

Perceived Effect of Single Mother Parenting on Student’s Academic Performance in South Africa: A Review of Literature

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Abstract: This study reviews theories and studies on single mother parenting and its perceived effect on student’s academic performance. Many students in South Africa are raised by single parents, particularly women, and it seems to be a norm. This review presents what is already known about single mother parenting and student’s academic performance in order to identify the existing research gap that gave rise to the need for this study. This literature addresses the issues on the effect of single mother parenting on the academic performance of students in diverse context as well as ascertaining the effect of single mother parenting on student’s academic performance. The knowledge obtained from this exercise sheds more light on the study in selected high schools in Mangaung, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting connotes the system of encouraging and aiding the development of a child physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and financially from formative years to adulthood^[1]. Single mother parenting is a circumstance in which the mother is solely responsible for the upbringing and welfare of a child who is not more than age 18^[2-5]. Children from single are faced with abnormal behaviours due to lack of control, care and close relationship that supposed to exist between the children and their two parents^[6]. This could be so because children depend on their both parents for the gratification of the first three needs in Abraham Maslow hierarchy of need that is physiological needs, safety needs (security) and love and affection needs.

Student’s academic performance is the result of the assessment of students through inclusive, methodical,

cumulative, analytical, decisive and collective evaluation of the experience of the students in a school setting. Ogunsaju defined student’s academic performance as advantageous adjustments or results in the performance of students after an interval of instructive and learning activities as associated with educational goals which make information available to students, teachers, school administrators and parents on the extent to which these educational goals have been attained. Student’s academic performance is the ultimate grade which students receive after a methodical and comprehensive measurement and assessment of the individual student in a school environment for making decisions on his or her cognitive, emotive and psychomotor areas^[7]. For this study, the researcher examined the academic performance of students as the outcome of student’s evaluation as measured by National Senior Certificate (Matric Examination) by the Republic of South Africa.

SINGLE MOTHER PARENTING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Single parenting is a universal concern which denies many school children the occasion to achieve academic excellence in their existences and outstanding labour factor for national output and development^[8]. The literature on academic performance among children insinuates that children's academic performance is enhanced when the involvement of both parents is guaranteed in their education^[9-11]. Parents are principally responsible for the educational and occupational development of their children^[12]. Hence, children raised in single parent family structure possibly do not obtain the essential attention they need because the single parent might be weighed down by many responsibilities. Uwaifo^[13] examined the influences of family structure and parenthood on the academic performance of Nigerian University students and found that significant differences existed between the academic performance of students from single parent family and those from the two-parent family structure which supported the findings of Eweniyi^[13].

Oluwatosin^[15] supported this in their study entitled effect of single parenthood on the academic performance of secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. A total sample of 250 participants was used for the study. Questionnaires were used to obtain data from the sample with the student's examination results. The authors found that there was a considerable difference between the academic performance of adolescent students from single parent families and students from two-parent homes as well as differences in truant behaviour of adolescent students from single parent homes and those from two-parent homes. In contrary to these findings Ushie, Emeka *et al.*^[16] showed that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of students from single-parent homes and those from two-parent families.

Ogunsola and Adewale studied the effect of socioeconomic importance of parents on the academic performance of students in selected in high schools in Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The study was based on a sample of 180 students which were indiscriminately chosen from three secondary schools. Data was obtained from respondents using questionnaires. Four factors were investigated statistically: the socio-economic background of the parent, the educational background of the parent, the educational qualification of the parent and the health status of the students. The findings revealed that parental socioeconomic statuses and parental educational background have no significant effect on academic performance of students. However, the parental educational qualification and health statuses of the students significantly affect the academic performance of the students.

Njoku^[17] investigated the influence of single parental upbringing on the academic performance of the senior secondary school in government as an educational subject in Zaria Local Government Area of Kaduna state, Nigeria. The research instruments for the data collection were questionnaire and achievement test from a total sample of 335 participants (12 teachers and 323 students). The findings show that educational attainment and occupational status of a single parent has significant impacts on student's academic performance. It further establishes a major association between parental income and academic performance of students from poor and wealthy single or two parental homes. Amoakohene^[18] studied the relationship between single parenting and academic performance among secondary school students in Afigya, Sekyere East District of the Ashanti Region. The questionnaire was used as the tool for data collection to carry out a social survey on a total sample of 200 students. The results showed that academic performance and single parenting are negatively correlated, thus, the more cases of single parenting the worse the academic performance.

Ochonogor^[6] studied the significance of single parenthood on adolescent educational accomplishments in 'South Africa: A socio-educational perspective'. A sample of 44 comprises of 35 students, 4 teachers and 5 parents were used for the study data were obtained from the teachers and students through questionnaire while the parents were interviewed. The author found that there is a keen positive correlation between adolescent education accomplishment and single parenthood. Findings further revealed that majority of students from two-parent perform well at school while fewer and outstanding students from single parent children perform well academically.

The type of parenting a single mother provided to her children may be due to the interference from the cause. Her psychological imbalance may lead to withdrawal or worse parenting or both^[19]. Single mothers are often seen and portrayed as incompetent when compared to their married counterparts. Nicolette, compared children's perceptions of their mother's parenting style within single and married families. The results indicated that mothers were perceived as favouring more autonomy than psychologically controlling parenting systems. The results also stated that there were no major dissimilarities between children's perceptions of a maternal parent in single and married families. A qualitative research by Weldegabreal^[20] found that financial problem (difficulties encountered by the mothers to meet fundamental needs of their children and family) and psychological issues (solitude, vulnerability and despondency) were the most important stress factors for the majority of single mothers with little support from the community, government and non-governmental organisations. While

children of single mothers receive little assistance in their educational commitments from their mothers which causes a negative effect on their performance in the school.

EFFECT OF SINGLE MOTHER PARENTING ON STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The family structure preferably provides a sense of safety and constancy that is essential for children^[11]. He further states that when there is a collapse in the family structure, it may have a very great effect on a child and their ability to function normally or attain academic objectives. The reality is that the child no longer has two parents to rely on. In this study, such child depends on the mother to meet a large portion, if not all, their needs. Due to inadequate finances and time, the mothers are unlikely to provide the sufficient support the child requires to perform to the best of his or her ability. This is necessarily imply that the mother is not providing enough love and attention. When the father is absent and the mother is not advantaged enough to provide for all the essential needs as well as oversee the academic performance of the child, the child will be backward or withdrawn^[21]. The case is the same when the mother is absent and the father is not advantaged enough. Given the positive influence of parental involvement on children's educational outcome, children raised in single parent families might not be given the essential attention they need because the single parent might be besieged by many responsibilities.

In line with the above, Amoakohene^[18] observe that children raised in single parent families are three times more apt to be high-school dropouts than children from two-parent families because single parents are the major and often the solitary source of financial support for the family and thus have less time to help children with school work, are more unlikely to use consistent disciplinary practices and have less parental control and all of these circumstances may lead to lower academic achievement. More specifically, Song etc, argue that children from single mother homes are at lower risk of dropping out of school compared to the children living with a father only or with a stepmother or stepfather. Furthermore, children from homes with many siblings have less parental support necessary to make headway with school work. The level of parental support an involvement with child's education has been found to impact school drop out, either positively or negatively^[7]. Uneducated mothers lack the capability to support their children academic development which impacts the child's academic performance^[22]. Videnovic and Lazarevic^[22], investigated familial and individual reasons for student's drop out. A semi-structured interview was employed to obtain data from twelve (12) students who are dropout and who are the risk of dropping out with four (4) parents.

The results showed among many that lack of parental support, socio-economic status of the family, bad relationships with parents, chronic illness of a family member are the prominent causes of student's dropout.

Similarly, Simon *et al.*^[8] examined the effect of single parenting on the academic performance among the students of Amamoma Presbyterian Junior High School in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The authors utilised descriptive survey design with a total sample of 47 students who were recognized to be residing with a single parent. The questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The findings established that a larger percentage of the respondents are on occasion dejected and emotionally unsound and this makes them uncomfortable in their academic pursuits. Furthermore, it showed that single parents do not often examine and oversee the obligatory learning materials of their children to assist their learning. In contrary, Lawal and Adediran^[23] studied the effects of a single parent on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Ibadan, South East Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The authors found that there is no significant difference between students from single mother home as a result of divorce and their academic achievement. Similarly, no noteworthy dissimilarity was observed between the academic achievement of students from single parent and their counterparts from a two-parent home.

Children from single parent households are prone to personality issues and develop antisocial behavioural tendencies. Congruently in the study by Oke on personality development, he evaluated the effect of single parenting on personality development of female undergraduate of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye in Ogun state, Nigeria. Total samples of 200 participants were purposively selected from 4 faculties. The results showed that single parenting influenced the personality factors of female undergraduates in relations to their interpersonal relationship^[24]. Single parent home mostly produces children who are more likely to experience deficiencies and denials of some rights and opportunities, resulting in a negative psycho-social impact on them in school^[3]. He further stated that the inability of the single parent to cope is as a result of the doubled responsibilities the parent (single mother or father) faces which requires extra time, attention and money. Therefore, less attention is paid to the psychological well-being and education of the child.

Stephen and Udisi^[21] investigated single parent families and their impact on children. Amassoma Community as a case study, Bayelsa state, Nigeria. A sample of 150 respondents (children between 12-17 years) who are living in single parent or two-parent homes. The questionnaire was used to obtain data from the respondents. The authors found that children raised in single families face considerably more problems than

children in two-parent families. The boys in single-parent homes face greater problems than girls in single-parent homes. The findings further revealed that younger children face greater problems than children that are a little bit mature due to the trauma they faced. Jaiyeola and Akinjide^[25] investigated the influence of single parenthood on the academic performance of undergraduate medical students from the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was utilised. A sample of 57 undergraduates were purposively chosen for the study. Data collection was done using a questionnaire. The results revealed that the absence of one would definitely have an effect on the income level of the households which might make it impossible to provide all the necessary resources that would better the academic performance by students from single parent background.

SINGLE MOTHER'S PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THEIR INFLUENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Generally, parenting is demanding and complex even when the two parents are actively responsible, let alone single mother^[26]. The complexity of parenting exposes single mothers to some challenges. Literature have shown that financial problems, social challenges and psychological challenges faced by single mothers influences their children socially and academically^[20,27]. Caissie *et al.*^[27] argue that single mother parenting is a very difficult situation to manage, aside their daily challenges budgeting was one of their major struggles. Kimani and Kombo^[28] investigated challenges facing nuclear families with absent fathers in Kenya. It was found that families with absent fathers suffered identity and provision crisis, father's absence made single mothers bear extra burden of productive roles and it also bring about socio-economic crises as well as leadership vacuum. They further found that absence father had serious effect on the children's discipline and contributed to their negative behaviour.

Moreover, Nyoni^[29] noted that single mothers had financial difficulties in paying their children school fees, provision food and the transportation fare for taking their children to school, paying their rents. Nyoni^[29] maintained further that lack of father to support in the care of children poses a challenge to single mothers as all the burdens are left on single mothers. Similarly, Raniga and Ngcobo^[30] investigated single mother's experiences based on their individual livelihood. The results showed that single mothers find it difficult to strike the balance with their job and caring and monitoring their children as a result of their tiresome work schedule which limit their capability to assist their children academically.

Furthermore, childcare responsibilities prevent single mothers from getting a well-paid job because these types of jobs are time demanding, this forced them to look for lower pay jobs resulting with inadequate income and resources which exposes their children to lower academic performance^[31]. Vyskocil investigated the issues, requirements and experiences of single mothers of students in higher education. The (26) single mothers of students were interviewed. According to the findings the single mothers revealed that time bounds and numerous competing demands for resources already restricted due to the absence of a partner led to insufficient financial, physical and emotional support needed to meet the challenges of bringing up children to responsible adulthood. They further revealed that they are guilty of not been able to sufficiently support their children's school work or extracurricular activities which may eventually influence their academic performance and behaviours.

Owing to deficiency of supplementary support (father's absence) in managing household concerns, single mothers exhibit high degrees of psychological distress which indirectly affects their children's social behaviour^[32]. Children growing up in single mother homes are less unlikely to undergo delinquency in behaviour than their counterpart from intact homes majorly due to absence of father-daughter and father-son relationships^[33]. In view of father and daughter relationship, a stable relationship with fathers is crucial part of development in young girls when transitioning to womanhood because they are emotional beings who are craving for intimacy and closeness, if the relationship with their father vanished, it could be an overwhelming effect on them psychologically even with their relationship with other people especially opposite sex^[34-36].

Furthermore, absence of father's interactions with daughters can result in insecurity issues, antisocial behaviours and promiscuity at an early age because girls often look up to their father for examples for any behaviour since their fathers were the first males to shower them with love, therefore, their opinions and thought are more valued than that of mothers^[33, 34] such behaviours interrupt the development in girls and can cause external and internal turmoil for the rest of their life^[33]. Molongoana^[35] studied the experiences of father absence in subject to young women who grew up without a father. Findings suggested that female children with absent father figures find it difficult to relate with men. This makes it difficult for them to establish healthy romantic relationships.

In a study from Saudi Arabia by Alnafea and Curtis^[36] the authors investigated the impact of mother's parenting techniques on the self-regulated learning behaviour of students in schools. Adapted parenting style questionnaire and motivated strategies for learning questionnaire were

the instruments utilised on a sample size of 351 respondents (grade 5-6 students and their mothers). The findings showed that authoritative methods are considerably and positively correlated to student's self-efficacy, cognitive, meta-cognitive strategy use, study and time management. Permissive styles are significant but negatively correlated to self-efficiency and meta-cognitive self-regulation. Authoritarian techniques have minute negative effects on time and study organization and minor positive effects on help seeking, although both are slightly important.

In South Africa, recent data show that there has been an upsurge in the number of absent fathers since the end of apartheid and consequently, children under the age of fifteen in the care of only the mother^[37, 38]. The data showed the proportion of these children from 45 to 52% between 1996 and 2009^[39]. Children growing up with absent fathers may have difficulties to transmit into adulthood due to lack of positive male role models as well as being deprived financially, physically and emotionally^[38, 40]. Due to this lack, the children struggle to perform well academically^[37]. It was further proposed by some researchers that development in single mother families amplifies the possibility of dropping out of school, becoming teen parents, lack of medical facilities as well as detachment from the workforce.

In contrary, Anyakoha^[41] examined single parents as a correlate of academic performance of students in Unity schools in South East Geo-political zone of Nigeria. A sample size of 476 (212 males and 264 females) from unity secondary schools was used for the study. The classroom academic performance scores and questionnaire were the research instruments used for obtaining data from the respondents of the study. The author found that, despite the financial condition of single parents, they support and aid their children educationally. Considering the available literature, single mother parenting influences the children socially, psychologically, emotionally and academically negatively or positively.

MOTHER'S LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Education has a pivotal role in the character building of individuals as well as a basic tool used society for transmission of societal values^[19]. Khan *et al.*^[42] indicated the connection between parent's educational level and their children academic achievement. Khan *et al.*^[42] explored the effect and impact of parents educational on student's academic achievements at the secondary level of education in Dera Ghazi Khan: A total sample of 200 students of grade 10 was used for this study. The grade 9th results of these students (secondary school certificate) by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education in Dera Ghazi Khan, oral interview, examination and

questionnaires were the instrumental tool used to gather data from the respondents. The findings established a positive association between parent's educational stage and academic achievements of students.

It has been widely reported that the socio-economic backgrounds of the parents affect student's academic performance^[43-45] as these parents could afford very good schools with high fee payment, necessary learning materials, after school lesson to complement school works, and even to get housemaid to relieve their children of house chores for them to have more time to their studies while students from poor socio-economic home background take up part-time jobs to augment the little support from their parents.

According to Ekpe *et al.*^[44], the authors examined the regulatory effect of self-motivation on the relationship between parent's socioeconomic background on their children's academic performance at Nigerian Universities. A sample of 150 final year students in 2012/2013 academic session from Business Faculties in the North, East and West regions of Nigeria. Questionnaires were used as an instrumental tool to obtain data from the respondents. The authors found that student's self-motivation (hard work) and significant parental socio-economic background are obligatory to achieve academic success. In a similar vein, Obugo-Ololube,^[45] investigated the influence of parental background on the academic accomplishment of secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. A sample size of 1,426 senior secondary school students was randomly selected from a population of 4,752 respondents. Data from the respondents was obtained using a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that considerable correlations existed between parent's socioeconomic and educational background, the income class, family size and the academic achievement grades of the students.

In contrary, Ebong^[19] examine parental background on student's academic accomplishment in secondary schools in Abak Local Government Area of Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. 1,440 physics students in Senior Secondary School three (SSS3) from 12 schools in both Day and Boarding school within the Local Government were used as the sample for the study. The physics results from West African Examination Council (WAEC) with the interaction of the researcher with the principal and teachers in the selected schools were used as the instrument for collecting data. The results showed that family structure, parent's profession and educational level of parents did not have a significant influence on student's performance in Physics rather the teachers have much influence on student's performance in Physics. The literature reviewed indicated that student's academic performance is influenced by the socioeconomic background and educational level of the mothers, as

mothers with high income can take complete responsibilities of their children's education. The financial and moral support a child receives from the parent (mother) affect him or her psychologically which reflected in his or her academic performance.

SINGLE MOTHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PARENTING ROLE TO ENHANCE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Parenting role in enhancing children academic performance involves assisting a child with their schoolwork, buying learning resources for the child, corresponding with the school, using some patterns in guiding the child, attending school activities that are relevant to school performance, paying school fees, and having high expectations for the child to progress into higher education studies^[46]. Hence, the parental role in education involves a range of instructive and educational tasks. These may include parenting styles, parental involvement or provision creates a positive learning environment that will be beneficial for teaching and learning to take place. These roles require much time and attention which made the effectiveness of these roles by single mothers to be more difficult, due to the dual responsibilities placed on the mothers by father's absence. Researchers braced this by suggesting that, children raised by single mothers have less parental attention and supervision due to dual responsibilities of being a caregiver and provider coupled with working long hours so as to meet up with their children's needs^[47, 48].

Many studies show that parenting styles has an effective influence in children and adolescent development and is usually connected with adolescent outcomes including academic achievement^[49-51]. Goitseona^[50] examined the relationship between perceived parenting style, resilience and emotional intelligence among adolescents. A total sample of 426 grade 10 adolescents (15-18 years) was used for the study. The questionnaire was used to obtain the data from the participants. The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between parenting styles (permissive, authoritarian and authoritative) on resiliency and emotional intelligence among adolescents. The findings revealed further that there is a significant difference between males and female's perception on parenting styles.

Similarly, Odonga *et al.*^[51] explored the influence of parenting styles on adolescent's academic achievement in day schools in the North Rachuonyo sub-county, Kenya. 263-day secondary school students registered for Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examinations (KSCE) in 2015 from 47 schools Rachuonyo North sub-county with 10 principals were used as the sample. The questionnaire was used to obtain data from the sampled students while the

sampled principals were interviewed. The study indicated that parenting styles statistically and significantly predict the academic performance of adolescents. Aside from parenting styles in parenting role, it is essential to consider the importance of parental involvement by single mothers in enhancing student's academic performance.

Parent involvement is expected to provide a good and conducive climate for social, intellectual and emotional development of the child and also to provide love, security, guidance and care that instigates good academic performance^[7]. Studies have shown that parental involvement such as helping with home works, attending school meetings, participating in school event and encouraging children verbally or materially is a strong predictor for achieving positive learning outcomes^[52, 53, 7]. Parental involvement implies the direct or indirect impact of parental behaviour on learner's cognitive ability and academic performance^[54]. Parental involvement occurs when parents take an effective role in creating a compassionate educational environment^[55]. According to Epstein framework, six types of parental involvement were identified, which are; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community.

In line with Epstein, (SASA), South African School's Act 84 of 1996 requires the parents to be occupied in the education of their children by assisting with fund raising, infrastructural development and school maintenance. According to section 6.1 of the Act, parents must be actively involved in their children's school work and ensure that the homework is completed. The new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) also specify that parents and communities have important roles to play in curriculum management. Most researchers suggest that socio-economic, parental self-efficacy, the occupations and levels of educational achievement of single mothers stimulate their level of parental involvement which in turn influences the children's academic performance^[56, 57, 7]. Education is the tool for empowerment and parental level of education predicts the possibility and the quality of parental involvement^[7]. Kapinga^[56] studied the impact of the parental socio-economic status on the academic achievement in secondary schools in Tanzania the results showed that the parents with high academic qualification and formal occupation are knowledgeable about the importance of education to their children and they are always ready to support them by buying useful learning materials, prompt payment of school fees and provision of funds for remedial classes.

Makua^[7] consolidated the above findings. Makua examined parental participation and its effect on academic performance of student in Korogwe, Tanzania. Questionnaire and interview were the research

instruments used in obtaining data from the sample. The study found that parents with low level of education were less likely to participate in their children's school work which may lead to their poor academic performance. The results further suggest that low income parents were unable to provide sufficient home needs and school learning requirements for their children. Makoni^[7] investigated the experience of young adults raised by single parent families in the Raymond Mhlaba local municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Focus group discussion and semi-structured interview and were used to gather data from a sample size of 26 (male and female participants). The findings revealed that although, children who are raised in single-parent homes can attain high levels of education and have solid functional relationships in later life, a lack of finance and inactive parental involvement in their educational activities and social lives can serve as hindrances their development and academic performance.

Parental involvement includes efficient contact between teachers and parents, communication about children's work and their challenges^[55]. Hence, effective parent-teacher communication is essential for a teacher to be successful and also essential for students to progress^[58]. Okeke^[59] investigated the level of parental involvement in the schooling of their children. Descriptive case study research design was used, unstructured interview was adopted to obtain data from 30 parents whose children went to primary schools in London. The results showed that most parents care about their children's education and want to participate. The results further revealed that most of these parents do not always know how to participate and some are intimidated by the operational structures within the schools. In view of the above, parental involvement is a basic factor in building a reliable foundation to boost the children's academic performance.

Apparently, parenting style and parental involvement are paramount in parenting role for enhancing good academic performance due to their direct contribution towards the growth and development of children and adolescent overall well-being especially on education.

CONCLUSION

Given the review of the literature, the effect of growing up in single-parent households have been shown to go beyond economics, increasing the risk of children dropping out of school but disconnecting them from the labour force and becoming teen parents. Also, the educational status of the mothers and student's academic performance are closely related. This is because mothers themselves having being to school are consciously aware of the importance of being educated. They stand a better chance in giving necessary support to their children to

enhance academic performance. Well-educated mothers contribute to their children's learning opportunities at home, through their day to day interaction and involvement in their school works. Mothers with higher occupational status and educational attainment may also have higher aspirations for their children's academic performance and choice of occupation which in turn can influence their commitment to learning.

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