



Challenges Single Parented Students Face on Education Attainment in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania

Neema Adam Rubamande, Marcel Mukadi, Lazaro Athanas Mwonge

Department of Education, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Jordan University College, Morogoro, Tanzania

Email address:

neemasuzy8@gmail.com (N. A. Rubamande), mukadimarcel@yahoo.fr (M. Mukadi), mwongelazaro@gmail.com (L. A. Mwonge)

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to assess the challenges single parented students face on education attainment specifically Alfagems secondary school, the case study in Morogoro Municipality. The study employed case study research design based on mixed research approach i.e., both quantitative and qualitative research approach. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used. Primary data were collected from 50 respondents who were randomly selected through interview and questionnaires. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis. During the analysis of qualitative data, the first step involved taking notes during interview, arranging them in a sequence and then, the data were coded finally presented in text form. Moreover, quantitative data were descriptively analyzed to generate frequencies and percentages. The study result revealed that economic hardship, lack of parental care, lack of socialization, lack of guidance and counseling and lack of emotional support were found to be the major challenges single parented students face in education attainment hence led to poor performance and drop out of school. Basing on the study findings, the researchers recommend that single parent students should try their best to love and concentrate on their studies regardless of the challenges encountered in their upbringing as result of the change in their family structure.

Keywords: Single Parent Students, Challenges, Education Attainment

1. Introduction

Single parent family is a family with children headed by a parent who is a widowed or divorced and not remarried or by parent who has never married [9, 11]. A single parent family is becoming a societal challenge as its number is increasing rapidly [15]. Globally, one-quarter to one-third of all families are headed by single-mothers. Developed countries, in particular, experience an increase in single-parent families as divorce becomes more common [14]. United Kingdom has over one million single-parent families; this gives one family in seven to be a single-parent family. The number of single-parent families is still increasing in recent years. Most single-parent families come into being as a consequence of marital breakdown, separation or divorce, but the increasing proportions are the result of births out of wedlock [16].

According to the United States Census, the figure of children who are dependent and live with only one-parent rose from 9% in 1960 to 27% in 2010, causing considerable concern among policy makers and the public. Researchers

have identified the rise in single-parent families as a major factor driving the long-term increase in child poverty in the United States. The effects of growing up in single-parent households have been shown to go beyond economics, increasing the risk of children dropping out of school, disconnecting from the labour force, and becoming teen parents [15].

Despite parents being responsible for the psychological, emotional welfare, educational and career development of their children, divorce and separation of various kinds or death of one spouse may leave the role in the hands of single parent [15]. No matter what people view about the presence of single parent families yet the presence of families headed by one-parent has a major influence on the social, economic and political context of family life as far as education of the children is concern. Due to the fact that single-parented students face many challenges throughout their development.

The challenges face single parented students and its effects on their education attainment were discussed by a

number of researchers [6, 4, 9, 11, 15] who found that single parented students who have low social economic status are more likely to score low marks, to drop out of school. Most of single-parent families have a low level of economic power and therefore they cannot provide their children with school requirements like school fees, text books, exercise books and other learning materials. Pong and Ju [13] argued that for single-parent families, directly or indirectly faces the challenges related to the poor economic condition for their families, not just to parenting style i.e., poverty directly reduces the access and quality of resources, social and health services and opportunities health care and education attainment. Also, Fraser [5] maintains that single parent fails to provide consistent supervision and monitoring, adequate family management practices, and a range of social and educational stimulating experiences due to financial hardship.

This study, therefore, intended to assess the challenges single parented students face on education attainment in Morogoro municipality in Tanzania.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design

In this study researchers defined the research design as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure [8]. The study employed case study design based on mixed research approach i.e., both qualitative and quantitative approaches that allowed in-depth and detailed discussion regarding the challenges single parented students face on education attainment in Morogoro municipality in Tanzania.

2.2. Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Morogoro Municipality specifically at Alfagems secondary school (the case study) situated in Morogoro Region in the Eastern zone in the country of the Tanzania. Geographically, Morogoro municipality covers 260 square kilometers while demographically it has a total population of 315,866 people; whereby male is 151,700 and female 164,166 [17]. Its geographical location coordinates are 6° 49' 20" south, 37° 40' 0" east.

2.3. Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques is the process of selecting a suitable sample or part of the population for the purpose of determining patterns or characteristics of whole population [7]. Therefore, the sample size of the study was 50 respondents i.e., 40 single parent students and 10 parents the representative of entire population [8]. In this study, the researchers used both purposive and randomly sampling techniques.

2.4. Data Type and Collection

Researchers used both primary and secondary source of data collection. Primary data were collected from 50 respondents i.e., 40 single parent students and 10 parents through structured questionnaires and interview respectively while secondary data were obtained through documentary reviews from school annual report, NECTA reports and from the internet sources.

2.5. Data Analysis

Kombo and Tromp [7] data the process of packaging the collected information, putting in order and structuring its main components in a way that the findings can be easily and effectively communicated. Therefore, the collected information was coded, recorded, processed and finally descriptively analyzed using the statistical tool SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 20 to generate frequencies and percentages. The study results were presented in the form of pie chart and tables.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Challenges Single Parented Students Face on Education Attainment

In assessing the challenges single parented students face on education attainment in Morogoro municipality in Tanzania the study intensively examined the different challenges through questionnaire, interview and documentary analysis. Researcher provided five statements, respondents were required to answer by indicating the degree of improvements they know and/or perceive whether they are Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 1 presents the study results.

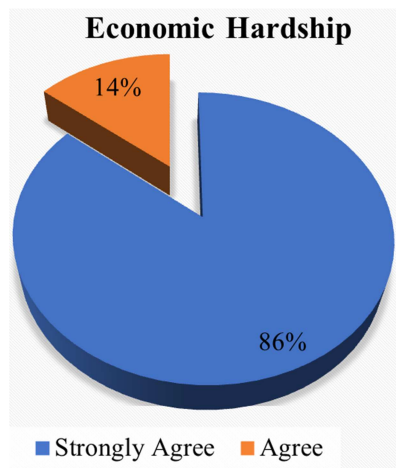
Table 1. Challenges Single Parented Students Face on Education Attainment.

| Challenges | SA | | A | | N | | D | | SD | |
|---------------------------------|----|-----|----|-----|---|----|---|----|----|----|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Economic Hardship | 43 | 86% | 7 | 14% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Lack of Parental Care | 28 | 56% | 20 | 40% | 2 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Lack of Socialization | 14 | 28% | 30 | 60% | 4 | 8% | 2 | 4% | 0 | 0% |
| Lack of Guidance and Counseling | 46 | 92% | 4 | 8% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Lack of Emotional Support | 48 | 96% | 2 | 4% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

Source: Field Study, 2021

3.1.1. Economic Hardship

The researcher sought to know the economic status of the respondents i.e., difficulty caused by having too little money or few resources in the study area. From Table 1 it was found that majority of the respondents 43 (86%) strongly agreed while 7 respondents accounted to 14% agreed to some extent that single-parent students face economic hardship in their homes leading to inability to get necessary school materials such as school uniforms, school fees, exercise books, bus fare, text books and other school needs. Moreover, the study revealed that the economic hardship was the main stress for majority of the single mothers. The study result is in line with the findings of various related studies [1, 2, 11, 10] who found that the emotional life of the single mother was affected by their single status hence reported that they felt lonely, helpless or hopeless. The study results were presented using pie chart as shown in Figure 1.



Source: Field Study, 2021

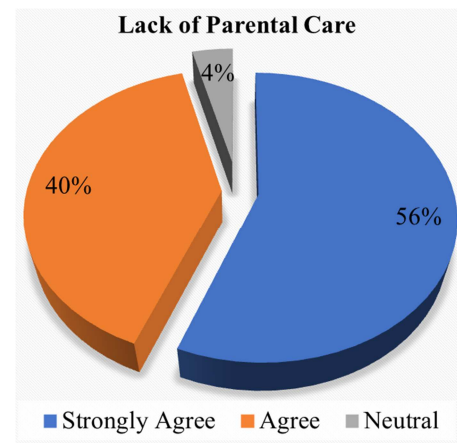
Figure 1. Economic Hardship (n=50).

The study results from Figure 1 revealed that in social sphere majority about 86% strongly agreed that single mothers tried to avoid attending social gatherings due to depression they had developed. Moreover, single mothers found it hard to maintain discipline among the student due to absence of male members. The mothers complained about loneliness, traumatic and depression and found it difficult to handle the responsibility of taking care their children. Therefore, economic hardship facing different family's affects children's (single parent students in this case) participation in education attainment hence affects students' academic achievement.

3.1.2. Lack of Parental Care

The researchers in this study found that lack of parental care involvement was a main challenge single parent students in the study area are facing. The researchers considered parent care as an important factor for students' performance if parents are not involved in academic issues the single parent students were seemed to have poor grades, poor school attendance and behavioral changes. From Table 1

above it was revealed that majority 28 respondents accounted to 56% strongly agreed that lack of parental care is the major challenge affecting single parent students in education attainment followed by 20 respondents accounted to 40% who agreed to some extent while 2 respondents accounted to 4% were neutral. The study result implies that students who are lacking parental care are more likely to have challenges in their academic performance. The study results were presented using pie chart as shown in Figure 2.



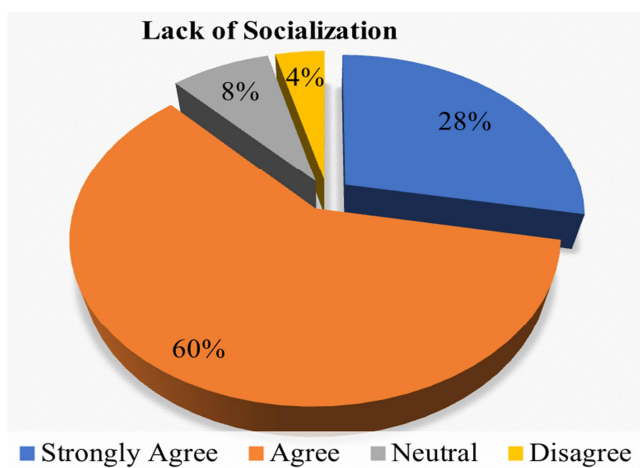
Source: Field Study, 2021

Figure 2. Lack of Parental Care (n=50).

The study result is in line with the findings of Mrinde [11] who found that despite the fact that a good number of single parent students live in economic hardship few do not have that problem, their parents can provide all school requirements and basic needs such as food, shelter and clothes. Moreover, it was revealed that parent from single family have less time to help their children with homework, are less likely to use consistent discipline, and have less parental control, and all of these conditions were found to be the challenges of students from single parent. Therefore, it was concluded that parental involvement is supposed to positively affect children's educational outcomes [12].

3.1.3. Lack of Socialization

Researchers considered socialization as an important factor for mind and body and lack of it can have negatively impact mental and physical health which in turn affects education attainment. On the issue of socialization according to gender and role model majority about 30 respondents accounted to 60% agreed by indicating that single parent students they are not comfortable being with only one parent because there are issues that a child learn from the same sex parent. The study results also found that 14 respondents comprised 28% strongly agreed while 4 (8%) were neutral and 2 (4%) of respondents disagreed. The study result implies that lack of socialization is the challenge that hinder single parent students faces in education attainment due to fact that some issues a boy cannot tell her mother likewise a girl cannot share with her father. The study results were presented using pie chart as shown in Figure 3.



Source: Field Study, 2021

Figure 3. Lack of Socialization (n=50).

The study result implies that single parented students are not comfortable as they cannot get the right nurturing due to the fact that there is a well-marked social distance between parent of one sex and children of opposite sex. The study result is in line with the findings of various related studies [18, 11] who found that challenges single parented student face is highly affected with family structure and gender roles of single parent being inappropriate (lack of socialization) which in turn affect students' academic achievement. Basing on the study findings it was recommended that the process of socialization that starts from the family depends on the effort of both parents should play a complimenting role in the child's upbringing.

3.1.4. Lack of Guidance and Counseling

It was found that majority about 46 respondents comprised 92% strongly agreed by indicating that parental guidance and counseling are an important factor in order to mold students' behaviors and cognitive stimulation followed by 4 respondents accounted to 8% who agreed to some extent indicating that single parented students lack guidance and counseling from his or her parent. The study result from Table 1 implies the absence of one parent is the challenge for the remaining parent to use most of her/his time looking for home needs that leads the student to lack guidance and counseling from the parent. The study result is in line with the findings of various related studies [3, 11] who found that single parent students lack guidance and counselling, supervision and monitoring which affects education attainment. The study results were presented using pie chart as shown in Figure 4.

The findings from Figure 4, indicates that single parent students lack guidance and counseling, supervision and monitoring which affects the student in building academic path and education attainment. Moreover, the respondents indicated that guidance and counseling are challenges to students from single parent because their parents do not have time to make follow up of their behaviors and school progress.



Source: Field Study, 2021

Figure 4. Lack of Guidance and Counseling (n=50).

During interview with one respondent X stated that; *...when the single parented student misbehaves at school and teachers need to see her parent for discussion about the student's behavior, they do not have time for that and sometimes that single parent does not know whether the student is attending school or not. They are less involved with their student's academic progress.*

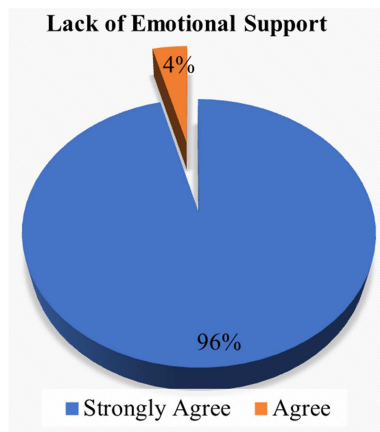
Also, during the interview with the head of the school (key informant in this study) it was revealed that;

...in our school there are single parent students whose parents are busy in earning money for their living hence they cannot get time to guide and counsel their children (single parent students in this case). Less involvement of parents in academic issues affect students' performance even led to the drop out from the school.

3.1.5. Lack of Emotional Support

The study found that single parented students experience emotional problems such as loneliness and depression. From the findings it was noted that, 48 (96%) of the respondents strongly agreed by indicating that emotional and psychological tortures of the students have been accelerated by single parent who seemed to cause changes in student's performance while 2 (4%) agreed to some extent. The study results were presented using pie chart as shown in Figure 5.

The study result from Figure 5 is in line with the findings of Smith [16] who insisted that parents are responsible in providing psychological and emotional support, education and career development for their children so whenever one of those things misses a child is much affected. Therefore, in this study the researchers find that single parent students in secondary school are facing lacks emotional support which affects their education attainment as well as social and psychological wellbeing of these students.



Source: Field Study, 2021

Figure 5. Lack of Emotional Support (n=50).

3.2. Summary of the Major Findings

The study revealed that single parent students face a number of challenges which affects their education attainment i.e., economic hardship which was found to be a major challenge that cause other challenges such as poor attendance of students that affects their academic performance. Moreover, lack of parental care, lack of guidance and counselling and lack of socialization were found to be other challenges that cause single parent students be uncomfortable and fail to concentrate in class hence engage in bad behaviours i.e., prostitution, selling drugs which makes them fail to attain secondary education.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Basing on the study findings the challenge that seen to be the causative of a number of other challenges is economic hardship in the family of these students' families i.e., single parent had insufficient financial resources to devote children upbringing and education expenses. Therefore, they could not get school requirements, at the same time failed to get proper care from their parents, monitoring and/or supervision, emotional support and cognitive stimulation. The reason is the remaining parent was concentrating in earning income in order to maintain the family while forgetting completely other responsibilities of a parent such as to be the role model of her or his children, provide guidance and counseling, to monitor and supervise academic progress of children as well as to provide emotional support.

Therefore, researchers recommended that single parent students should try their best to love and concentrate on their studies regardless of the challenges encountered in their upbringing as result of the change in their family structure.

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