



**AFRICAN JOURNAL OF  
ADULT EDUCATION  
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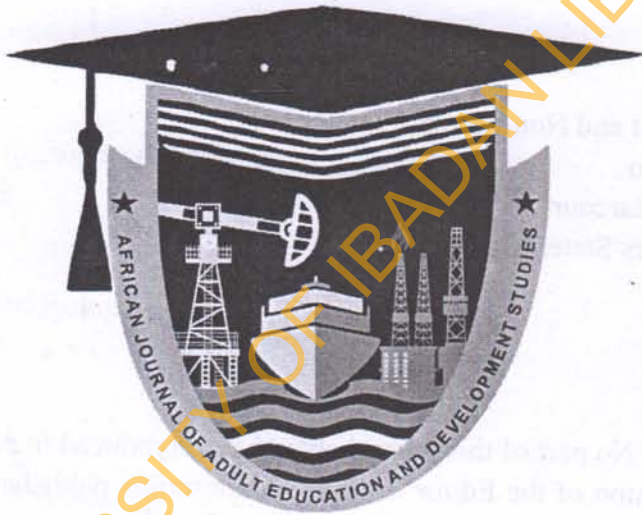
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# FEMALE SINGLE PARENTS AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

Omokhabi, Abiola Adiat *Ph.D*

## Abstract

The study examined female single parents and family responsibilities in Ibadan. Three research objectives and questions were raised for the study. Research design adopted was descriptive based on case study approach. The population of this study consisted of all female single parents who are informal business owners trading in major markets in Ibadan aged 25 to 50 years. The sample was drawn using the purposive sampling technique to select five (5) respondents each from New Gbagi, Oje, Bodija, Aleshinloye, and Agbeni-Ogunpa markets making a total of 25 (twenty-five). The instrument used was a questionnaire to collect information on the biodata of respondents and in identifying those who are single parents with the criteria: as a result of divorce, death of husband (widow) and having children outside marriage. In-depth interview (IDI) was also used to collect information on the themes derived from the research questions raised for the study. The frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the bio-data, while the thematic content analysis was used for the qualitative data. The study revealed that female single parents played dual roles and responsibilities such as feeding, clothing, medical, paying tuition fees amongst others. Single mothers faced different types of stress particularly decision making as regards welfare of the children, daily chores, child care and domestic duty and health. They adopted various coping strategies like spending more time with their children during weekends, getting more involved in household chores, watching television and listening to radio programme as well as engage in religious activities like prayer and fasting. The study recommended that social support in form of food, clothing, housing, counselling and emotional support could be provided to single parents to enable them care for their children and assist them in coping with their levels of stress.

**Keywords:** Female, Single-Parents, Family Responsibilities.

## Introduction

Single parent is someone who assumes the responsibility for protecting, guiding, and taking care of one's child by oneself or adopt a child by oneself (Corsini, 2002 in Gading, 2019). A family with a single parent consists of one parent with dependent children, who live together in one household (Hamner and Turner, 1996 in Gading, 2019). Single parent families headed by single mothers are becoming increasingly common around the world being a long social issue concerning families, the basic unit in the community. However,

nowadays, they are the fast-growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria (Nwachukwu, 2008). Children are largely affected if single parenthood is caused by divorce, annulment, death and other circumstances. Families led by single mothers face three major problems, namely, inadequate income, parenting difficulties particularly in monitoring the children and running the house (Dunn, 2008). Challenges faced by single mothers as head of the family are arduous because they have to shoulder dual responsibilities, where they are not only the breadwinner, but they are also the managers and educators of their children. Among the major challenges confronting single mothers are financial problems, emotional stress, psychological and physical problems, challenges in providing their children with education, care and love, and also negative social stigma towards them (Mustapa, Maliki and Hamzah, 2015). Single mothers face enormous challenges as head of the family as they need to juggle competing priorities in providing financial means, and managing their children's education. Becoming a single mother is a traumatic experience due to the stress incurred in shouldering innumerable responsibilities encompassing providing financial means, managing the household and raising the children (Rani, 2006). This is because there is a growing problem of reconciling work and family life, specifically for women with children and adults for whom they must care (Taylor - Gooby, 2004). For example, as in Nigeria and many other African countries, women are now actively involved in shouldering the responsibilities of the family economic provider's /breadwinner's (Okonkwo, 2012; Mokomane, 2012).

In Nigeria available reports indicate that single parent family is a new phenomenon (Salami and Alawode 2010). Other scholars' studies by Nwachukwu, and Agbo, (2007) have shown that, in Nigeria alone 35% of the population constitutes single parents. This shows the rapid growing trend of single parenting in Nigeria. When women become family breadwinners such situation exposes them to the possibility of role conflict when trying to combine work and family responsibilities. Evidence in the literature suggests that active involvement in work and family roles inevitably fuels work-family conflict, specifically for working mothers (Aryee, 2005; Amao - Kehinde and Amao-Kehinde, 2010). Single parents are demanded to work extra hard in order to fulfil the daily living needs of their family. On other side, single parents are also expected to provide time for their children to fulfil other basic needs of human, including safety, physical connections, honour, love and care, knowledge/education, social relationships, as well as spiritual needs, according to the Hierarchy of Needs (Abraham Maslow). Female single parents consequently must overcome a larger burden, as they should assume a double role, that is, to act both as a father and a mother. Individuals who assume double role may experience role conflicts, which more specifically defined as intra-role conflicts, which



means a disagreement that occurs when there was contradicting or opposing expectations of the roles.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The care and upbringing of children solely rests on two individuals in the family whereby different roles and responsibilities are shared by them, but due to some problems that cannot be prevented like death of the husband, or in some cases separation or divorce or having a child outside wedlock in which neither spouse has control over has resulted in a family type which is the single parent homes whereby shifting roles and responsibilities to a particular individual. The most common of this family type is the one headed by a female. Assuming double roles is likely to cause problems, as the tasks that were usually supposed to be carried out by two persons had to be done single handedly. Most studies on single parents have focused more on the causes, effects on children development and on academic performance thus leading to low emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of female single parents on the upbringing of the children. Hence, the study looked at the bread winning roles and responsibilities of female single parents who are working in the informal sector.

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to examine female single parents and family responsibilities in Ibadan while the specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the double roles of female single parents regarding responsibilities to the family
- ii. Determine the stress encountered by female single parents in fulfilling their double roles in the family.
- iii. Determine the coping strategies adopted by female single parents in fulfilling their double roles in the family.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) What are the double roles of female single parents regarding responsibilities to the family?
- 2) What are the stresses encountered by female single parents in fulfilling their double roles in the family?
- 3) What are the coping strategies used by female single parents in fulfilling their double roles in the family?

### **Conceptual Explanations: Single Parenting**

Single parent is a household in which only one parent lives with a child(ren). It simply means when one parent alone which could be the mother or father; shoulders the responsibility of bringing up the child(ren) without the support of the other partner. Literature has shown various definitions by various scholars on the concept of single parenting, for instance single parenthood can be defined as when one out of two people who is responsible for the nurturing and child rearing is not available, and the work meant for two people, is now been carried out by only one person (Hines, 2007). This implies that either of the parent is the head of the family living with and caring for the child(ren). Donkor (2010) on the other hand explains that single parenting refers to the situation whereby one parent caring for the responsibilities of the child(ren) instead of both parents. Thomas (2018) states that single parenting is a person who lives with a child or children and who does not have a wife, or husband with live as a partner. He further states that a single parenting may have either sole custody of the child or joint physical custody, where the child lives part-time with each parent. Azuka - Obieke, (2016) further explains that single parenting is a situation when a mother or father who looks after his or her children on their own, without the input of the other partner. He further states that single parenting has been on the increase, although the actual percentage is unknown, but practical experience and newspaper reports revealed that there is an increase of single parenthood in the country. In another dimension ,single parenthood is a situation where a single parent takes care of one or many children without any assistance, mostly physically, from the other biological parent (Danso and Aquah, 2014). This implies that this family type is the one in which either of the parents takes care of the children which may have serious consequences on the upbringing of the child(ren) as since the beginning of family societies have always seen a family to compose of two parents being responsible for the care of the children.

Single parent is a parent not living with a spouse where most of the day to day responsibilities in raising the child(ren) is by an individual (George, 2016). No wonder, Ossat (2017) supports this view that single parenthood is the practice of raising children or building family without a spouse or partner. As a form of building a family, single parenthood (single parenting) is now permissible in our society. In the western society in general, the child(ren) ends up with the primary caregiver usually the mother or the father when there is separation. Jallingo, (2000) emphasizes that single parenting is phenomenon rampant among the people who are not compatible with each other. He further states by that single parenting is common in our society because of misunderstanding among the couples.

Single parenting is a situation in which one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for upbringing of the child (Child, 2003 and Esleman, 2005). In the view of Calhoun, (2004) single parenthood is defined as a multifocal family composed of a mother, her dependent children one or more of her grown daughters and her children or sometimes other relative such as grandmother or aunt. Schaefer, (2001) viewed single parent family as a family in which there is only one parent present to care for the children. He further elucidated that whether judged in economic or emotional terms, the lives of single parent and their children are not inevitable more difficult than in a traditional nuclear family. Therefore, single parenthood is the act of training a child or children handedly, carrying out the duty of child upbringing by one of the parents. In another dimension some scholars have come up with different criteria in defining single parent as a family headed by either of the spouse with no support from the other spouse in terms of financial, emotional and tangible supports. For instance, Whitman, Borkowski and Keogh (2001) was of the view that a single parent also known as lone parent, solo parent and sole parent is a parent who cares for one or more children without the physical, psychological and sometimes financial assistance of the other parent.

Furthermore, Millar and Ridge (2013) also viewed a single parent as a parent who cares for one or more children without the assistance of the other parent in the home. It is clear from the existing literature that single parent is a family type made up of either a mother or father as the head of the family caring for child or children and sometimes living with a relative with no support from the other spouse. Single parenting can be defined as a situation in which one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for the upbringing of the child (Ham, 2004). These submissions by various scholars looked at the concept of single parent from different perspectives but all emphasis was on the fact that is made up of only one of the parents being responsible for the care of the child(ren).

### **Causes of Single Parents**

Single parent families are one representation of the range and diversity of family units in modern society and can be created through circumstances, including divorce, separation, death of a partner, or an unplanned pregnancy (Golombok 2000; Golombok, Zadeh, Imrie, Smith and Freeman, 2016). Single-parents have increased due to the increased changes from the traditional ways of doing things, over the years. Over the past three decades single-parent families have become more widespread than the so called nuclear family consisting of a mother, father and children. Some of the most common reasons are by choice, as in divorce or adoption; or as a result of unforeseeable circumstances; such

as death; child abuse, child neglect, or abandonment. While any of the parents may be involved, majority of single parents are women. Various reasons have been adduced as to why people get into single parenthood, the reasons commonly given by women for leaving their partners usually include: adultery, cruelty, battery, desertion, addiction to alcohol; drugs, and husband imprisonment and the death of husband according to Adelani, Afolayan, Sanusi, Olubiyi, Ayinla, Ibraheem and Adeniran (2015). To George (2016) single parent could be as a result of separation either by death or towards inability of one of the spouse to satisfy one another as many partners have been separated because of inability of one to perform his /her responsibility in the family while Salami, (2008) explained that, single parenthood may arise when either the male or female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock

From another perspective, Danso and Acquah (2014) stated that single parenting may crop up when couples separate after cohabitation or a marriage, and one of the ex-spouse as physical custody of the children. This shows that a female or male may become a single parent if separated and either of them have custody of their child /children. A female may become a single-parent when she gives birth to a child and does not live with the child's father or any other partner, particularly male. Single-parenting may also occur when a father or a mother is widowed and either of them assumes sole responsibility of nurturing a child. Thomas (2018) gave some reasons for becoming a single parenting as divorce break-up, abandonment, death of the other parent, childbirth by a single woman or single person adoption. Single parenthood occurs as a result of unforeseeable occurrence such as death, child abuse, child neglect, or abandonment by biological parents (Miller, Vandome and McBrewster, 2010). Studies have also linked the reasons for single parenthood to family breakdown due to divorce/separation or death of a spouse and other factors like non-marital childbearing, migration and personal choice (Moyo and Kawewe, 2009; Dintwat, 2010; Clark and Hamplova, 2013). This implies that the composition of single parent is a family headed by either the mother or father living with the child(ren), and its formation may be attributed to death of a spouse, divorce or unwanted pregnancy.

### **Unintended pregnancy**

Unintended pregnancy or unwanted pregnancy is a situation where a woman gets pregnant outside marriage where the father of the child do not accept the full responsibilities of the child or paternity. No wonder Ojo (2019) said that some out-of-wedlock births are intended, but many are unintentional. Out-of-wedlock births are not acceptable to society, and they often result in single parenting. A partner may also leave as he or she may want to shirk responsibility of bringing up the child. This also may harm

the child where they are not acceptable, they sometimes result in forceful marriage, and however such marriages fail more often than others. Moreover, it may result that the partners end their marriage. For instance, many communities in Nigeria single parenting are common among young women, even many of them lure to stay with their children and have concubines just to pay visit once awhile.

### **Death of Partner**

Families in all societies pray to experience long lasting marital relationship for many years but in eventualities of life like death of either of a spouse can occur making either the woman to become widow or man to become widower where the responsibilities of taking care of the immediate family rests on one of the surviving parent. In the submission of Ojo (2019), thousands of women in Nigeria have lost their husbands yearly making them to become single parents. Thus, affecting thousands of students in schools as many parents may not be able to care for the needs of their children. Even, many single parents may abandon their children's education because of their inability to care for them. However, many children achieve nothing today because of inability of their parents to give the pre-requisite to receive sound in secondary schools Nigeria

### **Divorce**

Divorce is dissolution of marriage either by male or female having being legally married initially such dissolution could be through court Scholar like Akanbi (2014) defined divorce as a legal dissolution of marriage bond which lay the foundation for single parenthood. Women may likely leave their husbands for various reasons like adultery, cruelty, and desertion, addiction to alcohol or drug and husband imprisonment.

### **Single Parent and Family Responsibilities**

The traditional concept of a family which consists of husband, wife and child or children seems to be facing challenges in recent years. Thus, there tends to be a proliferation of alternative family form such as single parent families which is headed by a mother or father having more to deal with than dual parent homes. Many parents are raising children without the other partner, either by choice or due to circumstances beyond their control (Ablow, 2013). Single parents are more likely to face three kinds of overload: responsibility, task and emotions and with adequate resources may provide a stable, nurturing home in which children thrive just as well as those who have dual parents. A woman experiencing the death of her spouse (husband) or losing her spouse due to a divorce would later assume a new status of becoming a widow which may include being a single parent for her children, acting both as a father and a mother (breadwinner, head of the family) (Feldman, 2000). A scholar Pollitt, (2004) unmasked that this task of

having complete responsibility of a child can be seen as a gift and at the same time a burden nonetheless, it is an experience like no other. Chen, (2006) explained that the challenge that single parent face is dealing with stress and frustration that comes with taking care of so many duties and responsibilities and not letting that stress affect the child in any way. When it comes to household chores, children in single parent families usually help out more as compared to two families but then the major brunt of the household responsibilities lies on the single parent's shoulders. This could be attributed to the fact that the absence of father figure in the family may likely make them to exhibit strong responsibility skills, as their mothers may often call upon them to help out more with family chores and tasks. Financial crisis could be a problem associated with the single parent families. It becomes difficult in meeting the basic needs of children such as food, clothing, and school fees maintaining the previous standard of living and meet personal expenses.

Kibeb and Wagstaff, (2006), suggest that a single parent household has less income than a two household in most cases. As a single parent, a woman is demanded by the community to fulfil three community roles that border on child development and care. The roles include taking care of the child(ren), helping her child(ren) to develop good personality; and helping her child(ren) to socialize appropriately and develop good manners. Wajim and Shimfe, (2020: 9) highlighted some of the areas where single parenting has positive sides:

1. Single parents have higher confidence in themselves: Without having someone else to rely on, single parents develop self-reliance and determination. And when they find that they can provide for themselves and their family successful on their own, they will feel much more confident than before.
2. There is less conflict in the household: Disagreement usually occurs when a family has two parents. But with just one parent, there are fewer arguments. Single parent can manage finances safely and securely without dealing with questions from his or her partner, having the freedom in choosing his or her religion as well as raising kids using his or her own values.
3. Develop strong bonds with their children by spending one-on-one quality time with them which allows for relationships to grow. Without the presence of the other parent, children will now rely on either of the single parent for strength and support.
4. Children develop self-confidence: Children develop self-independence early in their lives when they live with a single parent, they learn how to be self-reliance and

finding out that they can be helpful to their family, they acquire confidence in themselves. This could be attributed to the fact that they had to care for themselves, and sometimes younger siblings, children from single-parent homes have built confidence in their abilities. However, constant fighting among parents has negative effects on children, especially in divorce or separated parents that are not in and turmoil, they can grow into mature adults despite not having a complete family.

5. The child(ren) learn about responsibility: Seeing their parent hard at work, children will naturally develop a sense of responsibility. They realize that in order to thrive, they have to help in any way they can; they will see their chores as a necessary part of life instead of dire work.
6. Child(ren) grow into mature and well-balanced adults: Seeing their single parent hard at work just to provide for the family's need, children realized that they are indeed a priority without thinking that they are the center of everybody's universe. The hardships that they experience at a young age force them to face with disappointments and conflicts early in their lives. And with the help of their parent, they can grow from it and the process gets prepared for real-life

### Methodology

Research design adopted was a descriptive design based on case study approach because it deals with present status of respondents who are female single parent without any manipulation. The population for this study consists of all female single parents who are informal business owners trading in major markets in Ibadan aged 25 to 50 years. The sample was drawn using the purposive sampling technique to select five (5) respondents each from New Gbagi, Oje, Bodija, Aleshinloye, and Agbeni-Ogunpa markets making a total of 25 (twenty-five) respondents for the study. The instrument used was a questionnaire; to collect information on the biodata of respondents and in identifying those who are single parents with the criteria: as a result of divorce, death of husband (widow) and having children outside marriage before the interview took place. In-depth interview (IDI) was used to collect information on the themes derived from the research questions raised for the study. The in-depth interview method was chosen in order to be able to ask a number of questions from the respondents. Moreover, the method was chosen considering the possible complexity of the experiences of the female single parent in adapting and performing double roles. It also enabled the researcher to observe non-verbal expressions of respondents while answering certain questions. Observation of non-verbal expressions was critical in this research as it might reveal either discrepancy or agreement between the answer and the expression of the research subjects. The participants were given informed consent to fill before taking part in the study. The

frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the biodata while the thematic content analysis for the qualitative data

**Table 1: In-depth interview (IDI) conducted for the study**

Markets	Category of Participants	Number of Participants	No of sessions
New Gbagi	Female single	5	5
Oje	Female single	5	5
Bodija	Female single	5	5
Aleshinloye,	Female single	5	5
Agbeni-Ogunpa	Female single	5	5

Themes derived from research questions are:

1. roles /responsibilities of female single parents
2. stress encountered by female single parents in fulfilling their role/responsibilities
3. coping strategies used by female single parents in fulfilling their role/responsibilities

## Results and Discussions

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

**Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Age</b>		
25-29	2	8.0
30-34	6	24.0
35-39	8	32.0
40-44	5	20.0
45-50	4	16.0
Total	25	100.0
<b>Religion</b>		
Muslim	10	40.0
Christian	15	60.0
Others	-	-
Total	25	100.0



Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
No formal Educational	3	12.0
Primary	5	20.0
Secondary	10	40.0
Tertiary Education (NCE, OND, HND, University degree)	7	28.0
<b>Total</b>	25	100.0
<b>Type of Trade</b>		
Selling of food items	6	24.0
Clothes/underwear	5	20.0
Foot wares and bags	8	32.0
Provisions/toiletries	6	24.0
<b>Total</b>	25	100.0
<b>Number of Children</b>		
1-3	19	76.0
4 and above	6	24.0
<b>Total</b>	25	100.0
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
0- #30,000	4	16.0
#31000 - # 60,000	9	36.0
# 61,000 and above	12	48.0
<b>Total</b>	25	100.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	-	-
Single as a result of Divorce	9	36.0
Single as a result of Husband death	11	44.0
Single as a result of giving birth outside marriage	5	20.0
<b>Total</b>	25	100.0
<b>Years Spent As Single Parent</b>		
1 -4 years	3	12.0
5-8 years	7	28.0
9 -12 years	7	28.0
13 years and above	8	32.0
<b>Total</b>	25	100.0

The demographic characteristics of the respondents shows that they were aged in the following order, 8.0% were between 25-29 years, 24.0% were aged 30 – 34 years, 32.0% were aged 35-39 years, 20.0% were aged 40 -44 years and 16.0% were aged between 45 to 50 years. On religious affiliation 40.0% were Muslims while 60.0% were Christians. Educational attainment 12.0% had no formal education, 20.0% were primary school certificate holders, 40.0% were secondary school certificate holders while 28.0% had tertiary education (NCE, OND, HND, University degree). Type of Trade engaged by the respondents in the markets 24.0% respondents were selling of food items, 20.0% respondents were clothes/underwear, 32.0% respondents were foot wares and bags and 24.0% respondents were provisions/toiletries. Number of Children 76.0% had between 1-3 and 24.0% had 4 and above. Monthly Income 16.0% earn a monthly income of 0-#30,000 36.0% earn #31000 - #60,000 and 48.0% earn #61,000 and above. The respondent's marital status shows that 36.0% were single as a result of divorce, 44.0% single as a result of husband death and 20.0% single as a result of giving birth outside marriage. On years spent as single parent, it showed that 12.0% were between 1 to 4 years, 28.0% were between 5 to 8 years, 28.0% were between 9 to 12 years while 32.0% were 13 years and above.

**Table 3 Thematic Analysis from the themes derived from Research Questions**

Themes from Research Questions	Responses from participants from New Gbagi ,Bodija Alesinloye Oje and Agbeni-Ogunpa Market
Role/responsibilities of female single parents	<p>The following statements typify respondents' views and experiences:</p> <p>Since the death of my husband I have assumed the full responsibility of providing safety, guidance, and care for my two children, one is in primary and the other in secondary school, I don't pay house rent because we have built a house while he was still alive, I can't leave my children for relatives to take care of them am happy taking care of my children with what I earn.</p> <p>Another respondent said: I have only one child outside marriage the father feels less obligated to support our child and as a result I double my effort for him, taking good care of him working and balancing with my family life, providing all our needs from what I sell, I teach him all the cultural values like greeting and respecting elders. I also pay tuition, buy textbooks, note books as well as hire a private teacher to teach him while at school and am happy handling these responsibilities positively.</p> <p>A respondent said:</p>

Themes from Research Questions	Responses from participants from New Gbagi ,Bodija Alesinloye Oje and Agbeni-Ogunpa Market
	<p>I became strong and responsible for my children needs. I am responsible for the health and well-being of myself and children, pay tuitions fees, buy books and so on. I pay house rent, medical bills, clothing, electricity bills and feeding also. I work hard to take good care of my children because am proud of them as they are all I have.</p> <p>Another respondent said: It is very demanding becoming a single mother, am a trader and from my sales, I provide for my family the basic needs such as feeding medical, and welfare I encourage my children emotionally by talking to them, we have family discussion when we need to and we pray together. I always have to exercise patience and show more love to my children. As a mother, I am truthful and faithful so that I will be an example to them I will always be there for them forever as long as am alive.</p> <p>Another respondent said: I provide my children's necessities such as medical care, clothing, shelter, school fees, and food and also assist the youngest with her home assignments. I try as much as possible to maintain the previous standard of living and meeting my own personal expenses, discipline them using words of encouragement and not allowing them to go out late in night and at times am forced to use cane</p>

The above view shows clearly that female single parents play dual roles that are roles: expected of a father within our culture and the roles of the mother at the same time. They reported extensive roles and responsibilities feeling responsible for different domains of life including personal health and well-being and also for the health and wellbeing of their family. This could be as a result of the fact that female single parents had become the primary wage earners after the death of their husband, being divorced and having a child outside marriage may have forced them to shoulder responsibilities of their husband and attempted to compensate for their absence in performing child rearing and other functions for the children as they continue to engage in various trading activities in order to provide sufficient resources for their families. It could be inferred that female single parents were burdened with additional role strain as a parent. Their responses showed that being female single parents, to play the role of father, homemaker, family provider and head of the household add up to the heavy load of roles and responsibilities, but still they were satisfied with their dual roles as they believed that it was for the betterment of their children.

Themes from Research Questions	Responses from participants from New Gbagi, Bodija Alesinloye Oje and Agbeni-Ogunpa Market
Stress encountered by female single parent in fulfilling their role/responsibilities	<p>The following statements typify respondents' views and experiences:</p> <p>Daily chores, child care and domestic duty, health of my family worries me a lot, am so much worried of what they will become in the future and marriage and many more. It is not financially easy to take care of the needs of the children from one single purse but am thankful to God for helping me this far.</p> <p>Another respondent said: I face stress from some men whom want romantic relationship due to the fact that am single I have to make decisions concerning my children's wellbeing and schooling alone. Raising a child or even children without a father is very difficult and very demanding.</p> <p>A respondent said: As the only soul breadwinner of the family, I have to work all the time sometimes doing extra. I worry a lot on my health because of the extra efforts to get additional money. I ignore my own needs and adjust to in order to meet the family's basic need., Sometimes I feel lonely whenever am faced with an issue that relates to my children or personal life. I pray nothing happens to my health if it does, my children will suffer as there will be no one to take good care of them.</p> <p>Another respondent said: It is not easy being a single parent continual disturbance from my family members and friends on unsolicited advice to remarry because of my financial situation and sense of being lonely, when I fall sick it's not easy to take care of the family I sometimes have to call on my siblings to help when such happens</p> <p>Another respondent said: I do not command social respect as a responsible person from neighbour and some people even in the community simply because I am living alone with my children and taking care of them alone without a husband. It is hard to maintain discipline among the children due to absence of male member which is a father that is the reason I encourage them a lot I don't want them to feel sad that they are not living with their father.</p>

On stress encountered by female single parents in fulfilling their role/responsibilities there were different types of stress expressed by the participant's. Single mothers were entirely responsible for every decision they took and never ever getting a break. The dual roles by female single parents could be time consuming and tasking leading to strain or stress. Daily chores, child care and domestic duty represent sources of stress to day-to-

day functioning of a female single parents. Health is also another source of stress and these include current and future health care. Romantic relationship also represents another but least source of stress.

Themes from Research Questions	Responses from participants from New Gbagi, Bodija Alesinloye Oje and Agbeni-Ogunpa Market
Coping strategies used by female single parent in fulfilling their role/responsibilities	<p>The following statements typify respondents' views and experiences:</p> <p>I receive supports from just two of my siblings and friends; I have accepted my condition and realize that I have to fulfil my husband's wish to enable the children to achieve higher education and become useful in future. I don't care and can never give up even if someone criticizes me on how I handle my family.</p> <p>Another respondent said: My father didn't support me only my mum, i manage stress through self-control; I make myself happy by participating in various events in church meant for mothers. I am also coping through personal growth as am also furthering my education. I attend social functions just to make myself happy at times</p> <p>Another respondent said: I talk sometimes with the friends I trust most and release my emotions by crying when none of my children is around, I belong to a group in mosque that has meet my spiritual needs of praying, sometimes to avoid thinking I listen to various radio on programmes while in my shop.</p> <p>Another respondent said: It has not been easy, I try as much as possible to spend more time with my children, keep myself busy by getting more involved in household chores during weekends mostly, when am bored I watch Television when am at home and listen to radio programme</p> <p>Another respondent said: I cope emotionally by sharing my problems with my families and close friends. Sometimes I seek solutions from religious group through praying and fasting with God, one can do anything even if one is alone. I share my feelings with grown up children. Single mothers need patience, love and understanding</p>

From the interview it can be concluded that female single parents have a high level of coping. They expressed their engagement in problem-focused coping methods They reported high level of coping that is particularly oriented towards solving the problems they encountered in their personal and family life while carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

## **Conclusion**

The thematic analysis showed the experiences of female single parent's roles and responsibilities in their families, it could be seen that female single parents engage in income-generating work as they are traders and ultimately become financially independent. They reported extensive roles and responsibilities particularly on welfare of the family, feeding, clothing, shelter and education of the children. This finding indicates a substantial nurturing role played by them. Female single parents reported high level of coping that is particularly oriented towards solving the problems encountered while performing the roles and responsibilities as bread winners. The respondents claimed that their status being changed to single parents forced them to assume the responsibility both as a breadwinner and double parent to fulfil the economic needs of the family as well as providing time to fulfil the psychological needs of the family, which included providing care, at-home-education, as well as compassions. The most common type of single-parent family is one that consists of a mother and her biological children. Being a female single parent, can be hard and lonely. There is often no other adult with whom to share decision making, discipline and financial responsibilities. The full burden of child care, earning a living and parenting falls on them alone. The role of single parent is challenging one especially when the family is headed by a woman as it requires that they take on the responsibilities that should have been shared by both their spouses and them. In addition to becoming the primary wage earner, women are forced to shoulder other responsibilities of their husbands.

## **Recommendations**

Based of the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Social support in form of food, clothing, housing, counselling and emotional supports could be provided to single parents to enable them care for their children and assist them in coping with their levels of stress by social welfare officers as well as by various Non-governmental organizations concerned with Social welfare:
2. Legal frameworks and family policies should be enacted by the Ministry of Women Affair in charge of social welfare services and adequately tailored to the needs of single parents and their families to help cope effectively as a family.
3. Social workers/social welfare officers should advice, counsel and recommend various coping strategies on how best to cope with stress and difficulties in their day-to-day running of their family
4. The government, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), and religious bodies should assist female single parents' children through provision of scholarship and

welfare packages to enable them with their educational pursuit as this can help reduce the burden of care on their parents

5. Female single parents may be stigmatised, marginalised and feel that they are alone in their battles. Community, Churches, Mosques and leaders may devise vocational training programmes and activities to provide means of livelihood and financial assistance in form of soft loans to them, encourage them to join cooperative societies in their respective religious groups, monitor their trading activities as this will help to boost their businesses and encourage their saving attitudes. It is in this way that the most crucial problem of single parents may be lessened and minimized.

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