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ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF SINGLE PARENTING IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

¹ EJEH, B., ²ARIGBEDE, Y.A³ UBI O.M and ⁴BELLO, A.O (MRS)

¹Department of Geography and Environmental Management, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

²Department of Geography and Environmental Management, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

³Department of Geography and regional planning, Federal University, Dutsin-ma, Katsina State, Nigeria.

⁴Geography Department, Federal College of Education, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding Author's Email: findbenejehnear82@gmail.com

Abstract

Child upbringing is a shared responsibility of both parents. In recent times single parenthood is becoming more widespread. It is seen as raising a child by one parent alone, whether the other parent is alive or not. This is seen as normal by some, and thus offer social support; or as absurd, unacceptable, shameful and thus stigmatized both the single parents and their children. How does the Benue community perceive single parenthood using six LGA across the three senatorial zones. Data were obtained through questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview. Purposive sampling method was used to select six Local Government Areas, while 386 households were chosen as sample size based on Yamane 1976 formula. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, mean score, map were used for the analysis. Result from the finding indicates that the incidence of single parenthood is a common reality with about 78% in the study area and about 69% perceived the incidence as either bad and very bad. These increases vary over space. It is established that migration, divorce, conflict/crisis, death are the most contributory factors influencing the prevalence of single parenthood. Chi-square results the influence of age ($\chi^2=5.982$), religion ($\chi^2=30.223$), education ($\chi^2=18.213$), occupation ($\chi^2=16.822$) and income ($\chi^2=23.801$) on the increase in the incidence of single parenthood at 0.05 significance level. Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended that government should strengthen marriage institution to promote stable family pattern, the government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), and well-wishers should provide scholarship and welfare packages to children from single parents' home to enable them with their educational pursuit, rather than constituting deviant behaviour to the society. There should be a network of social support for families affected to tackle negative effects of single parenting as well as campaigns against discrimination of such families.

Key words: Community perception; Single parenthood; Benue State



1. Introduction

The 21st Century has witnessed a tremendous transformation in the family structure; one of which is the increase in the incidence of single parenthood. Single parenting is a person who lives with child/children and does not have a wife or husband (Thomas 2018). The number of single households reached 202.6 million in 2006 from 153.5 million in 1996 with about 11.8% of total households. In 2006, one-person households accounted for 28.9% of all households in Western Europe, 26.7% in North America and 25.7% in Australia and Asia. According to Grall (2009), there are approximately 13.7 million single parents in US with more than 12 million single parents in custody of over 20 million children in 2000. This increased to 21.8 million children raised by single parents in 2009 (about 26% of children 21 years and below).

In Africa as reported by Haregu, Begu and Ezech (2017), that there is an upsurge of single parent household especially female headed household. For instance, in Kenya female headed household declined from 32.7 in 1993 to 32.2 in 2014. While the rate was 35.3 and 21.5 in rural and urban area in 1993, it was 35.8 and 27.3 in 2014. This suggests that, single parent household is becoming a norm despite the dearth of data on the magnitude of its prevalence in Africa. Only one third of children are growing up living with both parents while about 48% of children are growing up with absent but living fathers in Africa (Anyebe et al 2017). In South Africa, about 28% of women are single parents. South African children are by

far the least likely to be living with both father and mother as just 36% of South African children live with both parents, and one in five lives with neither parent. Six of every 10 Kenyan women are likely to be single mothers by the time they reach 45, one of the highest rates for single-parent families in Africa (Haregu, et al, 2017).

There is a greater variation in the cumulative risk of becoming a single mother after first marriage. While only about 25% of women in Ethiopia will experience an episode of post-marital single motherhood, approximately half of women in both Malawi and Zimbabwe are expected to become single mothers via divorce or widowhood. Moreover, with the notable exception of Kenya, women are far more likely to become single mothers following divorce or death of a spouse than by having a premarital birth. In all countries, the total likelihood of ever being a single mother by the age of 45 is quite substantial: 30.0% in Ethiopia, 59.5% in Kenya, 61.0% in Malawi, 51.7% in Tanzania, and 68.8% in Zimbabwe.

Figures from Nigeria as other parts have also reported such increases as reported by Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2008). Nigerian households are predominantly headed by men (81%) and less than one in five (19%) are headed by women. Female-headed households are more common in urban areas (21%) than in rural areas (19%). There has been a slight increase in the proportion of female-headed households from 17 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in the 2008 and also 82% and 18% of the



households in Nigeria are headed by men in 2018. Single parent household increase from 11.1 in 1990 to 16% in 2013 (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018).

Upsurge of single parents in Nigeria according to Falana, Bada and Ayodele (2012) have been associated with two main routes, namely relationship breakdown/increasing rates of divorce and birth of child out of wedlock has been reported. Although there are others links such as, being widowed, migration (migrant labour management) and people are choosing not to marry, because marriage in recent times appears no longer serve interest of many women as reported by Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2008), causing many women who wish to have children to do so without marrying, opting to remain single parents. Single parenthood in Nigeria is becoming a norm rather than anomaly, where children born into such families are legitimized even if the child has never seen a father. Benue State has experienced such transformation as other parts. There is no doubt this incidence of single parenthood varies over space and these have effects on the individual member of the family and society at large. For instance, Chukwuka (2018) documented that children from single parent family/home are likely to faced emotional destabilization, negative social disposition, and poor moral upbringing among others. Wajim and Harry (2020) added that, single parent experience psychological instability, face stress, depressed, angry, frustrated and helpless among other things.

Given the fact that single parenthood is a global phenomenon, many authors have contributed to the discussion from both developed and developing countries based on their perceptions such as Keswet and Dapas (2010), Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo and Adeniyi (2017), Amarjit (2017), Wajim and Harry (2020). Despite the aforementioned studies from various authors much about the variation of the incidence of single parenthood over space remains fairly unknown in Nigeria in general and Benue State in particular. This creates a gap in knowledge which this study fills. The study therefore analyzed community perception on single parenthood over space in Benue State, Nigeria.

2. The Family Composition Theory

This theory was propounded by McLanahan and Sandefur in 1994. According to the theory two-parents or intact families are the ideal family structure for children. The theory argues that children that are not raised by both biological parents are likely to suffer lower levels of well-being than children from intact families. This is because such children are likely to lose social capital, which refers to the emotional, economic and educational support that parents provide for their children. The theory concluded that the decision of parents to live away from each other whether as a result of divorce or an initial decision not to marry damages, and sometimes destroys, the social capital that might have been available to children if they are together.



This means when biological parents live away from each other, children lose a close connection to the nonresidential parent. Such parents do not feel emotionally involved in their children's lives and are less likely to feel financially responsible for their children. Theorists who favour the family composition model see this loss of social capital for children from single-parent and non-intact families as inevitable. Therefore, they argue that family structure has a direct connection to the well-being of children. The major weakness of the theory is that, it fails to realize that the loss of social capital from one parent can be replaced by another individual or that the residential parent can compensate for the absent one

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Study Area

Benue State lies within the lower river Benue trough in the middle belt region of Nigeria. It is located between Latitude $6^{\circ} 30'$ to $8^{\circ} 0' 0''$ N of the equator and longitude $7^{\circ} 30'$ to $10^{\circ} 0' 0''$ E of the Greenwich meridian (see figure 1). Benue State shares boundaries with

(Acock and Demo, 1994). The theory is relevant to the study by the fact that, two parent family remains the ideal family structure in Benue family like other parts of Nigeria while single parent has negative effect on people especially children and women. The theory was used to explain the factors responsible for and the implication of family transformation especially single parenthood which is not only limited to children but individual member of the family.

other States like Nassarawa to the north, Taraba to the east, Cross-River to the south, Enugu to the south-west and Kogi to the west. The state also shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroun on the south-east with a landmass of 32,518 square kilometer (Ujoh and Alhassan, 2014).

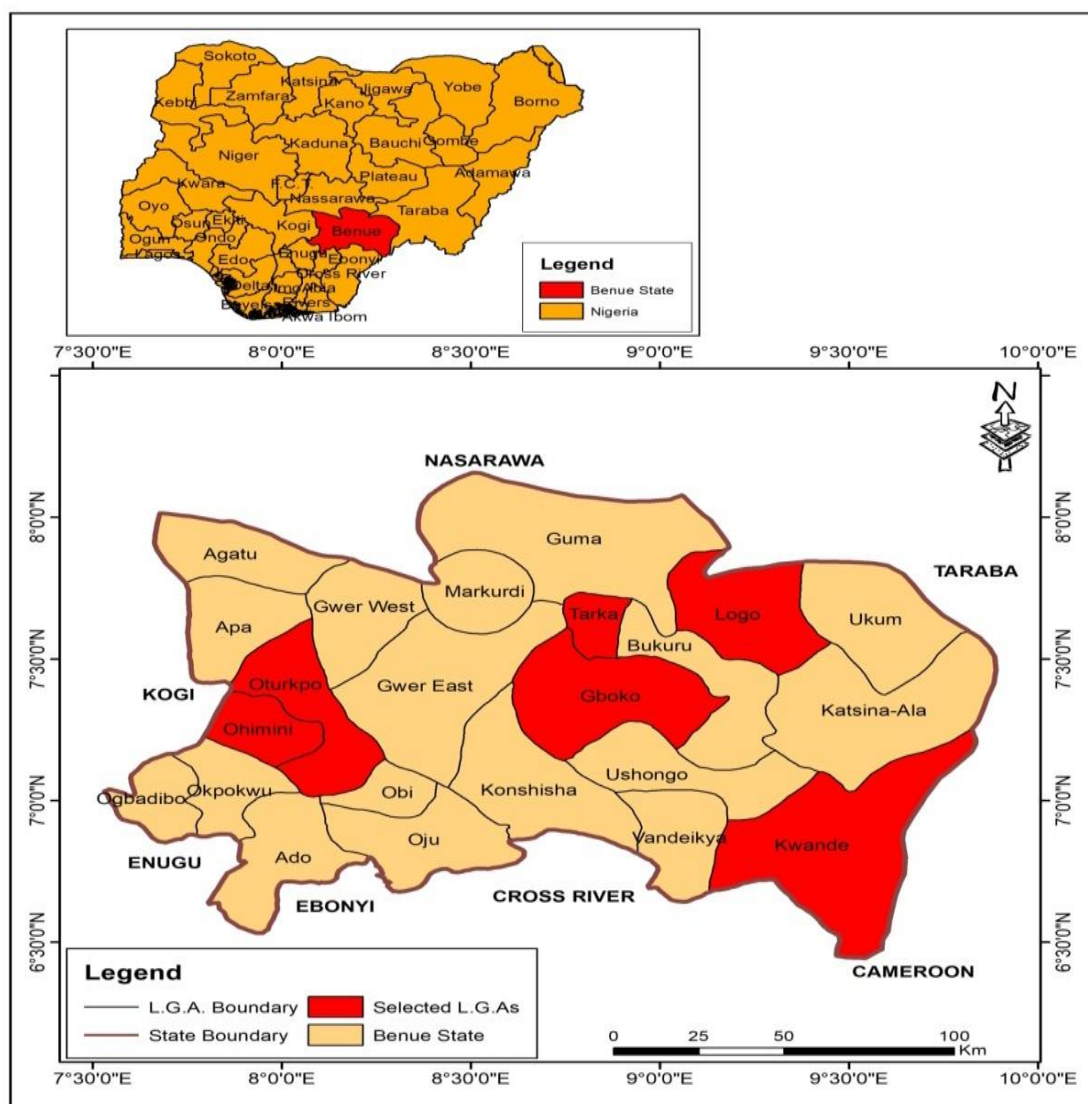


Figure 1: Benue State showing the selected LGA

Source: Adapted from Administrative Map of Nigeria (2019)

3.2 Data collection

Reconnaissance survey was conducted; this is to have proper perspective on the incidence of single parenthood among the people in recent times. Consultations were made with relevant agencies that are custodians of demographic data such as National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

and Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). During the survey, it was observed that, there is a change in the family life of people in the study area. These changes vary over space. These become a concern to the researcher as to what could be the reasons for the changes and the implication looking at Benue State with



different socio-economic characteristics. Issues like this informed the data types and other aspects of methodology. The types of data obtained include: Demographic and socio-economic profiles of respondents, incidence of single parenthood. Primary and secondary data were obtained. The primary data were obtained through the use of questionnaire which was complemented with Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) as well as In-depth interview (IDI) while secondary data were obtained from national population census data such as population figure of Benue State, Number of Local Government Areas and council wards. Data on single parenthood were obtained from National Bureau of Statistic, Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. Others include textbooks, library research, journals, published and unpublished projects and theses.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad \text{Where, } n = \text{sample size, } N = \text{Population size,}$$

e = Level of significance (set at 0.05 for this study). Where, Sample size for each of the selected

LGA = $\frac{\text{Total estimated household size for each LGA}}{\text{Total number of households in the selected LGAs}}$ x sample

317, 474

$$\frac{317, 474}{1 + 317, 474 (0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{317, 474}{793.685} = 400$$

A total of 386 households were used as sample size. The projection of selected

2.3 Sample size and sampling technique

Benue State has a population of 6, 427, 991 (2019) as projected. It comprises twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas which are grouped into three (3) senatorial zones. In order to arrive at the estimated number of households, Nigeria average house size of six (6) persons per household was used to divide the projected population in each of the Local Government Areas (LGAs). This gave a total of 1, 114, 412 number of households in Benue State. A total of 317, 474 households in the selected LGAs were used as the study population. To determine the sample size, Yamane (1967) method for determining sample size was used and the formula is:

LGAs was based on the Benue State Population growth rate of 3.6%.



Table 1: The selected LGAs from each zone and no. of questionnaire administered

Zones	Estimated households	No. of Questionnaire
Gkoko	96, 160	116
Kwande	60, 005	79
Logo	45, 128	55
Ohimini	18, 264	24
Otukpo	70, 901	86
Tarka	20, 301	26
Total	310, 759	386

Source: Field Survey, 2019

After grouping the Local Government Areas (LGAs) according to the three (3) senatorial zones, two LGAs were purposively selected from each senatorial zone making a total of six (6) Local Government Areas (LGAs). From the selected two LGAs, one with the highest and lowest estimated households were purposively selected from each Senatorial zones. This is to enhance equal representation from each senatorial zone. The household at ward level in each of the selected LGAs served as a unit of observation. After arranging the wards in each of the selected LGAs alphabetically, systematic sampling was used to select the second, fourth ward in that order. What informed this method was the uneven distribution of the number of wards in each of the selected LGAs.

4.2 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were coded manually and entered into and analyzed using SPSS version 21. Simple descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables and mean score and map were used for the analysis. In addition, chi-square was used to test the significant difference in

the incidence of single parenthood among socio-economic and demographic subgroups.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of respondents

The sex distribution of respondents is presented in Table 2. Results show that about 62% of the household heads were males while 38% were females. This is in tandem with the fact that, the households in Benue State like other traditional African societies are male-headed dominated. This is in consonance with similar studies on households by Osezua 2009; Ogwuche and Asoba 2013; Aboajah, Andrew, Chia and Okeme 2018 which reported in Benue State 78% and 23%, 69% and 31%, 71% and 29% dominated by male-heads. The studies were conducted in the same State which could be the reason for the similarity as revealed by the respondents. However, the findings disagree with Manyara (2016) on changing family structure where the composition of females outnumbered that of male in Kenya. The difference could be attributed to the location which is made of people with different socio-



economic characteristics from the present study areas. Laah (2003) reported that, the dynamics of a country's age and sex structure are

central in any meaningful demographic analysis because of its significant demographic, economic and social implication.

Table 2 Sex, Age, Marital status, occupation and monthly incomes of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	240	62.2
Female	146	37.8
Age group (years)		
35-39	9	2.3
40-44	22	5.7
45-49	41	10.6
50-54	101	26.2
55-59	65	16.8
60-64	71	18.4
65 and above	77	19.9
Marital Status		
Single	33	8.5
Married	237	61.5
Widow	41	10.6
Divorce	49	12.6
Separated	26	6.7
Occupation		
Civil service	88	22.8
Farming	212	54.9
Pettytrading/business	62	16.1
Artisan	10	2.6
Student	8	2.1
Housewife	6	1.6
Monthly income		
No fixed income	131	33.9
₦5000- ₦10,000	42	10.9
₦10,000- ₦15,000	37	9.6
₦15,000- ₦20,000	45	11.7
₦20,000- ₦25,000	22	5.7
₦25,000- ₦30,000	6	1.6
₦30,000- ₦35,000	13	3.4
₦35,000- ₦40,000	26	6.7
₦40,000 and above	64	16.6

Source: Field Survey



Age is a socio-economic attribute upon which household abilities and physical disposition in planning, organizing, controlling resources are based. The age distribution of respondents in Table indicates the dominance of 50 years and above which accounts for 81%. Only few were between the age brackets of 35-39. The finding established that most household heads in the selected Local Government were adults. Among them, about 38% were aged. The findings corroborate with that of Attah, Mbah and Okeke (2018) and Aboajah, Onjewu, Chia and Ocheme (2018) where it was reported that, the majority of the household heads in Benue State were within the age bracket 50 years and above. The marital status of reveals that majority of the respondents (62%) were married. Others include widow (10.6%), divorce (12.7%) and separated (6.7%). The finding is in tandem with studies in Benue State by Osezua (2009); Okeke, Ihenacho and Obasi (2015); Upev, Haruna and Giroh (2016) where 77.5% 69.2% 82.5% of the respondents were married accordingly.

Result of occupation of the respondents reveals that 55% were full time farmers who depend mainly on farming as means of livelihood. Others are 23% are in civil service, 16% are petty traders, 3% are artisan, 2% are students and 2% are housewife. This is in consonance with the study by Ejeh (2016) and Aboajah *et al* (2018) where 55% and 97% of the respondents were farmers. The income distribution of respondents reveals that 34% have no fixed income. This could be nature of occupation engage in. About 32% earned monthly income between

₦5,000-₦20,000. Only about 28.2% of the respondents earned monthly income above the national minimum wage of ₦30, 000 (thirty thousand Naira) as obtainable in Nigeria. This suggests that most of the sampled population were low-income earners, which is very much related to the kind of socio-economic activities engaged in. Secondly, it could be attributed to the high number of respondents with primary education as highest qualification which can influence their opportunities to be gainfully employed in high income jobs. The level of income an individual earns could greatly influence his or her wellbeing such as quality of medical care, education and so on. The employment or occupational status of both men and women could influence family transformation. Those who work outside the home especially in the urban area have higher tendencies of experiencing some form of family transformation such as marital separation which can be detrimental to the family wholeness. Most employed couples tend not to have enough time for marriage related cum family gender roles such as parental supervision, domestic chores among others and delegate these tasks to house helps. However, the study disagrees with Ogwuche and Asoba (2013) where majority of the household heads earn monthly income of 51-100,000 per month in Benue State.

3.2 Education, ethnicity and Religion of Respondents

Table 3 indicates the level of education of respondents. Result shows that, majority (82%) had formal education



while about 18% had no formal education.

Table 3 Level of Education, ethnicity and Religion of Respondents

Highest Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	68	17.6
Primary	146	37.8
Secondary	98	25.4
Post-secondary	74	19.8
Ethnic Group		
Idoma	93	24.1
Tiv	204	52.8
Igbo	34	8.8
Igede	40	10.4
Yoruba	5	1.3
Hausa	10	2.6
Religion		
Islam	12	3.1
Christianity	368	95.3
Traditional	6	1.6

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The low level of education especially the percentage of respondent with no formal education suggests that, they lack employment skills which could limit their potential to be gainfully employed. The ethnic composition of the respondents in Table 3 shows that Tiv (52.8%) are the major ethnic group followed by Idomas with 24%. The reason for high population of Tiv and Idomas could be attributed to their dominance in the area. Secondly, the two major urban centres in the study area apart from the state capital are the administrative headquarters of the two ethnic groups which are dominated by

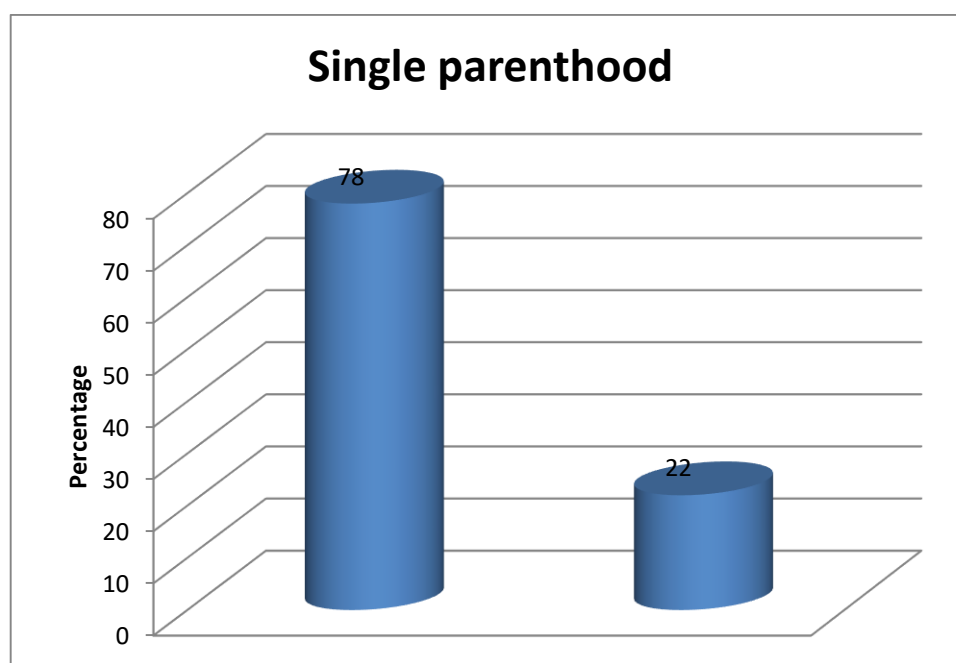
Tiv and Idomas. This is in conformity with the work of Otanwa (2018) where Tiv and Idoma constitute the majority of the ethnic groups in Benue State. Others were Igede, Ibos, Yoruba and Hausas. The religion of respondents is shown in Table 3. Based on the results, 95% of respondents practice Christianity with only 5% being traditional and Muslims. The reason for high population of Christians is due to their dominance in the State. In confirmation of the findings, Ejeh (2016) and Otanwa (2017) in their study reported Christian religion as the dominant religion with few

Muslim and traditional worshippers in Benue State.

4.3 Level of awareness of the increase in single parenthood in the study area

The level of awareness of single parenthood are presented in Figure 4. According to the results there are about 78% awareness of single parenthood by the respondents. This is an indication

that single parenthood is a common social phenomenon in the study area. According to National Bureau of Statistics 1999; 2005 and 2009, the incidence of single parenthood was about 5.5% before year 2000 in Benue State which has witnessed a change in the 21st Century to about 16.0% with a difference of about 11%.



Source: Field survey, 2019

This is similar with Anyebe et al (2017) which report 98% awareness of single parenting in Zaria. This furthermore reaffirms the position of Nwachukwu (2008); Ekpenyong and Udisi (2016) who both reported a fast growing number of single parents of 19% in Bayelsa. Akinade and Akinjide (2016) documented that, before the 21st Century, the existence of single parenthood was unknown in Nigeria, and where cases existed they were regarded as exceptional cases but presently, it is a

growing phenomenon with Ibadan having 3.9% and 24% in pre and post 2000.

4.4 Perception on the incidence of single parenthood

Figure 2 shows the level of perception of single parent households in the study area. Respondents were asked to rate the incidence of single parenthood based on their perception. Result reveals that, about 69% of respondents perceived single parenting as either bad or very bad, indicating it is not acceptable; only

10% perceived single parenting as acceptable.

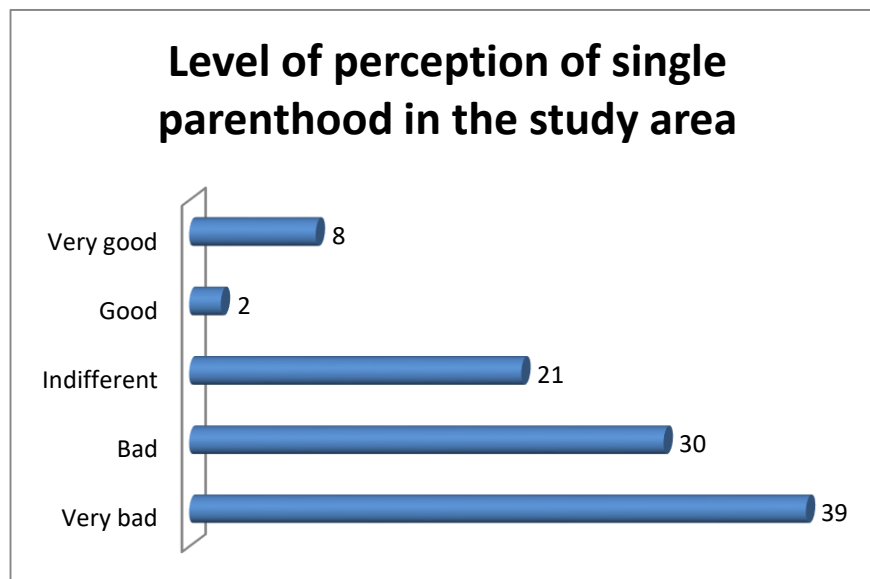


Figure 2 Perception of single parent households
Source: Field survey, 2019

This is tandem with Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo and Adeniyi (2017) who reported about 63% perception of single parenthood as very bad and bad in urban Zaria. Other studies such as: David (2009) reported that many children from disrupted families have a harder time achieving intimacy in a relationship, forming a stable marriage, or even holding a steady Job. According to Marton, (2005) children from single parent families do worse than children from intact families on several measures of well-being.

Charles, (1994) explained that twenty-two percent (22%) of children in one parent families will experience poverty during childhood for seven years or more, as compared with only two percent (2%) of children in two-parent

families. While Nwachukwu, (1998) claimed that the quality of parent child relationship in single parent may be lower than the intact families of the stress associated with marital disruption. This may interfere with the transmission of appropriate norms and values, which may interfere with the child's attachment to parents, making it more difficult to transmit values.

Oams, (2002) argues that the absence of one parent alters the family's methods of making decisions and weakens parental control over the behaviour of the children. It has been reported, for example, that single parent exercise less supervision over their children socialization. Idoko, (1998) explained that single mothers are less effective disciplinarian-less authoritative and sure of themselves than two-parent families.

Survey by National Center for Health Statistics, (1988) found that children in single parent families are two to three times as likely as children in two-parent families to have emotional and behavioural problems. They are also more likely to drop out of high school, to get pregnant as teenagers, to abuse drugs, and to be in trouble with the law. Compared with children in intact families, children from disrupted families are at higher risk for physical or sexual abuse. Contrary to popular belief, Haralambos, (2008) posited that many children do not ‘bounce back’ after divorce as one of the causes of single parenthood. Difficulties that are associated with family breakup often persist into adulthood. All these pointed

how bad the life in single parent household could be.

4.5 Spatial Variation of single parenthood in Benue State

The spatial distribution of single parenthood is shown in figure 3. The result shows that, the incidence of single parent households is more in Ohimini (3.00) and less in kwande (2.52) than other Local Governments. This suggests that more people are likely to head a household either as a single mother or father in Ohimini than other LGAs. However, there are other people that are less likely to remain as a single mother or father in Otukpo and Gboko than other LGAs.

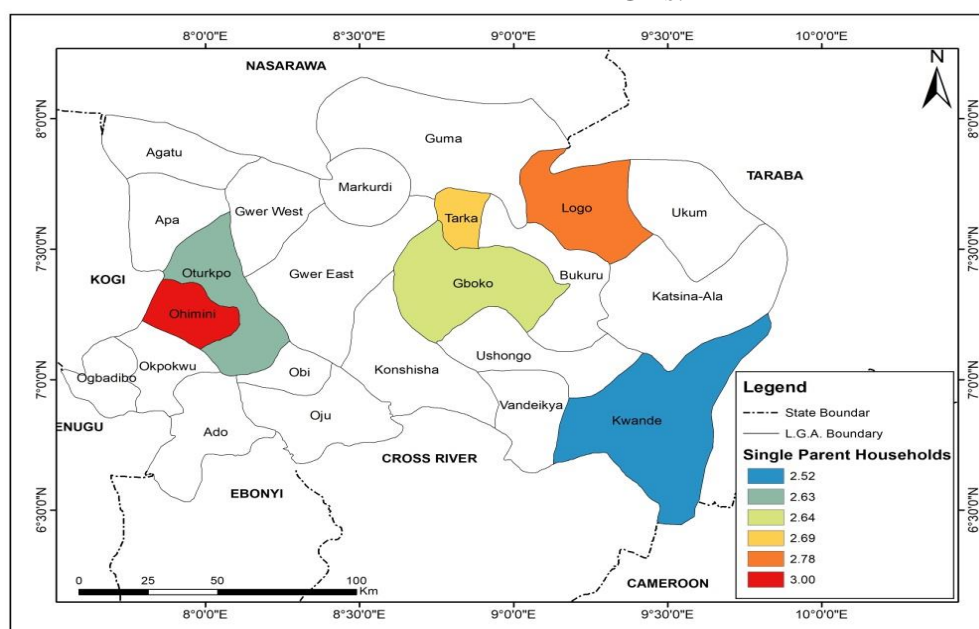


Figure 3 Spatial Distribution of single parent households
Source: Field survey, 2019

The fact that the incidence of single parenthood is more in Ohimini is attributed to the rate of divorce of about

24% which is one of the major causes of single parenthood as collated from various courts between 2000 -2019 in the



study area. In support of the result, during the FGD session at Otukpo LGA, a discussant explained that:

In the past 40 years it is difficult to see a man or woman living alone or with his/her children except such person had a problem of marriage following the death of the spouse. Today is has become something people are happy with (62 years old female discussant, 2019).

Excerpt from in-depth interview with an aged Ohimini stated that:

Single parent household is not common in the past. If it occurs as a result of death, the wife can be inherited by the brother of the deceased, and if it is the man, he will be asked to remarry immediately.(Adult Male Ohimini, 2019).

The implication of the finding is that, children from such households are less successful as adult, particularly in two domains of love and works that are most essential to happiness. In addition, Adoga in Wajim and Harry (2020) posited that a society with high incidence of single parent families are likely to have high rate of crimes such as drug addiction, robbery, 419 (swindlers), prostitution and low standards of living, due to high rate of unemployment. As revealed by respondents that majority of single parents are females (78%) as against their male counterparts (22%). This could affect the children wellbeing. Olaleye *et al*, (2017) reveal that single parent households have an adverse effects on the psychological made up of children such as feeling of inferiority complex, hostility and aggressiveness. This is because both parents have significant role to play in the upbringing of their children. Nwachukwu (1998) and Uwaifo (2008) added that life in a single parent family can be traumatic and children brought up in such family

structure often suffer emotional problems.

4.6 Factors influencing single parent households

The distribution of respondents on the factors influencing the incidence of single parent households is presented in Table 4. Results show that, divorce and migration were the major social factors. Divorce as a factor could be due to infidelity, lack of sexual satisfaction and others. This is because Benue State like other states in Nigeria frowned at extra marital sex and when this occurs, marriage could be unstable or dissolved. This is similar to Olaleye, Ajayi and Oyebola (2016) in Osun State, Anyebe, Lawal and Adeniyi (2017) in Zaria which reported divorce as the major social factors influencing single parent households. Migration as a factor could include career pursuit outside the state, change in job location especially in urban areas or crisis. This is because Benue State in recent times has witnessed series of communal crisis



between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Increasing number of people in the labour force and crisis/conflict were

identified as the major economic factors responsible single parent households.

Table 4 Factors influencing single parenthood

Social Factors	Mean Score	Rank
Migration of spouse	4.40	1 st
Divorce	4.40	1 st
Increasing level of education	3.86	3 rd
Choice to remain unmarried among people	3.42	4 th
Increasing level of urbanization/urbanism	2.98	5 th
Total	3.81	
Economic Factors		
Conflict/crises	4.39	1 st
Increasing number of women entering into labour force	4.28	2 nd
High cost of living	4.16	3 rd
Nature of spouse occupation	4.13	4 th
Financial incapacitation of spouse	3.97	5 th
Total	4.19	
Psychological factors		
Death of the spouse	4.51	1 st
Born children out of wedlock	4.22	2 nd
Lack of patience/intolerance	4.17	3 rd
Physical incapacitation of spouse/partner	3.92	4 th
Abandonment by spouse	3.89	5 th
Imprisonment of spouse/partner	3.66	6 th
Total	4.06	

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The labour force participation is attributed to the desire especially women for gender equality in governance, employment and others. As a result, some of them especially in urban areas are becoming active in labour participation. This could lead to one of the spouse living outside the home thereby leaving some of the family responsibility to house help or the children. Conflict/crisis as a factor could

include farmer/Fulani herdsmen crisis, misunderstanding between spouses. Domestic and gender violence accounts for some of the single parent cases. In cases where violence is meted out on the woman in marriage by either the spouse or in-laws, it may lead to divorce especially in this era of gender equality and equity (Eyo, 2016). Such violence could be physical, sexual, verbal, economic and emotional. Death of

Table 5. Chi-square results on socio-demographic influence on single parenthood

Variables	Indicator	χ^2	P-value	Remark
Age	Single parenthood	5.982	0.917	Not significant
Sex		0.546	0.761	Significant
Religion		30.223	0.000	Not significant
Education		18.213	0.020	Not significant
Occupation		16.822	0.156	Not significant
Income		23.801	0.094	Not significant

Source: Authors Computation, 2019

spouse and having children out of wedlock were identified as the major psychological factors influencing single parent households. Death is inevitable for every human being and when it occurs, the family is affected. This is in tandem with Ekpenyong and Udisi (2016) which identified death as the major factors responsible for single parent in Bayelsa. Henslin (1995) sees single parent family as a family whether there is a separation of spouses through death, divorce or when a woman decided to produce a child/children without necessarily getting married to the opposite part. In such case, the woman becomes head of the family. Having children out of wedlock is unacceptable in marriage in Benue State like other parts of Nigeria. This could be as a result of lack of sexual satisfaction, sex preference, family interference, poor communication among couples. In all, economic and psychological factors are

mostly responsible for the incidence of single parenthood than social factors.

The findings in Table 4 confirms the important of Family Composition Theory by Sandefur which postulates that two parent or intact families are the ideal family structure for children and when children are not raised by both biological parents such children are likely to suffer lower levels of well-being. In this study it was reveal that the decision of parents to live away from each other whether as a result of divorce, separation, migration in search of greener pasture or death destroys the social capital (emotional, economic and educational support) that might have been available to children if they are intact or together. This is because children lose a close connection to the non-residential parents and such parents do not feel emotionally involved in their children's lives and are less likely to feel financially responsible for their children.

4.7 Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis was tested using chi-square to determine the significant difference in the incidence of single parenthood among socio-economic and demographic subgroups (Table 5). The

result shows that, the calculated chi-square is greater than the p-value between age $\chi^2 = 5.982$, religion $\chi^2 = 30.223$, education, $\chi^2 = 18.213$ occupation, $\chi^2 = 16.822$ and



income $\chi^2 = 23.801$ and single parenthood.

We therefore reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that, age, religion, education, occupation and income has significance influence on the increase in the incidence of single parenthood. Consistent with the findings, Zaba *et al* (2009) reported that, early age at marriage is likely to increase marital instability which could lead to single parenting. Furthermore, early marriage exposes women especially to early pregnancy and high fertility. However, there is no significant difference in the incidence of single parenthood and sex. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are essential for government, demographers and other development actors:

- i. The problems or difficulties faced by single parents can be eliminated or curtail by maintain two parents home; hence two loving parents may offer guidance, protection and support for the growth and development of their children. Religious group and Social Workers should provide advice and assistance to single parents on how best to cope with challenges associated with such household.
- ii. The government should create more jobs opportunities and increase wages as

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded, that single parenting is a public knowledge and on the increase and this varies over space which is being influenced by both social, economic, and psychological factors. However, the phenomenon is generally unwelcomed in the study setting. This suggests that the social lives of people have experienced a transformation in the 21st Century which is similar to the Western and Asian countries over the last four decades. However, this may take different dimension due to variation in socio-economic background and development.

such, single parent can also benefit in order to cope with the problems face as single parents. Also government should subsidized or ensure that school fees and educational materials are affordable. This will drastically or tremendously curtail crime rate in our dear macrocosm.

- iii. There is need by government to strengthen marriage institution to promote stable family pattern.
- iv. There should be a network of social support for families affected to tackle negative effects of single parenting as well as campaigns against discrimination of such families.



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