



Effects of single parenting on academic performance of Apollo '3' JHS students in Kpone Katamanso municipality

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Abstract

The study conducted was on the effects of single parenting on the academic performance of Apollo '3' JHS students in Kpone Katamanso Municipality, sought to answer the following research questions: What are the challenges associated with single parents? How does single parenting affect academic performance and what measures should mitigate the effects of single parenting on academic performance? The study design was a descriptive survey. Purposive sampling procedures were used in selecting 100 students who were identified as hailing from single parent homes. The researchers administered closed-ended questionnaires to gather data. The analysis done was by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The study found among other things that pupils from single-parent homes, about 35% in JHS one, 40% in JHS two and 37% in JHS three had low parental involvement in their educational activities while 65% in JHS one, 60% in JHS two and 63% in JHS three parental involvement was high. The study also discovered that the performances of students in single-parent homes averaged, 42% in JHS one, 47% in JHS two and 45% in JHS three had low performances against 58% in JHS one, 53% in JHS two and 55% in JHS three with higher performances from dual-parent homes. Based on these findings, the study concluded that the low parental involvement in the activities of students' from single-parent homes is the cause of the poor performances of their students while the high parental involvement from two-parent families supported the higher academic performances of their wards. The study requested the intervention of government and undivided attention and hard work from single parents to overcome their numerous challenges and to support their children in improving their academic performance.

Keywords: single parenting, academic performance, kpone katamanso municipality

Introduction

There is a consensus in literature that the presence of both parents in a family implies that the child will get more care (Chioma 2012, Chambers 2008, Ortese 1998) ^[9]. On the other hand the absence of one parent in the life of the child leaves a gap to fill (Diane 2007) ^[13]. This collaborates with Prutt (2000) that in any traditional society and family support for the proper upbringing of the children is the responsibility of the two parents. Andersson (2002), holds a view which projects that in the United States of America, about half of children aged 15 have lived with a single parent. Comparatively in Ghana, the Ghana Statistical Service (2012), indicates that Ghana has close to 2 million (10.2%) of single parents. This number is made up of those divorced, separated and widowed. The high figures indicate that single parenting is an issue of national and international concern. One will pause to ask which of these parents are alive and how the single parents can cater for the physical and psychological needs of their children. A single parent is a parent who has a day-to-day role in raising her children alone without the help of a wife or husband (Eweniyi 2005). On their part, Salami & Alawode (2000) argued that parents are the primary breadwinners and caretakers upon whose shoulders the ultimate responsibility of childcare lies. In Accra and its environs, many parents prefer sending their wards to private schools due to the prestige and higher academic output often attributed to them. But these private schools are very expensive hence parents' have to battle to pay the fees. According to Narko and Vorgelegt (2007), the academic performance of children improves when both

parents are involved in meeting their educational needs. Donkor (2010); Farooq, Shafiq & Berhanu (2011) linked the academic performance of children to their parents educational level, socio-economic status, the attitude of the children towards learning, the school and learning environment and the residential state of the family.

The view of Eweniyi (2005) has it that most of the researchers who conducted their studies on this topic used students of senior high schools and the universities to access academic performance without recourse to basic education. As a result, there is paucity of literature on the nexus between single parenting and academic performance in Junior High Schools. Addressing this issue is very crucial considering the fact that these are the formative stages of these children and any form of disruption in their education could have a lasting effect on their lives.

Narrowing these experiences to the peri-urban area in Accra, Chowa, Ansong & Osei-Akoto (2012) intimated that the issue of single parenting has been a dominant one in the Kpone Katamanso Municipal Assembly over the years. It is against this idea that an investigation is being conducted at the Kpone-Katamanso Municipality to ascertain the effects of single parenting on students' performances.

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges associated with single parent in KKM?
2. How does single parenting affect the academic performances of students?
3. What measures are taken to mitigate the effects of single parenting on academic performance?

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework.

In this study, the Karl Max (1867) conflict theory, as cited by Amoakohene (2013) was the underpinning theoretical framework. The basic idea behind the theory examines life in an environment with limited resources, those who are privileged to have been wealthy and powerful are always engaged in a conflict with the world in their quest to hold on to their power and glory as against the poor and powerless. It is said to create a condition of imbalances in human society. In situations where the rich are fabulously wealthy and the poor miserably impoverished, there is a suppression of the poor by the rich. In the context of the school environment, students whose financial backgrounds are weak in most cases are denied some opportunities as those from wealthy homes in terms of their academic

achievements. The theory in this context is applied appropriately as an interpretation of grades and performances made by students from single-parent families that are economically handicapped. The concept behind the study is a visual representation designed to explain the expectations and the key themes in this research. Using the description of Miles and Huberman (1994), as cited by Musgrave (2000), the frame work explains the relationship between the main factors, conceptual underpinnings and the critical variables of interest that portrays the issue of single parenting as a threat to the future of over some millions of children in schools in Ghana and around the world. The conceptual framework portrays the direct relationship between the dependent and the independent variables that are associated with single parenting and academic performances of students, as shown in figure 1.

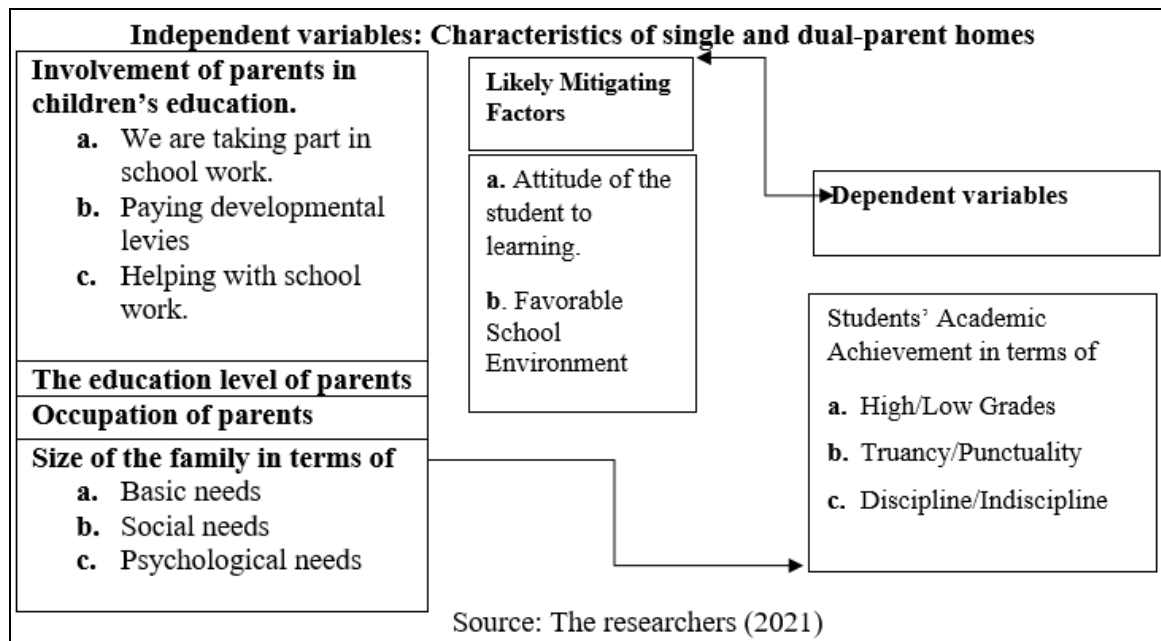


Fig 1: Conceptual underpinnings of the relationship between the variables of single and dual parenting on the academic performance of students

The concept shown above suggests that the more parents are involved in the education of their children; the likely they are to influence their performances academically. The number of problems single-parent families undergo hampers their efforts in making the right decisions. The simple reason is that their finances and opportunities to live a good life are limited. These factors may consequently contribute to the poor performance of their children in school.

Methodology

Research Design

Orodho (2008) defines research design as the arrangements of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that meets the aims of the research purpose with economy in the procedure. The design used for this study was descriptive survey. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer research questions concerning the current status of the subject of study. It does not involve changing or modifying the situation under investigation, nor is it intended to determine cause-and-effect relationships (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005: 154). According to Polit & Hungler (1996), descriptive survey aims predominantly at describing, observing and documenting aspects of a situation as it

naturally occurs rather than explaining them. This design has the advantage of producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people. With the aid of purposive sampling procedures, students who were identified in the school as having single parents, totalling one hundred (100) were used in the study. Purposive sampling technique is one in which a researcher deliberately chooses subjects to be included in a study on the basis of their judgment of the typicality or possession of a particular characteristics needed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009) [12]. The instrument employed for data collection was questionnaires because all the respondents are educated. Besides, the questionnaire provides fewer chances for biases or errors. It is a stable instrument that ensures consistency and a uniform measure void of variation. The questionnaire contained closed-ended items, intended to narrow the responses useful information about various items in the instrument. The questions were short, unambiguous, focused and simple, as recommended by Frankel (2000). To facilitate scoring and easy analysis of data, the questionnaires were coded according to a scoring key as follows: 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree. 3. No opinion, 4. Disagree, and 5. Strongly disagree. All the responses ticked

on the questionnaire were carefully coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The system used descriptive tools for analysis and presented the information on tables indicating frequency count and percentages for discussion.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the results and discussion of the study. In addition, the results are presented in sections with each section addressing a research question of the study.

Research Question One. What are the challenges associated with single parenting in Kpone Katamanso Municipality (KKM)?

The researchers sought to find out from the respondents the nature of the challenges faced as regards single parenting in the Kpone Katamanso Municipality. Their responses have been summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Challenges associated with single parenting in KKMA.

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total (n)
1. Single parents feel lonely as they have no companion	23	23%	7	7%	32	32%	24	24%	14	14%	100
2. Single parents find it difficult to instill discipline in their children.	41	41%	22	22%	15	15%	12	12%	10	10%	100
3. Separated spouses suffer low self-esteem as society judges them instead of giving them the right support.	14	14%	10	10%	21	21%	34	34%	21	21%	100
4. Single parenting has psychological effects in the mind of single parents and their children.	31	21%	24	24%	8	18%	17	17%	20	20%	100
5. Each partner had a financial role in meeting monetary obligations; hence single parents face financial problems.	27	27%	25	25%	15	15%	14	14%	19	19%	100

In Table 5, the investigators wanted to know whether most of the single parents express feelings of loneliness and out of the total sample, 35% strongly agreed, 7% agreed, 32% were neutral, 24% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed and six representing 10% disagreed as shown in the table. The analysis shows a majority of dissenting views on the statement since the neutral, and all those in disagreement are on the opposing side. It indicates that most single parents do not feel lonely as captured by Freeman (2004) [18]. The result also contradicts Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan (1997) that single parents from divorced homes always have psychological and behavioural deficits as a result of loneliness or lack of companionship. Farrel (2001) argued that since children develop a greater sense of well-being when staying with their fathers, they should do the same for their mothers when they found it to be single parent. On the item of most single parents finding it difficult to instil discipline in their children as represented in Table 5, 41% strongly agreed, and 22% also agreed that most single parents find it difficult to discipline their children. However, 15% remained neutral to the statement, 12% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed with the statement as indicated in the Table 5. The researchers experienced in several situations that many single parents out of sympathy for their children based on the situation they find themselves places especially mothers in tight situations to instil stiffer punitive measures on their children. In support of the majority decision, Bellavia and Frone (2005), in their study of single parenting, found out that single parents struggle with most family demands, including punishments and rewards for their children. Milkie, Mattingly, Nomaguchi & Bianchi (2004) reported in their study that even though single parents suffer from the highest rates of discipline-based conflicts, they are not likely to spend insufficient time with their children. Once they are around, they will instil discipline depending on the situation at hand. On Table 5, the researchers again wanted to find out whether separated spouses suffer low self-esteem as society judges them instead of giving them the right support. The data shows that 14% strongly agreed and 10% agreed to the statement. Out of the sample, 21% remained neutral while the majority

34% disagreed, and another 21% strongly disagreed with the statement as indicated in the table. The majority of the respondents are opposed to the statement that separated spouses suffer low self-esteem. In a study conducted by Chowa *et al.* (2012), they compared their experiences with single-parent families and their numerous challenges against dual-parent families. The study concluded that children living with single parents are likely to perform poorly in school. It is as a result of the translation of parents' lower self-esteem to setting lower objectives for themselves. Consequently, their lower self-esteem that has been as a result of their unfortunate situation that invariably affects their overall lives. The consequences included dropouts, delinquencies, alcoholism, drug abuse, and addiction, and many more. The researchers further sought to know whether single parenting has psychological effects in the minds of the single parents and their children in Table 5. Out of the sample selected, 31% strongly agreed with another 24% in agreement. About 8% were neutral, 17% disagreed, and 20% strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of the respondents upheld the hypothesis as valid since there are psychological issues involved in single parenting, especially when it involves divorce. According to Clarke and Hayward (2006), psychological effects in any form of separation of parents often come as a result of inadequate parental contact with children, which often poses a significant challenge to them both the children and the single parent. However, the research hypothesis of Clarke and Hayward (2006), points to the fact that children's sense of well-being is often affected when their parents do not stay together anymore most notably due to divorce. The researcher expressed similar opinions as children often wanted their parents to be together to support their upbringing. Again in Table 5, the researchers sought to identify whether single parents face financial problems since each partner had a financial role in meeting monetary obligations. About 27% of the respondents strongly agreed with another 35% in agreement. However, 15% were neutral, but 14% disagree, and 19% strongly disagreed as represented in. As indicated earlier, most of the problems single parents face are financial, as shown by the majority

decision. The overall effects trickle down to their children, as suggested by Frazer, Brockert, and Ward (2004) in their study on single parenting. They found out that financial constraints can be a barrier to proper education. As such, most single parents and children live in constant fear of failure of the education of the children due to their economic state. The implications are that once there is no assurance of meeting the financial obligations of the

education of the children, the likelihood of them not continuing to the higher levels is absolute.

Research Question Two: How does single parenting affect academic performance?

Analysis of the second research question that sought answers on how single parenting affects academic performance was presented in Table 6.

Table 7: How single parenting affects academic performance.

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total (n)
6. there is difficulty in Most single who find it	32	32%	31	31%	18	18%	8	8%	11	11%	100
7. Most single parents do not help their children with their school assignments.	35	35%	30	30%	14	14%	11	11%	10	10%	100
8. Most single parents in employment can cater for their children well.	37	37%	34	34%	12	12%	12	12%	5	5%	100
9. Some parent’s level of education affects the academic performance of their children.	29	29%	33	33%	17	17%	9	9%	12	12%	100
10. Family size can affect the academic performance of children.	31	31%	32	32%	20	20%	8	8%	9	9%	100
11. There are differences in academic performance of single and dual parents children	12	12%	10	10%	13	13%	36	36%	29	29%	100
12. Not all dual parents meet the family and school needs of their children.	36	36%	29	29%	13	13%	12	12%	10	10%	100

The researchers wanted to find out whether most single parents find it challenging to meet the educational needs of their children. The analysis shows that 32% strongly agreed and another 31% agreed. Out of the total, 18% remained neutral while 8% disagreed and another 11 strongly disagreeing, as shown in Table 6. Finances are a significant part of schools, and therefore, parents have to pay the fees of their children to empower schools to run as indicated by the majority decision. Frazer, Brockert, and Ward (2004) found out that financial constraints can be a barrier to proper education. The implications are that once there is no assurance of meeting the financial obligations of the education of the children are likely to get out of school. The analysis supports the hypothesis that most single parents find it challenging to support their children through school. The researchers suggested by way of an item that most single parents do not help their children with their school assignments. The data shows that 35% of respondents strongly agree and 30% agreed. Out of the sample, 14% were neutral, and 11% disagreed with 10% strongly disagreed, as shown in Table 6. The researchers are of the view that a single-parent family requires many funds to keep the family alive. Parents have to work overtime to support the rest of the family. The argument of Nyarko (2011), expresses the limited help most single parents often give to help their children with school assignments. However, Amoakohene (2013) proposes that the absence of a parent is probably associated with a decrease in total parental involvement, which is, in turn, related to poorer school outcomes. The researcher in support of the hypothesis revealed that in divorce situations, boys living with their mothers and girls residents with their fathers adjust better than living with same-gender parents. The researchers were interested in identifying whether most single parents in employment can cater for the educational needs of their children. The data shows that 37% of respondents strongly agreed and another 34% agreed. About 12% remained neutral while another 12% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed as presented in figure 13. Evidence from the findings of Yee and Eccles (1988) avers that the type of career of a single parent could have a positive effect on his children in two ways. One of them is that the children may intend to work to be like their parents or even higher. Also, Jeynes (2002) found that parents who work in jobs that are much demanding are likely to have no time to attend to their

children which may consequently influence the school attainment of the children. Based on the researchers’ experience, a single parent in government jobs have managed to educate their children to any level they wish to go. Those who are entrepreneurs equally work hard to cater for the school needs of their children. It, therefore, affirms the position taken by the majority of the respondents. The researcher was interested in finding out whether some parent’s level of education affects the academic performance of their children. The available data on table 6 indicates that 29% of the respondents strongly agree and 33% also agreed in line with the statement. Also, 17% of respondents remained neutral, and 9% disagreed, with 12% strongly disagreeing as presented in Table 6. The researchers’ experience in the study was vital as there are practical implications on single parents’ education and its impact on pupils’ academic performances. In support of the respondent's views, research by Duncan and brook-Gunn (1997), shows that an educated mother is likely to have a positive influence on children if even other factors are favorable or inconsistent. In another study, Stipek (2004), explains the relationship that exists between these assertions is that the lower a mother's educational level, the worse effects it could have on family interactions and the behavior of their children which can transcend to their educational performances. Davis-Kean (2005), identified a direct positive relationship between the educational level of parents and the relative expectations of success for their children which equally supports the majority decision. The statement on whether family size can affect the academic performance of children shows that 31% of respondents strongly agreed and another 32% agreed to a family size affecting academic performance. However, 20% remained neutral, and 8% of respondents disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed. In practical terms, the smaller the family size, the better the lives of its members once there are finances to support them. It is against that background that Olayinka (2009) maintains that the basic unit of society is the family; hence, a well-established childhood can guarantee a future stable family with fewer members. Eamon's (2005) study agreed that children from smaller family sizes stand the opportunity to benefit academically than those from large families. It supports the majority decision, as shown in Table 6. Another item sought to find out whether there are differences in the academic performance of single and dual

parents’ children. According to the analysis made, 12% of respondents strongly agreed, and another 10% agreed that not all dual parents meet family and school needs. About 13%, however, remained neutral, with 36% of respondents disagreed, and 29% strongly disagreed. The results showed that the majority decision on this hypothesis disapproves of the statement. Onzima (2011), in support of the statement posits that children of single-parent homes are not able to complete school in most cases up to college. Nyarko & Vorgelegt (2007) suggested a similar position by stating that there is enough evidence to believe that parental or guardian involvement is associated positively with students’ performance in school. A study conducted by Abudu and Fuseini (2013) shows that the sample from two-parent homes has many parents helping children in their academic work as compared to those from single-parent families. The implications are that children from single-parent homes may perform poorly academically as compare to dual parents, but the analysis suggests otherwise. Further, another item intimated that not all dual parents meet the family and school needs of their children. According to the analysis made, 36% of respondents strongly agreed, and another 29% agreed that not all dual parents meet family and school

needs. About 13%, however, remained neutral, with 12% of respondents disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. In the Ghanaian context, the inability of parents to meet the basic needs of families is a common phenomenon. A study by Nyarko (2011) and Chowa *et al.* (2012) that the economic empowerment of families depends primarily on their businesses/trades. It is the researchers’ opinion that not all single parents are weak and not all dual parents are wealthy. Amoakohene (2013), however, started taking proper care of children and meeting family basic needs depends mostly on the type of family and the income levels of the single-family parent or dual. In light of this study, the researcher saw a negative relationship between single parenting and poor academic achievement and a weak link between dual parents and economic well-being.

Research Question Three: What measures are taken to mitigate the effects of single parenting to enhance academic performance?

Table 7 presented an analysis of the third research question that sought answers to the measures taken to mitigate the effects of single parenting such that academic achievement is enhanced.

Table 7: Measures taken to mitigate the effects of single parenting

Statement	SA	%	A	%	N	%	D	%	SD	%	Total (n)
13. The government should give subsidies to cater for children of single parents.	42	42%	32	32%	9	9%	7	7%	10	10%	100
14. Schools should create favorable environments to cater for the needs of all children.	45	45%	40	40%	8	8%	4	4%	3	3%	100
15. Students irrespective of parent type should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes toward learning.	36	36%	39	39%	12	12%	8	8%	5	5%	100
16. The government should create more employment avenues for the youth.	32	32%	37	37%	14	14%	9	9%	8	8%	100
17. Couples should create alternative means of livelihood for their family due to unforeseen circumstances.	28	28%	31	31%	17	17%	13	13%	11	11%	100

To mitigate the effects of single parenting requires severe governmental intervention. The researcher proposed measures for adoption by all concerned parties such that some reliefs could be sought and presented in Table 7. As a result, the researcher stated that the government should give subsidies to the appropriate entities to cater to single parents families. After the analysis, the data shows that 42% and 32% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. However, 9% remained neutral while 7% and 10% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the statement as indicated in Table 7. There are several interventions the government can implement to subsidize single parents in Ghana. One of such interventions is the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty initiated in 2008 targeting impoverished and disabled people extended to include single parents. A study conducted by Sandvik, Diener & Seidlitz (1993) ^[42] emphasized the need for the United States government to do more for people who are single parents because single parenting is as well a national problem. The researcher believes that the majority of affirmative responses are valid to conclude. The researchers again proposed that schools should create favorable environments to cater for the needs of all children. The analysis indicated that 45% of the respondents strongly agreed and 40% equally agreed to the proposition. About 8% remained neutral while 4% and 3% disapproved respectively to the proposed measure as presented in Table

7. Schools are to create the needed environment for effective teaching and learning to thrive. Findley & Varble (2006) ^[17] conducted a study on creating an enabling school environment for learning. According to their findings, all pupils from dual or single parents when given the necessary support and quality education rises to their best. Educational performance does not necessarily matter which type of parenting a child has. The solution to non-performance, though, is affected by factors that culminate in the home of single parents. The researcher stated that students irrespective of parent type should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes toward learning such that their academic achievement is enhanced. The analysis shows in Table 7 that 39% and 36% strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the hypothesis stated that while 12% remained neutral. The minority views are 8% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement. The data is presented in, as shown in Table 7. The majority, according to the analysis, shows that students irrespective of parent type should be encouraged to develop positive attitudes toward learning. Findley & Varble (2006) ^[17] also found in their study that the type of parent only cushions the child as a stepping stone to a better life and not a better life by itself. As a result, all children in school must be encouraged to learn to achieve their future aspirations. The researchers has a similar opinion about the stance of Findley & Varble. The suggestion by the researchers that couples should create

alternative means of livelihood for their families and where necessary, ensure the education of their children against unforeseen circumstances. The data shows that 28% of respondents strongly agreed and another 31% agreed. About 17% were neutral on the statement while 13% disagreed and 11% strongly disagreed, as shown in Table 7. It indicated that the majority of the respondents consented to set aside of a sort of insurance policy for children such that they are adequately catered for when their parents part company. A study conducted by Pruett (2000) ^[40] in the United States of America on the topic of Father Need reiterated the need for secured educational policies for children while fathers are alive. The researchers think that similar educational policies abound in Ghana and suggests that such policies get implemented.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the finding the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. It is clear from the study that most of the pupils from single-parent homes experience low parental involvement in their academic activities compare with pupils from two-parent families rather have a high level of parental participation in their academic work. Through this, single parents have challenges of indiscipline among their families and secondly, financial problems since each partner had a financial role in meeting monetary obligations. However, most single parents do not express feelings of loneliness or low self-esteem due to societal judgement.
2. It also concludes that there is a difference between the academic performance of pupils from single-parent homes and their counterparts from dual-parent homes. Because single parents find it challenging to meet the school needs of their children hence have to work overtime along with their children to support their families this has affected the students negatively in their school.

In respect of recommendations, it is recommended that parents, especially those who are single, plan and apportion their time in such a way that they would be able to aid their children in doing their homework, give them guidance on becoming successful academically, visit their children at school to finding out their performance in class as well as give them all the materials they required for their studies. This is important as it shall complement the efforts of the teachers. School counsellors should offer the necessary help and psychological support for students from single-parent homes to overcome their academic and emotional problems. When the right help is given, they would focus on learning. The researchers also recommended that the government must intervene with subsidies, jobs, enabling school environments, and encourage all children to develop positive attitudes toward learning so that their academic performance can be enhanced. Parents by themselves must create alternative means of livelihood for their families and where necessary, ensure the education of their children against unforeseen circumstances.

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