

**THE STRENGTH OF SINGLE PARENT MOTHER
FAMILIES IN DAR ES SALAAM
TANZANIA**



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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed to discover if single parent families can still be strong and healthy despite of their struggle and challenges they do face in their daily life. The research was conducted among six single parent families headed by single mothers. The research work was to explore the lived experience of strength of single mothers inside a single parent family in Dar es salaam- Tanzania.as most societies perceive single parent families as deviation as culture norms related and only favor a nuclear family as a normal family, but in this study it showed that single parent family can be same or even more healthy than nuclear family. Single parent family is a result of divorce, death of one partner, abandonment, unplanned pregnancy, oneself decision of not want to get married. The research work was guided by phenomological perspective as well as Qualitative approach was used together with related information's about the study.in-depth interviews was used as data collection method, involving six informants (single mothers).the result showed that although single parent families faces a lot of challenges, like economic crises, criticism, frustrations, loneliness, less time for family socialization due to work responsibilities, but they still stick together as one family with their children and tackle life in positive perspective. From the research findings it showed that proper communication within and outside the family is needed so as to help the community know how does being a single parent mean in order to eliminate the negativity perception about how people see a single parent family as a deviation.

Key Words: Experienced strength, Single parent mothers.

ABSTRAK (Bahasa Indoneia)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah orang tua tunggal dalam keluarga masih bisa kuat dan sehat meski ada perjuangan dan tantangan yang mereka hadapi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Penelitian ini dilakukan di antara enam keluarga orang tua tunggal yang dikepalai oleh seorang ibu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman hidup dari seorang ibu di dalam keluarga yang memiliki orang tua tunggal di Dar es salaam-Tanzania. Karena kebanyakan masyarakat memandang keluarga yang memiliki orang tua tunggal sebagai penyimpangan norma budaya yang terkait dan hanya mendukung keluarga yang lengkap sebagai keluarga normal, Namun dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keluarga dengan orang tua tunggal bisa sama atau bahkan lebih sehat daripada keluarga yang lengkap. Keluarga dengan orang tua tunggal adalah dari hasil perceraian, kematian salah satu pasangan, penelantaran, kehamilan yang tidak direncanakan, keputusan sendiri untuk tidak menikah. Penelitian ini menggunakan Pendekatan kualitatif, dengan informasi terkait tentang penelitian ini. Wawancara mendalam digunakan sebagai metode pengumpulan data, yang melibatkan enam responden (ibu tunggal). Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa walaupun keluarga yang memiliki orang tua tunggal menghadapi banyak tantangan, seperti krisis ekonomi, kritik , Frustrasi, kesepian, sedikit waktu untuk bersama keluarga karena tanggung jawab kerja, namun tetap saling bersatu sebagai satu keluarga dengan anak-anak mereka dan mengatasi kehidupan dengan pemikiran yang positif. Dari hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi yang tepat di dalam dan di luar keluarga sangat dibutuhkan untuk membantu masyarakat mengetahui bagaimana menjadi orang tua tunggal untuk menghilangkan persepsi negatif tentang bagaimana orang melihat keluarga dengan orang tua tunggal penyimpangan.

Kata kunci: Pengalaman yang dialami, orang tua tunggal.

INTRODUCTION

In Tanzanian context it was reported that divorce cases have increased and in somewhat it continues to affect a big number of children, as result increase high number of street children, lawbreaking teenage, pregnancies in girls as well as high rate of school dropout (Kimwaga,

2000). Parental separation is common in Tanzania rather than legal divorces followed by a big numbers of marital dissolution complaints in social welfare departments increasing day to day. (Rita Report, 2007). The Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA) reported that Magomeni court in Dar-es-salaam received 118 divorce cases in 1997, they rose to 422 cases by the year 1999. Divorce cases in the country may even be higher, but it might be other divorce cases are not reported at all. The Women Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) annual report (TAMWA, 2006) showed that organization has received a total of 2390 cases in 2000 and rose up to 4349 cases in 2006. That is to say if divorce cases are increasing to that extent the growing number of single parent children will increase too and obviously the female become the victims and responsible for taking care for their children as a mother and most of them find it difficult to remarry unlike men. According to Natihaika (2000) about 273 cases of serious marital conflicts have been reported every three months in Dares-salaam alone. Furthermore, Busela (2004) describe that an increased number of people have been seek in assistance with marital conflict over the few years in Tanzania.

A single parent family is becoming a societal challenge as its number is increasing rapidly for instance in Tanzanian context it was reported that divorce cases have increased and in somewhat it continues to affect a big number of children, as result increase high number of street children, lawbreaking teenage, pregnancies in girls as well as high rate of school dropout (Kimwaga, 2000). Parental separation is common in Tanzania rather than legal divorces followed by a big numbers of marital dissolution complaints in social welfare departments increasing day to day. (Rita Report, 2007).Conventionally religious establishment, media and most of the government entities define the ideal family as that comprised of two happily married, heterosexual biological parents living with their children, (Smith, 2008). 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 .Many children are being reared by single-mothers, who seem to struggle making ends meet living below the poverty line; though some few women are rich the majority are poor. Perhaps, single-mothers and fathers do not have as much time as required to participate fully in their children's schooling, thus adding to the problems for children of single-parent families (Ferrell, 2009).Therefore children from single parent households face many challenges throughout their development due to struggle to copy with a life of single parent.

Despite what most of the people perceive single parent family as deviant and despite the challenges and difficult single parent face but shows single parent can be success by having strong family support, discipline, finance support and religious as we know the role of religious does have some effect on children behaviors as well as the one parent when it comes about faith.

Family structures have transformed extremely throughout the second half of the 20th century (Martin, 2003). The Second Demographic Transition that happened on the 1960s up to the late 1980s in developed nations, involving dropped-off fertility rates, reduced marriage rates, and increased divorce rates and increased figures of births to unmarried women (Lesthaeghe, 1994; Sorrentino, 1990), added straight to a growing number of single-parent families. The traditional male worker ideal, which states to a married couple with one or more children, bold that father works to make a living while mother stays at home to run the household and to take care of the children, hence not that clear anymore in developed countries due to an increase of single parent families especially single mother household, now the single parent families they provide for their children which makes an increase of women at work places for their children (Lewis, 2001; McDonald, 1997).

Research has regularly revealed that family structure can simplify or limit the ways in which parents are able to positively impact the psychosocial and educational results of their children (Amato & Keith, 1991). The consequences of parental divorce differ and depend on a diversity of factors; the nonexistence of one parent have serious effects on the teen-age as single parent mother led homes experience lower household income which eventually influence the educational opportunities and success in school for the children(Benokraitis, 2002 : 414).

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, while In developing countries a large number of single parent families is more due to abandonment, unplanned or accidental pregnancy, death due to HIV/AIDS disease and imprisonment and less due to divorce produce single-parent families, mostly headed by women. The rates differ from country to country for example in Kuwait the rate is less than 5 percent while the rate is over 40 percent in Botswana and Barbados. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, more than 25 percent of households are headed by women (Ponzetti, 2003).

The trends in divorce in many Asian countries appear to be similar to those in Western countries. For instance, China's divorce rate increased from 0.5 in 1950 to 1.46 in 1990 and dropped to 1.2 in 2008. Japan's divorce rate also increased from 0.94 in 1970 to 2.08 in 2000 and slightly declined to 2.0 in 2008, Thailand increase in divorce rate from 0.11 in 1950 to 0.76 in 1983 and to 2.1 in 2007.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of concepts

Single parent family

The definition of single parent family appears to be universal understanding, which refer to an individual caring for a dependent child (children), but it may differ across the academic studies. For example, includes a study from the United State which define single parent families as a single adult living with a dependent child in their home; a study in Ireland define single parent family as people parenting alone, parent separated or divorced from their partners or widows and widowers. A Korean a study that distinguishes variety types of single parent families according the cause of singlehood and the sex of the single parents, and the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA),who define in the Singapore context ,a single parent family as including those who are divorcees with children, widowed with children, unwed(not married)mothers ,and foreign brides whose child is a Singapore citizen or permanent resident (PR) below the age of 18(Singapore lien center for social innovation,2015).

Strength

Strength can be defined as the emotional or mental qualities necessary in dealing with difficult or distressing situations (Oxford dictionary, 2017). There is little doubt that single-parent families undergo stress related to the major loss of a parent and a spouse from the family. Despite the many challenges including economic deprivation, social and legal challenges, and family system reorganization, there are some families that may and in fact do suffer and triumph over their difficulties.

Theoretical perspectives on the life of single mother families

The previous studies:

The previous study in this study show that new family patterns are emerging; that, is women are no longer the unique emotional center that they are or have been in the conventional family. Simultaneously, men are no longer the unique instrumental center that they are or have been in the conventional family (Swidler, 1980). Either partner can earn money, engage in child care, and care out household duties. Some feminists also challenge prevalent assumptions about the ideological nuclear family as the only desirable and legitimate family form; that is, they associate this family form with the oppression of women. They argue that within the nuclear family structure women are in subordinate positions as they are "excluded from gaining direct access to valued resources such as income, recognized and status-giving work, and political authority" (Thorne, 1992).

Also the previous study show that the events of separation potentially lead to major changes that produce considerable stress for families. Next to death of one's spouse, separation may initiate the most severe demands for the reformation of family life (Holmes & Rahe, 1967). After separation, mothers generally gain custody of the children, with the exclusion of unfamiliar circumstances (Hetherington, & Cox, 1978). (Glick 1979) predicted that by 1990 one half of all children would spend some time in a female-headed family. Separated women with children must face a number of interrelated challenges involving the determination of emotional and reasonable issues, creating effective roles and relationships with family members, and development of new interests and social relationships (Mandell, 1988). In order to meet these challenges and become a one-parent family, (Herz Brown 1989) proposed that one must resolve issues during the outcome of separation and during the readjustment and stability of the family system.

Throughout the process of stabilizing as a single-parent family, several tasks must be accomplished and difficulties must be overcome. Though, she believed that many families do not stabilize successfully in their new family system. (Weiss 1979) purported that it takes from 2 to 4 years to recover from the effects of separation and abandonment.

In Tanzanian context it was reported that divorce cases have increased and in somewhat it continues to affect a big number of children, as result increase high number of street children, lawbreaking teenage, pregnancies in girls as well as high rate of school dropout (Kimwaga, 2000). Parental separation is common in Tanzania rather than legal divorces followed by a big numbers of marital dissolution complaints in social welfare departments increasing day to day. (Rita Report, 2007). Shabani and Kuname (2001) report by citing Kinondoni Municipal Council, at Social Welfare Department each officer deals with more than 12 complaints of marital dissolution per month, a total number of 12 officers; this means more than 144 martial dissolution cases take place per month in Kinondoni. This number in different to 48 registered divorces cases in 2007/2008 in Kinondoni it prove that most couple initiate separation without follow legal route.

Theoretical Perspective

Phenomenological perspective approach

Phenomenology is the study which tries to recognize people's perspectives, perceptions and understanding of a specific circumstances or events on their daily basis of their life. Husserl (1962), the founding father of phenomenology as a philosophy, argued that the fundamental principal of phenomenology is the return to the "things themselves." This appeal to the things themselves signifies that philosophy must begin with the root of knowledge to the foundation of knowledge without assumptions (Cohen, 1987). For Husserl, the roots of knowledge are found in the consciousness of the knowing subject to whom the phenomena appear (Spiegelberg, 1982). Thus, phenomenology means "the study of phenomena, as-phenomena-appear-through consciousness" (Thompson, 1990).

According to Edmund Husserl, his theory of Phenomenology refers as the idea of phenomena, which refers to ourselves, other people, and the objects as well as events around us. It includes the reflection of our own conscious experiences as we experience them. For Husserl, phenomenology constitute the things as they are given to our consciousness, whether in perception, imagination, thought or decision. The fundamental objective of phenomenology is to study the phenomena which experienced in various acts of consciousness.

Phenomena can be described into two categories (i) mental phenomena and (ii) physical phenomena. Mental phenomena constitute of what occur in the mind when we experience something, including the acts of consciousness, or its contents, while physical phenomena include the objects of external perception starting with colors and shape.

Husserl claims that every mental phenomenon or act of consciousness is always directed toward some object, meaning that there are about something that lie outside. And later on he replaces physical phenomena with experience or intentional experiences, which claim that our consciousness is always intentional and it aims at something objective. He went on by claiming that every intentional experience gives meaning or have the essential characteristics of giving some meaning, due to the task of phenomenology of aiming to capture the phenomenon as intended (Kockelmans 1994).

As someone being a single parent mothers, that person must need to have a personal strength in order to help a single mother to face the challenges and obstacles of self-development and family development as well. Single parent families when they take a move forward to a new life, new self without their husband, they find themselves in need to look for a new identity for themselves and for the new family, leaving behind the old identity of persons they once were, meaning that leaving their past family structure.

When a single parent family achieve a good communication pattern and better relationship, it tend to create environment of trust and respect among the family members. And these came when a single mother recognize that their children are human being with their own feelings and thoughts. This bond between children and their mothers enable the mothers to give enough time to listen to their children on what they truly want or what they want to communicate with their mothers. When mothers shows the respect for their children obviously the children will return the same favor of respect for their mothers.

RESULTS ON THE LIFE LIVED AND STRENGTH OF SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES IN DAR ES SALAAM.

Table 1: Subject Names and Age

Names	Age
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A	24
B	26
C	29
D	30
E	35
F	36

Source: Research data

Years since started staying as single mothers

According to the family decline perspective, the concept that the level of commitment to marriage as an institution has eroded because many couples tend to stay in a marriage as long as they are happy and their needs are being met is associated with this point of view. American society has become increasingly individualistic, as people have become preoccupied with the unrestricted pursuit of personal happiness (Popenoe 1993; Waite and Gallagher 2000). Opportunities and risks are increasingly taken in and handled by individuals themselves without the concern of social groups. Individualization theory also claims that many of the changes occurring in family structure, such as the increasing number of single-parent families, can be explained by a long-term trend in modern societies to allow more autonomy to individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002).

Table 2: Informants since staying as single mothers

Mothers	Years as single mothers
A	20
B	5
C	4
D	4
E	3
F	1

Source: Research data

Table 3: Informants by Education levels

Education Attained

Secondary level
College level

Source: Research data

Experiencing state of Freedom:

Freedom to be and become was a liberating experience to these single mothers. According to oxford dictionary, freedom is defined as the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants or the power of self-determination attributed to the will; the quality of being independent of fate or necessity.

An “A” mother: prior to A mother’s separation, parenting was accomplished, for the most part by her irresponsible partner, so now was her only responsibility, therefore she had to depend on her own thoughtful of what it is and meant to be a parent. Power, strength and survival arose overtime as she discovered that she could parent her own children on her own. She stated that;

A mother B: surviving as a single parent for a “B” mother was a process in which she moved from dependency to being more independent and determined to go it alone. She claimed that previously she depended so much in everything from her husband.

A mother C: moving on as single mother was an easy option for a mother “C” due to the facts that since she young living with her parents she witnessed a brutal abuse treatment from her father to her mother which psychologically affected her to engage herself or commit herself into marriage, so because she wanted children she had to go only for child (being pregnant) and because she had already having a great job of her own/self-employed dealing with chicken in wholesales and retails she decided to raise her son on her own way and because she was already having that idea of being a single mother family, surviving was easy and planned long back.

How to deal with emotional state:

According to Wikipedia, emotion can be defined as any relatively brief conscious experience in everyday speech which are characterized by intense activity and high degree of pleasure or displeasure. Emotion is often intertwined with mood, temperament, personality, disposition, and motivation.

Inside our society today parents deal with many challenges that may lead to various stressors. These stressors could be of various natures and have a great amount of impact and stress on the family. Flexibility is the ability to withstand and rebound from crisis including adversity (Walsh, 1996). Flexibility resides within an individual and the individual is able to access inner strength (Walsh, 1996). Centre for the study of social policy stated that parents who are emotionally strong are able to maintain a positive attitude, creatively solve problems, and effectively rise to challenges in their lives. Parents who cope with everyday life stressors including the occasional crisis have resilience (Forthun, Carannante & Diehl, 2011). They have the ability to bounce back and have the strength needed to survive despite the circumstances. Parents with resilience can generally cope on their own, they are however aware that they can seek help should they need it. All parents have the inner strength or the resources that allow one to be resilient (Walsh, 1996). Parents require understanding and patience and this can be a huge challenge for any parent raising a child with autism. Parents that show resilience tend to have a close relationship with their children and provide them with the adequate attention (Forthun, Carannante & Diehl, 2011).

Emotions play the big role in our life in the sense of expression on what we want or need so as we can be able to make change in our daily life. The feelings of anger, vulnerability, sadness, and love for the single mother's life worked through their own losses together with their children were experiencing long back, due to either divorce separation, domestic crises, death of their loved ones, or critical illness of the loved ones, inside our society today parent's deal with many challenges that may lead to various stressors.

A mother D: feelings of sadness has been associated with divorce, and claimed to a person of short temper when it comes for those memories of sadness she experienced before and after her divorce. For her music a real medicine for her sadness emotional and sorrow, music helps her to let go of those sad feelings and make her feel better and become relieved from any difficulties she faces in her life.

Another mother claimed that, feelings of sadness and anger has been due to her ex-husband's ill-treatment and her in-laws, she became so emotional when she tried to force herself to be close with relatives from the husband's side and became so painful when she failed to

succeed to win their heart and love. so she ended up allowing herself to concentrate on her own son and her siblings which were the only place to experience unconditional love and happiness.

The next mother also claimed that, for her emotions is due to her past life with her ex-boyfriend, they passed into some levels of happiness and pain when she was still dating her ex-boyfriend, she was feeling more happiness even though she was hurt inside but all it was because she loved her boyfriend so much until her boyfriend denied her baby before the baby was born, so now when she think about the good time they had together with her ex-boyfriend she goes to her room and cry alone or when she looks at her baby sometime she feel hunger and think how some men can be monsters and abandon their children.

Courage to go forward and face challenges and change:

For the mothers, the process of gaining courage which involve flexibility in waiting and going forward to meet the challenge of living in a single parent families' situation.

A mother A, when I was having a talk with her, she reflected on the strength that comes from listening music and taking care for her own daughter. Claiming that when she was pregnant throughout those months she experienced pain from her husband abusive language, sometimes she get bitten up those times required physical and mental strength due to her condition, while caring for her daughter required change and adjustment in order to push her limit, so for her by accepting the challenges gave her the confidence that she could face change and meet some of her precious goals and prosperous.

A mother B, she claimed that, when she was still with her partner for the past 3 years of their marriage was ok, but as times goes on the in-laws started hating her and because they were not ok with their marriage so they pushed her partner too to hate her and because they are family they succeeded and at that time she was already having almost a 3 years old son, after six months later she moved out as a single mother with her son. so she told herself that she could meet the challenges of a new life for herself and her child; she accepted the challenge with some confidence and claimed that it was a part of process and it will work out because now she can talk to people and just be more open about herself despite financial difficulties but she was sure to adjust with those changes ahead and within her.

A mother C, for her was simple claiming that no matter how difficult it is in raising a child alone which seem for her a step ahead in maturity manner. For her as long as she provides and give care and love for her son challenge is part of life whether someone is living alone or living together with her partner's challenge and change is what makes transition from one step to another step in positive way.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: in order for a single parent family to keep moving forward in positive way is to make sure self-identity or self-construction are strengthened in the sense that mothers and children in single parents families do experience serious and awful fall in their economic, self-identity as well as social standings in their daily life, and when all these happen usually makes them feel embarrassed and uselessness.in the process of overcoming these negative perception it is already itself example and proof evidence of their internal strength.as far as family concern which regarded as crucial primary development of self-esteem for the children so the presence of strength within the single parent families between mother and child this lead to self-confidence and being proud of who they are in front of other people in the society and around other children at school that include around the children from nuclear families to a child and boost their performance at schools and into other social activities.

Recommendations: Some professional volunteers within the society on guiding and counselling single parents especially single mothers who are the most victims. The counselling will help the single parent to learn better ways of raising their children and dealing with their own life as a family.

Single parent mother's empowerment, in this case single mother family should establish groups and start a joint business so as to make it easy for them to get income in terms of loans with less interest and strengthen entrepreneurship knowledge. This will help to reduce the hardship of their financial and economy which will lead to less burden of family responsibilities. It will be a breath through if single mother families along with their children to have the same

economic and social possibilities as those of the nuclear family. This may involve calling for a positive perception giving priority for single mother in interferences meant at reducing and alleviating poverty.

Though some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are doing exactly the same, the problems and challenges that single parent mothers and the children of single mothers are continuing from side to side , as the previous research studies indicated , are enormous that require development efforts to help them to get through their difficulties. Interferences assisting single mother to develop their economic resources can bring about changes in their children's life. For this reason we call upon both governmental and non-governmental organizations can show a priceless role in planning and implementing programs that empower single mothers and their children, in the sense of psychologically economically, socially wellbeing with positive discrimination for their family structure.

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