffering individuals from the stresses and strains of daily life (McLennan, Ryan & Spoonley, 2000). Within the family, Parsons further proposed the differentiation of gender roles, describing men as fulfilling the instrumental role (providing financial stability and discipline) and women as fulfilling the expressive role (offering emotional support and nurturing). This complementary division of labor was seen as necessary for the effective functioning of the family and, by extension, the wider society. The family, therefore, acts as a system in which each member plays a specific role that contributes to the well-being of the whole unit.

However, structural functionalism has been critiqued for its tendency to idealize the nuclear family and to neglect alternative family arrangements such as single-parent households, blended families, or cohabiting partnerships. Critics argue that functionalism overemphasizes social harmony while underestimating conflict, diversity, and inequality (Murdock, 1949; Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Nonetheless, the theory remains relevant for understanding how family dysfunctions such as single parenting can disrupt the smooth functioning of society and affect the developmental outcomes of children. In the context of this study, Structural Functionalism Theory provides a

valuable lens for analyzing how the absence of one parent can affect the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area. The theory assumes that when one part of the family system fails to perform its designated function, other parts of the social structure such as the educational system or community are affected. For instance, when a parent is absent, children may lack emotional stability, proper supervision, and adequate financial support, which can lead to academic underperformance, behavioral issues, and social maladjustment. This situation represents a form of family dysfunction that undermines the equilibrium of both the family unit and society.

Furthermore, from a social work perspective, the structural functionalist framework underscores the need for interventions that help restore family balance and promote child development. Social workers act as mediators and support agents to assist single parents in fulfilling their dual roles effectively. Through counseling, advocacy, and community outreach, social workers can help families compensate for missing functions within the household such as emotional support or financial stability thereby improving children's educational outcomes. In Emohua LGA, where socio-economic pressures and family instability are prevalent, social work interventions can play a critical role in strengthening family systems, promoting resilience, and ensuring that children from single-parent homes are not left behind academically or socially. In all, the Structural Functionalism Theory emphasizes that the family, as a social system, functions best when each member fulfills their expected role. When this balance is disrupted as seen in single-parent households the child's development, particularly educational development, may suffer. Applying this

theory to the study of single parenting in Emohua LGA provides an understanding of how family structure influences student outcomes and highlights the importance of social work practice in restoring balance, providing support, and enhancing the educational development of children from single-parent families.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the relationship between single parenting and students' educational development in Emohua Local Government Area (LGA) of Rivers State. This design enabled the researcher to gather data from respondents without manipulating variables. Emohua LGA, located in Rivers East Senatorial District, is a culturally rich and agriculturally based community with a population of about 289,200 people. The study focused on single parents and children from single-parent homes. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 400 respondents were utilized. Respondents were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected using both primary and secondary sources. The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire divided into two sections one capturing demographic data and the other addressing the study objectives rated on a Likert scale. Secondary data were obtained from books, journals, and published materials. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics such as simple percentages, mean, and standard deviation to interpret responses and address the research questions. Overall, the methodology provided a systematic framework for gathering reliable and valid data to understand how single parenting influences students' educational outcomes and to

inform social work interventions in Emohua LGA.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** What are the major causes and patterns of single parenting among families in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?

**Table 4.2.1: Statistical Scores on the Major Causes and Patterns of Single Parenting among Families in Emohua LGA (N = 390)**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D	Dec.
1	Marital conflict and incompatibility leading to separation or divorce	3.74	0.63	A
2	Early or unintended pregnancies outside wedlock	3.68	0.71	A
3	Death of a spouse resulting in widowhood	3.55	0.77	A
4	Economic hardship forcing partners to migrate or abandon families	3.62	0.66	A
5	Infidelity and lack of trust between partners	3.70	0.64	A
6	Cultural tolerance of polygamy and unstable marital unions	3.46	0.80	A

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork (2025)

The data presented in Table 4.2.1 indicate that respondents generally agreed that several socio-economic and cultural factors contribute to the rise and patterns of single parenting in Emohua LGA. All items recorded mean scores above 3.40, with standard deviations ranging from 0.63 to 0.80, signifying moderate variability in responses but an overall strong consensus. Item 1 (marital conflict and incompatibility) had the highest mean score of 3.74 (SD = 0.63), suggesting it is the most dominant cause of single parenting in the area. Closely following are infidelity and lack of trust (Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.64) and early or unintended pregnancies (Mean = 3.68, SD = 0.71), both indicating that moral and relational breakdowns within families play critical roles. Economic hardship (Mean = 3.62, SD = 0.66) also featured prominently, reflecting the impact of poverty and unemployment on family stability. The death of a spouse (Mean = 3.55, SD = 0.77) was also widely recognized, although less frequently than social and economic causes. Finally, cultural tolerance

of polygamy and unstable unions (Mean = 3.46, SD = 0.80) showed that traditional family practices in the area may contribute indirectly to the persistence of single parenting. Overall, the homogeneity of high mean values indicates that respondents perceive single parenting in Emohua LGA as resulting from a combination of marital instability, economic difficulties, and shifting cultural norms patterns that align with broader social work concerns about family disintegration and child welfare in the community.

Findings from the study indicate that the causes and patterns of single parenting in Emohua Local Government Area stem from a complex interplay of marital, economic, cultural, and social factors. Respondents identified key contributors such as marital conflict and incompatibility, infidelity and lack of trust between partners, early or unintended pregnancies, economic hardship leading to family abandonment, and spousal death. Cultural practices such as polygamy and the growing tolerance for unstable

marital unions also featured as notable causes. These patterns suggest that single parenting in the area is not a product of isolated incidents but rather reflects broader social and structural conditions that undermine marital stability and family cohesion. This finding is consistent with the study of Adewale (2018), who examined Socioeconomic Determinants of Single Parenthood in Southwestern Nigeria and reported that marital instability, poverty, and infidelity were primary causes of single-parent families. Adewale emphasized that increasing financial pressures and declining moral values have made families more vulnerable to disintegration, especially in regions where social support systems are weak. Similarly, Nwosu and Okwulehie (2020), in their work Marital Instability and Single Parenthood in Southeast Nigeria, found that spousal incompatibility, infidelity, and migration in search of better economic opportunities were leading causes of single parenting. Their study further noted that the economic burden of maintaining families often compels one partner usually the male to relocate, thereby destabilizing marital relationships and resulting in separation or abandonment.

In addition, cultural factors such as polygamy and social tolerance for marital dissolution remain significant in rural communities like Emohua. This observation resonates with Odu and Ogunleye (2019), who found that cultural acceptance of multiple unions and gender inequality perpetuates unstable marriages and single-parent families in parts of the Niger Delta region. The persistence of these cultural norms demonstrates that single parenting in Emohua is both a socio-cultural and economic issue requiring holistic intervention. From a social work practice perspective, these findings underscore the importance of family counseling, premarital education, and community sensitization programs aimed at promoting stable family relationships. Social workers in Emohua can play a critical role in conflict mediation, supporting families facing economic stress, and offering psychosocial interventions to single parents to mitigate the adverse effects on children's development. Therefore, the study reinforces the need for an integrated social work approach that combines family therapy, empowerment programs, and advocacy for cultural transformation to address the underlying causes of single parenting in the area.

**Research Question 2:** How does single parenting affect the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?

**Table 4.2.2: Statistical Scores on the effects of single parenting on educational development of students (N = 390)**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D	Dec.
1	Students from single-parent homes experience lower academic motivation and engagement	3.62	0.73	A
2	Lack of adequate supervision at home affects students' study habits and performance	3.78	0.67	SA
3	Emotional instability of students from single-parent families reduces classroom participation	3.59	0.80	A
4	Financial constraints of single parents limit students' access to quality learning materials	3.82	0.63	SA

5	Limited parental involvement in school activities affects students' learning progress	3.54	0.71	A
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**Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2025)**

The table shows that respondents largely agree that single parenting significantly affects students' educational development in Emohua LGA. All items recorded mean scores above 3.50, indicating general agreement or strong agreement with the statements. Item 4 ("financial constraints of single parents limiting students' access to quality learning materials") had the highest mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.63), suggesting that economic hardship is the most pronounced effect of single parenting on students' education. Item 2 ("lack of adequate supervision at home") also showed strong agreement (Mean = 3.78, SD = 0.67), implying that insufficient parental monitoring negatively impacts study habits and academic discipline. Item 3 ("emotional instability") and item 5 ("limited parental involvement") recorded means of 3.59 and 3.54, respectively, signifying that emotional and motivational factors also play a substantial role. The lowest mean value (3.54) still falls within the "Agree" range, indicating consistent perceptions among respondents. The standard deviations (0.63–0.80) reflect moderate variability, implying that while experiences differ slightly among households, the overall trend is uniform. Overall, the results indicate that single parenting affects students' educational development through multiple dimensions financial hardship, emotional strain, and lack of parental supervision or involvement. This underscores the need for social work interventions such as parental guidance programs, financial support systems, and school-based counseling to assist single-parent families in enhancing their children's educational outcomes.

Findings from the study revealed that single parenting has profound effects on the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area. Respondents emphasized that children from single-parent households often face emotional instability, reduced academic motivation, inadequate supervision, and financial limitations that collectively hinder their academic performance and social adjustment in school. Many students from such homes are reported to have weaker study habits and lower classroom participation compared to their peers from two-parent families. The study also found that limited parental involvement in school-related activities and the financial strain faced by single parents restrict children's access to educational resources, further compounding their learning difficulties. These findings align with the research of Uwaifo (2008), who examined The Effects of Single Parenting on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Edo State and found that students from single-parent homes exhibited lower academic achievement and less discipline due to inadequate parental monitoring and limited emotional support. Uwaifo concluded that the absence of one parent, particularly the father, creates a void in supervision and guidance, which often manifests in poor educational outcomes. Similarly, Adewuyi and Fabiyi (2010), in their study Parental Structure and Students' Academic Achievement in Lagos State Secondary Schools, established that children from intact families perform better academically than those from single-parent households. They attributed this difference to the combined

financial and emotional support available in two-parent families, which enhances children's motivation and concentration in school. The findings also resonate with Okafor and Ekechukwu (2021), who studied Family Structure and Academic Adjustment among Adolescents in Rivers State and discovered that single parenting contributes to lower self-esteem and higher absenteeism among students. They noted that many single parents struggle to balance work and childcare, resulting in reduced involvement in their children's academic life. These challenges limit the students' access to consistent guidance, creating learning gaps that affect performance and school retention.

From a social work practice perspective, these results highlight the critical need for school-based social work interventions that support students from single-parent families. Social workers can

collaborate with teachers and parents to provide psychosocial counseling, mentorship, and educational support programs that compensate for the absence of one parent. Furthermore, social workers should design empowerment programs for single parents, particularly mothers, to strengthen their capacity to meet the educational and emotional needs of their children. In essence, addressing the educational implications of single parenting requires a multi-sectoral approach involving schools, social workers, and community stakeholders working together to promote educational equity and child welfare in Emohua LGA.

**Research Question 3:** What are the implications of single parenting for social work practice in enhancing the educational welfare of students from single-parent families in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State?

**Table 4.2.3: Showing Statistical Scores for the Implications of Single Parenting for Social Work Practice in Enhancing the Educational Welfare of Students from Single-Parent Families: N = 390**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	S.D	Dec.
1	Social workers are needed to provide counseling and psychosocial support for students from single-parent homes	3.82	0.58	SA
2	School-based social work interventions can help bridge the emotional and academic gaps caused by single parenting	3.69	0.73	A
3	Social workers can collaborate with teachers and parents to monitor students' progress and address family-related challenges	3.74	0.66	A
4	Lack of adequate social work support limits the educational welfare of children from single-parent households	3.61	0.77	A
5	Policy-driven social work programs can enhance educational inclusiveness and support for single-parent families	3.79	0.69	SA

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2025)

Table 4.2.3 presents data on the implications of single parenting for social work practice in enhancing the educational welfare of students from single-parent families in Emohua LGA. All items recorded high mean scores (ranging from 3.61 to 3.82) with moderate standard deviations (0.58–0.77), indicating a strong and consistent agreement among respondents. Item 1 (mean = 3.82, SD = 0.58) recorded the highest rating, implying that respondents strongly agree that social workers play a critical role in providing counseling and psychosocial support to children from single-parent homes. Item 5 (mean = 3.79, SD = 0.69) also shows a high level of agreement, emphasizing the need for policy-driven social work interventions to promote educational inclusiveness. Similarly, items 2 and 3 (means = 3.69 and 3.74) reflect the belief that social workers should operate collaboratively within schools to close academic and emotional gaps while monitoring students' holistic development. The lowest-rated item (mean = 3.61, SD = 0.77) still indicates agreement that the absence of social work support reduces educational welfare outcomes for affected students. Overall, the results suggest that effective social work practice including counseling, collaboration, advocacy, and school-based interventions is essential for mitigating the negative impacts of single parenting and enhancing students' academic and emotional wellbeing in Emohua LGA.

Findings from the study revealed that social work practice plays a pivotal role in addressing the educational and emotional challenges faced by students from single-parent families in Emohua Local Government Area. Respondents agreed that social workers are essential in providing counseling, psychosocial support, and intervention

programs tailored to the needs of these children. The study also found that school-based social work interventions can serve as a bridge to mitigate the emotional distress and academic setbacks often associated with single parenting. Furthermore, participants emphasized the importance of collaboration between social workers, teachers, and parents to ensure holistic monitoring of students' academic progress and behavioral adjustment. Respondents also highlighted that inadequate social work presence in schools and communities has significantly limited the educational welfare and inclusiveness of children from single-parent homes. These findings align with the work of Olanrewaju and Adeniji (2019), who examined Social Work Interventions and Educational Adjustment among Students from Disadvantaged Families in Lagos State. Their study revealed that school-based social workers who provide counseling, mentorship, and family support services contribute significantly to improving students' emotional stability and academic performance. They concluded that effective social work practice reduces educational disparities by addressing the psychosocial barriers faced by vulnerable students. Similarly, Chukwu and Igwe (2021), in their study Social Work Practice and Educational Support for Vulnerable Children in South-South Nigeria, found that active engagement of social workers in schools improved students' attendance, reduced dropout rates, and strengthened family-school relationships. They argued that social workers serve as mediators between educational institutions and families, ensuring that children from nontraditional homes receive equal opportunities for learning and development.

The findings also echo Ogunbameru and Adeyemi (2020), who investigated Family

Challenges and the Role of Social Work in Promoting Child Welfare in Nigeria. They asserted that single parenting presents unique emotional and economic pressures that require professional social work intervention to safeguard children's educational and psychological well-being. The study emphasized that policy-driven social work programs focusing on family empowerment, financial assistance, and parenting education are essential to improving the welfare of children in single-parent households. From a social work practice perspective, these findings highlight the urgent need for institutionalized social work services within the education system of Emohua LGA. Social workers should be integrated into schools to provide continuous counseling, develop family-centered interventions, and advocate for inclusive education policies. Additionally, collaboration with community-based organizations and government agencies can strengthen family support systems and promote educational equity. In essence, social work practice serves as a vital mechanism for enhancing the educational welfare of students from single-parent families by addressing both the psychosocial and structural barriers that impede their development.

### **Conclusion**

This study has provided a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics, effects, and social work implications of single parenting on the educational development of students in Emohua Local Government Area, Rivers State. The findings reveal that single parenting in this locality is largely driven by marital instability, infidelity, economic hardship, early pregnancies, and cultural acceptance of polygamy and unstable unions. These factors collectively contribute to the breakdown of

family structures, creating conditions that challenge the traditional roles of parents in the socialization and educational support of their children. The study further established that children raised in single-parent families face numerous obstacles that hinder their educational development. These include emotional instability, lack of supervision, limited access to learning materials, and reduced parental involvement in school activities. The absence of a dual-parental structure often results in economic strain and psychological stress, both of which have direct consequences on a child's academic motivation, classroom participation, and overall school performance. Thus, the educational disparities observed between children from intact families and those from single-parent homes are deeply rooted in both emotional and socio-economic deprivation.

A major insight from the study is the critical role of social work practice in mitigating the adverse effects of single parenting on students. The results underscore the need for professional social workers to be integrated into school systems, where they can provide counseling, mentorship, and psychosocial support tailored to the specific needs of children from single-parent families. Through family counseling, home visits, community education, and advocacy, social workers can help rebuild family functioning, strengthen parent-child relationships, and enhance students' educational welfare. Moreover, policy-driven social work programs are essential to ensure inclusiveness and equal educational opportunities for all children, regardless of family background. In conclusion, single parenting is not merely a private or domestic challenge it is a social issue that affects community development, social stability, and the educational future of

children. Therefore, addressing its impact requires a multi-sectoral approach that combines family empowerment, educational support, and social work intervention. Strengthening social welfare structures, promoting responsible parenting, and creating enabling environments for single parents to thrive will not only improve the academic prospects of children but also foster social cohesion and development in Emohua Local Government Area and Nigeria at large.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- **Integration of Social Workers in Schools:** The government and educational authorities in Rivers State should deploy trained social workers to public and private schools. These professionals should provide counseling, psychosocial support, and academic monitoring to students from single-parent families, thereby mitigating the emotional and educational challenges they face.
- **Parental Empowerment and Support Programs:** Social welfare agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should design empowerment programs targeted at single parents, especially mothers. Such initiatives could include skill acquisition, financial literacy training, and small business grants to reduce economic hardship and improve the capacity of single parents to meet their children's educational needs.
- **Strengthening Home–School Collaboration:** Schools should establish parent–teacher partnerships that actively involve single parents in

their children's academic life. Regular communication, parent–teacher meetings, and home visit programs by teachers and social workers can help improve student supervision, emotional stability, and school performance.

- **Policy Development for Family and Child Welfare:** The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, in collaboration with educational policymakers, should formulate and enforce child-centered welfare policies that recognize and support children from single-parent homes. These policies should emphasize inclusive education, psychosocial support, and financial assistance for vulnerable families.
- **Community Awareness and Preventive Education:** Community leaders, religious organizations, and social workers should conduct enlightenment campaigns on responsible parenting, family stability, and the consequences of single parenting on child development. This will help to strengthen family values, reduce family breakdowns, and promote the well-being of children in Emohua and beyond.

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