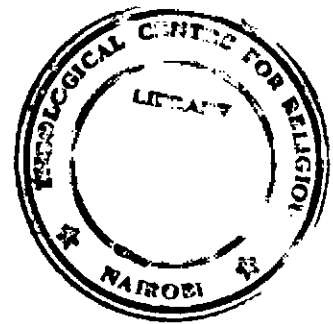


TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

**SINGLE MOTHERHOOD AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY:
A KENYAN SITUATION**

**LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR BACHELOR OF ARTS, RELIGIOUS
STUDIES**

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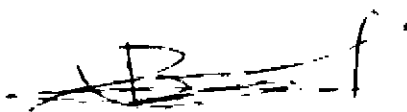


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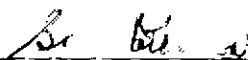
DECLARATION

I the undersigned declare that this is my original work, and has not been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. Information from other sources and people consulted has been fully acknowledged.



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Date: 6/21/2001



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Date: February 6th 2001

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In our traditional African society, single motherhood was not an issue because of the then profound sense of communitarian life and clan systems. Today in our society, single motherhood is an undeniable fact. The phenomenon is now taking Africa by storm, and it is highly prevalent in our African urban centres. It is a phenomenon that is greatly affecting the whole institution of marriage, the Church, and the society as a whole. For this reason, it is a phenomenon that is calling for urgent study and action.

Today we talk of modernization, urbanization, economic revolution, freedom, gender sensitivity, and so on. These are not just mere ideas but issues, which have a bearing on the ground. They have affected all sectors of life, and the family has not been spared either. Today, single motherhood is not a strange vocabulary. It is a reality, a fact that is to be faced and understood, as well as a challenge that needs to be addressed. This piece of work is not an elaborate study on the phenomenon of single motherhood, but rather some of the effects it has on the society, the Church, and the family. My study concentrates more on the poorer side of the group, those from the low income-earning neighbourhoods. The study also seeks to see the effects of this phenomenon on the children of single mothers. These children mostly live under psychologically disturbing circumstances.

Although the study concerns single mothers, the writer observes that there are also single fathers who have their own stories to tell. They too stand in need of attention and care. Thus, it would even seem more fuller a work, if I talked of single parenthood instead of just single mothers. Nonetheless, it is not that I intend to ignore them, but I wish to concentrate on single motherhood for more focus and precision. It is my hope that through this piece of work, my readers and myself

will be more enlightened and rise up more strongly to face this phenomenon with more understanding, love and empathy.

Purpose & objectives of the study

The notion of single motherhood has always been unwelcome news to majority of the people. Either these people have not yet fully come to terms with its reality, which is taking the modern society by storm, or they are not fully informed and understood the facts that surround single motherhood.

From common talk, there are negative criticisms and condemnations directed to single mothers. The purpose of this work would be to help my readers and I to come into a deeper knowledge of the fact of single motherhood in our society. Besides, the work will aim at bringing up more broader and clearer facts surrounding single motherhood. If only we could patiently and lovingly listen to single mothers and come to know and understand how they landed in that state! This would help us understand, accept and appreciate them the more. This piece of work will serve the purpose of inviting all of us as well as encouraging us to listen to single mothers, and especially in the ecclesiastical circles.

Objectives

- (a) To shed more light into the fact of single motherhood in our society.
- (b) To show whether there is any bearing that single motherhood has on the society, the Church, and the family.
- (c) To bring up more clearly the state of single mothers in the society and especially the difficulties they face as well as the state of their children.

- (d) To show the position of the Church on the fact of single motherhood and what the Church is doing about the situation.

Hypotheses

(A) Regarding The Society

1. Single motherhood and low economic status have a positive relation.
2. Single motherhood affects the moral standards of living.
3. Academic status has a bearing on single motherhood.
4. Proper and timely family life education can reduce early and irresponsible Parenthood.

(B) Single Motherhood and the Church

5. Single mothers do not feel fully accepted in the Church.
6. The Church provides her faithful with sufficient instruction on matters of family life, Marriage, religion, and morals.

(C) Single Motherhood and the family

7. Children of single mothers feel the absence of a father figure.
8. Delinquency has a direct relation to single mother home.
9. The Institution of marriage, which forms the basis for a family, is being Undermined.

CHAPTER ONE

SINGLE MOTHERS

CATEGORIES OF SINGLE MOTHERS:

Definition:

According to P. N. Wachege, "single mothers are women who voluntarily or as victims of circumstances live without male partners, but with their children, either born of their own womb or adopted".¹ The emphasis is on the "single" to show that this woman lives alone with her children. Mostly she is the sole provider of the emotional, affectionate needs of the children as well as discipline. As we see in the definition, a woman may become a single mother out of choice, her own choice, or by accident. Some circumstance, never willed or intended by the person may land her into single motherhood. We shall clarify this more as we continue to look at the categories of single mothers. Some women have no capacity to bear children either because of bareness or some medical complications. Some of them resolve to adopt a child or two, and bring them up by themselves. These are still mothers, against the opinion of some people who hold that one becomes a mother only by giving birth.

There is however from some circles, a dislike for this term "single mothers", especially from some women writers. One such writer is Mercy Amba Oduyoye, who expresses her feelings by saying that "The andocentric legal provisions have difficulty recognizing mothers as heads of households, but choose to invent names like "single mothers", suggesting they have stepped outside the norm of submitting to a male authority."²

¹P. N. Wachege, *African single mothers, social-friend and religious investigations* (Nairobi: Signal Press Ltd., 1994) p.1

²Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Poverty and Motherhood", *Concilium*, 706 (December, 1989), p. 75.

I don't see authority as any problem as I believe that a mother is a mother, married or unmarried. Besides, mothers without husbands must be treated as heads of households and that is what they are. Thus I will go along with the term "single mother" as defined in this paper, and besides that, it is the most commonly used term. There are various types of single mothers as seen below.

Single Mothers by Choice

Traditional Kenyan society had no provisions for this, and therefore I may say that this is a phenomenon of the modern times. This is truer of the modern urban Kenya. This category consists of mostly young women who on their own accord, do not want or rather choose not to commit themselves to any man or live with him, but would like to have a few children, usually of their own womb, and bring them up. Wachege says "these are usually women who are capable, enterprising, mainly of the elite class and who have sufficient money to feed themselves and their children. They in a way do not like to sacrifice their autonomy for marriage".³ But it should be noted that this group of mothers does not simply out of the blues choose to remain single. There are reasons behind their choice and these reasons differ from one person to another. Some have developed distaste for marriage after seeing how their own parents have lived their marriage life, some have experienced the wrath of men, even from their own brothers, thus they simply dislike living with men. One therefore makes a choice to remain single. A certain lady, a mother of two in her thirties during my interviews told me that she decided to stay single because she would hate to experience what she witnessed her mother experience in the name of marriage. Almost everyday her mother had to bear the wrath and indiscipline of a drunkard husband.⁴ Many people

³P. N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p. 55.

⁴Jane Muthoni, aged 29 years, interviewed at Kariobangi, Nairobi, on 20/8/2000

tend to dismiss this category of single mothers, saying after all, that was their own choice. What I would like to say is that, yes, there is the aspect of choice, they chose to marry, but not the violence and abuse they received. And so let us consider also why they made the choice. The society also has a lot to play and contributes a lot to the life that individuals lead.

Single Mothers By Accident/Chance

This consists of the largest portion of the group. They are women who become single mothers through no deliberate choice of their own. The emphasis here is on 'no deliberate choice' to show that really under no circumstances whatsoever, did one sit down and decide to be a single mother. One is simply a victim of circumstances or events which by themselves may have been willed by others or unexpected to her. Some are victims of broken marriages, some became widows after death of husband, others were raped and many other different cases we hear of. Some of the common types of single mothers by accident are discussed below.

(A) Death of Husband

This is a regrettable yet an understandable situation that leaves one in a state of single motherhood. It is shocking and "there are many who, after the death of their husbands prefer to remain unmarried and at the same time do not agree to leverage union. They prefer to live alone along with their children".⁵ Well, one may argue that they are free to remarry but choose not to. This may suggest that they fit in the class of single mothers by choice. Let me say that although there is an element of choice, it is not much a choice for one, it is not easy for a widow to remarry and

⁵P.N. Wachege, *African single mothers*, p. 31.

secondly some and in fact majority of them have strong sentimental attachments to their departed husbands. They still feel that they are married. Vatican Council II talks of it. Quoting I Timothy 5:3, the Council says that widowhood accepted courageously is seen as a continuation of the calling to marriage and that all would honour it.⁶ It is an unfortunate affair, a painful experience, but as the council says, let widowhood be taken courageously. I asked one widow who was left while very young why she chose not to remarry and she told me that it would be a dishonour to her departed husband whom she loved so much.⁷

(B) Broken Marriages

Divorce and separation belong here. In some cases it is the woman who chooses to leave the husband. Yet, let me clear it up that this is not just single motherhood by choice. When this woman was marrying, it was because she had seen the beauty of marriage and felt the need to marry and expected all the best. Unfortunately things turn sour and circumstances arise that force her out of the ark of marriage. Then she is forced to stay alone bringing up the children born during their marriage or thereafter.

Mbiti calls it the most painful of all marriage problems.⁸ "Some of the common causes cited for divorces and separations are refusal of sex, unfaithfulness, drunkenness, witchcraft, cruelty, incest, and theft."⁹ It is unfortunate that with the growing liberalistic attitude in our society, many couples

⁶*Gaudium et spes*, in Vatican II Documents, (7th Dec., 1965), No.48.

⁷ Joice Mwangi, aged 33 years, interviewed at Kariobangi-Nairobi on 20/8/2000.

⁸ J. S. Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa* (Essex: Longman group U.K. Ltd. 1986) p. 209.

⁹ *A Biblical approach to Marriage and Family in Africa* (Machakos Theological Advisory Group, Scott Theological College 1994), p. 35

resort to divorce and separations as a solution to their marital problems. But in marriage, a lot of patience, love, understanding, perseverance, and dialogue are called for.

(C) Rape

Psychological factors come more at play in cases of single mothers who were raped. When one is unexpectedly attacked and brutally abused sexually, she develops a psychological fear that forces her to “dread the presence of men and becomes overwhelmed by fear when alone or when in the presence of men.”¹⁰ Many of these rape victims stay single without a male partner. In both traditional and modern societies, rape is a sexual deviation. It is a crime and something repulsive.

(D) Cheated

Cheating is not a new vocabulary, and even the wisest people at one time or another falls prey to being cheated. Cheating is found almost in all sectors and areas of life, and sexual life is not an exception. A lot of factors come to play here. Mid-life crisis for men leads them into affairs with younger women. Some times those cheated into sexual affairs carry some responsibility especially when they crave for gifts and treats. Nonetheless, men use these gifts as inducements. Many young women fall prey to their own schoolmates and college mates. Others are cheated with money by sugar daddies, while others fall prey to *matatu* touters who promise a free ride. Still many are promised marriage in exchange for sex. But in many cases, these poor ladies “are abandoned

¹⁰Carlson Brown, “Because of Angels: sexual violence and abuse”, Concilium, 1994:1, p.6.

once they conceive. They really go through a feeling of rejection, worthlessness, and loneliness. And in their frustration, some usually turn to sex for survival."¹¹

(E) Polygamy

One would wonder how a woman would be a single mother in a polygamous situation and yet it is said that she is married. But "in many cases, older wives live almost like single mothers with little or no attention from the so-called husband."¹² There are also some cases reported in polygamous unions, where jealousy leads to the killing of the husband, leaving the wives widowed, thus in single motherhood.¹³ In other cases, polygamous men became Christians, choosing one wife and leaving the others to live as single mothers.

(F) Absentee partner

Strictly speaking, wives of those men who work far away from home are not single mothers. But practically speaking, some of these men simply ignore their families and continue working in the city for years without going to visit them. The wife of such a man practically lives just like a single mother. She suffers the absence of her husband and cares for the children alone. The children also suffer the absence of the fatherly love and care that they deserve. "In some cases, when the husband stays far away for too long, it leads to new unions and final separation."¹⁴

Other causes of single motherhood are for example prostitution, incest, ratio of women to men, physical deformities, etc. etc. all of which cannot be fully discussed in this piece of work.

¹¹ P.N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p. 29.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁴ J.S Mbiti, *Love And Marriage In Africa*, p. 205.

What the author has discussed hopefully gives an idea of who single mothers are, and situations that result to single motherhood.

Conclusion

We have seen the main causes or factors behind the phenomenon of single motherhood. There are single mothers by choice, and there are those who are single mothers through no deliberate choice of their own. They are single mothers by chance. Our discussion of single mothers by chance should help us understand these people better and come to know that they are in need of our love and empathy. Even those who are so by choice, the fact is that they live among us, they are in the church, and therefore they have to be addressed also and in a loving manner. The idea of single motherhood is an olden one as well as modern. In our next chapter, we shall go ahead to see the traditional and modern trends of this phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN TRENDS OF SINGLE MOTHERHOOD

As, has already been observed, single motherhood was not a common phenomenon in Africa at large. Not that the problem was foreign to the society, but there were well-designed means to deal with it especially preventative measures within the community structure. In this chapter we shall have a brief look at both the traditional and modern views concerning single motherhood. We shall also consider a few of the problems faced by them and their children.

Traditional Outlook

P.N. Wachege observes that in the traditional society, single motherhood was by no means a way of life. It was a deviation.¹⁵ The natural and fully accepted way of life was marriage. After initiation, everyone was expected to marry. This was a sacred duty that one had towards his/her clan and family, in order to raise children and carry on the family name. Generally, everyone married and no woman was left to herself. Certain cultural norms and values characterized this traditional outlook. We shall explain a few of them.

(A) The We Consciousness

In the traditional society, the main norm of social living was “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”.¹⁶ Everything that our forefathers and mothers did in the society was guided by this norm. The community aspect was very strong and whoever diverted from the community to lead his/her own personal lifestyle was seen as a rebel and therefore was accursed. As a result, marriage and generation of children became a community affair. Mbiti tells us that marriage was a social adventure centered on one’s partner but including other people in its wider orbit.¹⁷ This would follow, then, that since the generation of children was a matter of concern to the whole community, there were strong sanctions against those people who indulged in sex for selfish reasons.

¹⁵P.N Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p. 71.

¹⁶J.S Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.), p.224.

¹⁷J.S Mbiti, *Love and Marriage in Africa*, p.45

(B) Fertility

In all African cultures, fertility had a great value. Fertility was proved best within the institution of marriage. "Principally, the essence of womanhood is motherhood"¹⁸ as John Paul II, says in his apostolic letter, *mulieris dignitatum*. This is especially true for the African women. Fertility was highly placed and so much valued for continuation of lineage and perpetuation of life. One became immortal through remembrance, and this was assured by having children. That is why it is said, "infertility blocked the channel through which the stream of life flows."¹⁹

In such a case, continuation of life is put into danger. Thus most of the women got married to prove their fertility.

(C) Bride Price

Bride wealth had a great part to play, especially in consolidating a marriage. It was not a purchase price for a wife, but an exchange of gifts in order to show in concrete terms that the two families had agreed to the marriage of the son and the daughter. In many cases it was not paid in full at one time, but in instalments, keeping up that relationship. It became clear evidence that the man and woman were truly and legally married.²⁰ In case of one who was poor, the community took charge and paid the dowry. Bride wealth strengthened marriages and one could not stay with somebody's daughter without paying the dowry. This is sometimes lacking these days, especially with the "come-we-stay" relationships.

¹⁸Gregory Baum, "Bulletin: The Apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*", Concilium, 206 (December, 1989), p.147.

¹⁹B. Kosembo, E. Magesa, and A. Shorter, African Christian Marriage (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977), p.105.

²⁰A Biblical Approach, p. 19

(D) Marriage Fidelity

Marital fidelity was a great virtue in the traditional society. As a result, divorce was something rare. This was because it would go against the basic norms of marriage and bride wealth. In most communities, marriage itself was a long process, and thus the process of separation became even longer. The community took charge to solve problems and difficulties facing particular marriages. This had to be done since “a divorce would mean a scar on the whole community”.²¹

Traditional Treatment

The traditional community handled some of the problems according to the gravity of the issue. These are discussed in the following pages.

(A) Training

The path to adulthood in the traditional society was characterized by intensive training at different stages of growth. There was direct education, which dealt with what to do and what not to do and the codes of relationships. This was mostly done during the time that preceded the initiation. There was also the indirect ethical education that was imparted from an early age through things like story telling, riddles, folk songs, etc. The older people taught the younger people. “Boys were usually taught by the uncle, father, grandfather, or an older relative. The girls were taught by the grandmother, mother, or an older relative”.²²

²¹ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, p. 145.

²² *A Biblical Approach*, p. 21.

(B) Divorce

Divorce was prevented to a certain extent by the value attached to bride wealth. The community aspect of marriage also played a greater role in preventing divorce. One of the causes of possible divorces was sterility. "In many communities, if a man was found to be sterile, his brother could perform the act and save the marriage. In case it was the wife who was sterile, the man took another wife. Still, the first one remained his wife".²³ In this way, many cases of possible divorce were avoided.

(C) Leverage System

Though controversial especially with the coming of Christianity, it was one of the solutions that many tribes found to care for the widows. In a leverage system, when the husband died, the widow was taken by one of the brothers of the deceased or by a close relative. In most cases, the widow had the choice of the man from within the group of men legible according to the custom. "The woman is not remarried to the new man as they believed that the woman was already married to the deceased man, and as such to the clan"²⁴

Consequently the author prefers to call it wife guardianship. Here in Kenya, the Luo Community has been strong on this practice. "Their argument has been that, failure to care properly for the widow will mean loss of her dead husband's wealth and this may lead her into prostitution and in any case, no one will marry a widow".²⁵ All the same, Leverage system to a

²³J. S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, p. 145

²⁴Kisembo, et al., *African Christian Marriage*, p. 78.

²⁵Michael C. Kirwen, *African Widows* (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 223.

large extent in a particular community catered for women who could if it were today be left by themselves as single mothers.

(D) Polygamy

Although polygamy is a system not accepted by the Church, in our traditional society, it was used as a way of caring for certain categories of single mothers. “In certain societies, when a woman became pregnant out of wedlock, she was usually married off to older men, as second or third wife, or as one of the many wives. In this way, she was placed under the care of some man”.²⁶ In other cases, the man who caused the pregnancy was forced to marry the girl or strictly take care of the child. All these social controls acted as safeguards.

Modern Outlook

The opening sentence of the document *familiaris consortio* says, “In the modern world, it is the family that has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture”.²⁷ This statement seems very true. These changes have affected the family in the sense that the traditional values attached to family and community seems to be eroding away. These days, many young women feel that they need not and cannot rely on a male partner in a serious commitment. So, they try to find a job to feed themselves and the child or children. Africa is being caught up in this situation at an alarming rate. But we might be in the first generation of change and therefore not too late to handle the situation. Nonetheless, the trend is not very encouraging and here lies the challenge to the Church. Ways have to be sought to control this

²⁶P. N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p 91.

²⁷John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*. (Nairobi: Pauline Publications, 1982), No 1

trend and to strengthen family ties. The following reasons have led to this situation. Causes are numerous and some of the major ones are discussed below.

(A) We - I Attitude

Today, it seems that the golden rule of “I am because we are and since we are therefore I am” seems to be losing its value. The matter at stake is that, the community aspect of marriage and family seems to be disappearing. Everything is taking an individualistic note. Families have become so much nuclear from the original extended state. And so, children are strongly moving to a very individualistic realm.

In this state of affairs, traditional controls can no longer function, thus giving rise to “free love, where married love is dishonoured by selfishness”.²⁸ As a result, the phenomenon of single motherhood comes more on the increase

(B) Erosion of Sound Cultural Values

Certain traditional values kept the community as such and especially the young from any possible deviations and if any deviations occurred, they had means to deal with such problems. Today, people keep the traditional values that they prefer. The focus is on the individual, individual freedom, while the role of tribes and clans is undermined in many societies.

Now, one area where the traditional cultural values have lost the say is in the area of sexuality. One great influence here is the western notion of sexual liberation. This makes a lot of things to seem permissible. The results are that, schoolgirls are dropping out due to pregnancies

²⁸*Gaudium et spes*, No. 48

and many young women are becoming pregnant when they didn't really felt ready for it. Independence and uncontrolled freedom in the cities have given rise to pre-marital sex and cohabitation. Bride wealth and notifications that were a great value in marriage life are taken very lightly these days. Then some parents have made bride wealth such a burden since they want to be compensated for the money they spent in educating their daughters. This has made many young men to contempt bride wealth, and in some cases, it is sidelined completely.

(C) Lack Of Training

Most of the traditional training given to young people for life is on a serious decline. Well, some tribes still have some sort of initiation rites, but not really with all the instruction and the training that preceded and followed the ceremony. "The youth have emancipated from clan and parental authority, and coupled with the breakdown of community consciousness, there is then this general failure in training. Other reasons include the introduction of western type of education, employment possibilities in the cities, urbanization etc."²⁹

Then in some nuclear families, some parents tend to be too strict provoking rebellion among the children, and there are others who feel restraint to control the children.³⁰ Now since many of the traditional means of training and counselling have diminished, we need to look for new and modern means that could help our youngsters to lead a more responsible, morally sound, and Christian life.

²⁹Kisembo et al., *African Christian Marriage*, p. 125.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 112.

Causes For This Modern Outlook

The author feels that some of the causes were mentioned above in passing. Nonetheless, some are worth looking at critically.

(A) Urbanization

Nowadays, people are no longer tied down to those self-sufficient homogeneous village communities. Education, trade, economical factors, and travel facilities have moved and are moving people out of their rural settings into urban setting.³¹ This has affected the social structure very much. "Some men come into the city leaving their wives back in the village, and once in the city, they look for sexual satisfaction in new partners".³² As this migration into urban centres continue, there comes up the problem of housing, jobs, slums, alcoholism, prostitution, and so on. "About 47% of urban population in Kenya live in very low income neighbourhoods, of which 30-40% are absolutely poor at mere subsistence levels".³³ Of these people of low-income neighbourhoods, very many belong to the group of single mothers. Women headed households are on the increase. Thus the situation is becoming serious in Kenya and especially in Nairobi. It is the time we need to wake up with more and greater sensitivity and awareness.

³¹Ibid., p.188.

³²Ibid., p. 41.

³³Government of Kenya and UNICEF, *Children and women in Kenya: A situation analysis*. (Nairobi: UNICEF Kenya country office & government of Kenya, 1992), p.14.

(B) School Education

It is a fact that most of the single mothers conceived while in school or college. Every year, thousands of girls drop out of school due to pregnancy. What has gone wrong? Too much an exposure to external influence? Or is it our educational system that is not preparing the students for life? Or are we not able to bring in a synthesis of the traditional and modern values? The rate of schoolgirls dropping out of school due to early pregnancy is alarming. Studies by the ministry of health in 1988 showed that in 1985, over 8000 girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy, 9000 in 1986, and 13000 in 1987.³⁴ Thus school education is one of the modern causes of single motherhood. There was much discipline and control when girls were traditionally in the village.

Another aspect is that, after school too, some women nowadays feel that once they are well educated, have a good job and can stand on their own economically, they need not have a husband, but have a few children through someone of their choice.³⁵ Thus even education has led people into single motherhood.

Problems Faced By Single Mothers

These problems are many. It is not easy to elaborate all of them in such a short paper. Nonetheless, a brief look at some of the prominent difficulties will help us look at them in a more concerned manner, and to realize that they are a group struggling, calling for attention and care.

³⁴Ibid., p.24

³⁵P.N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p. 116.

(A) Economic Problems

Very often, single mothers find it very difficult to own a piece of land or a house or even to educate their children. Land inheritance laws do not favour them. "The land inheritance practices deprive rural women who are single or divorced from inheriting the family land".³⁶ The main factor causing financial strains is lack of a proper job. Many are not eligible for a decent job because of lack of skills. One reason for this is that many drop out of school due to pregnancy before completion of their studies.. So, most of them take up small jobs like selling vegetables, charcoal, *chang'au* brewing, selling second hand clothes, and some turn into commercial sex.

(B) Housing

Many single mothers lack proper housing. This pushes them into slums. Once the children increase in number, space in the house becomes insufficient. This forces some of the children into the streets.

(C) Role Confusion

This is caused by the absence of a husband support. Some single mothers have to take up father roles, especially in dealing with the children. A good number of those I personally interviewed affirmed this.

³⁶Government of Kenya and UNICEF, Children And Women in Kenya, p. 32.

D). Social Stigma

Often a social stigma is attached to them as people of low morals - even if one is trying all her best to lead a normal life. Many people look down upon them and consider them to be prostitutes. In this respect, the Church is not too far away either. Mostly in the Church, these mothers are discriminated against. Often they are not taken as bridesmaids or godparents in baptism and other sacraments. The fact is that, they are viewed as not upright people. "There are also cases when they had been publicly insulted in Churches by priests when they presented their children for baptism".³⁷ Then of course there are the more psychological problems they experience such as depression, loneliness, poor self-image to some, etc.³⁸

The above mentioned difficulties faced by single mothers should move us in a way to understand them better and accept them as people in need of attention, mercy and compassion.

Problems Faced By Children of Single Mothers

Children from single parent families tend to inherit a lot from the family environment in which they grow. They too suffer both materially and psychologically. First of all, they lack the proper balanced parental care that ought to come from both parents. The material poverty of mother is experienced likewise by the children.

In a single parent family, the proper upbringing of the child suffers. A child learns the basics of human and Christian living in a family. When the expected family atmosphere is not

³⁷P. N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p.143.

³⁸A Biblical Approach, p. 184

there, the child lacks a proper upbringing. That is why *Gaudium et spes* stresses the need for the active presence of the father for the training of the child.⁴⁹

Sometimes a child of a single mother suffers from lack of a sense of identity. Children like to be called by their father's name. But in this case, they lack that chance. The value systems of our societies are so much affected by the transition from the traditionally controlled society to the so-called modern society. We need to rise up more strongly in spreading the gospel values that can strengthen the basic family values.

Theological Perspectives: *Biblical View Of Widows:*

The sacred scriptures have not ignored single mothers. There is a special concern for widows in the scriptures. There is a call to care for and protect the widows. In the Old Testament, it was stipulated that during harvesting time, those who had crops were not to finish everything; the grains, the olives, and the grapes, from the fields. There was to be something left to benefit the widows among other needy people (cf. Dt. 24:19-21).

Isaiah talked of justice, especially in defending the rights of widows (Isaiah 1:17). Widows had to be protected and cared for, since their husbands had died and they were left as single mothers. This is a great lesson for us, when it comes to dealing with single mothers who are all over and around us.

The New Testament continues to stress the need to care for the widows. Those who reinforce the law should not forget the rights of the widows (Cf. Mk. 12:40). The Apostles even as they continued with their work of preaching had to choose seven helpers who would see to it that

⁴⁹*Gaudium et spes*, No. 50 & No. 51

the widows and other needy people were cared for. (Cf. Acts 6:1-4). Besides, the widows are encouraged to be women of honour in the way they live. They are cautioned against leading a loose moral life. They are also encouraged to be humble, to bring up their children well, and to be of help to the community (Cf. 1Tim. 5: 6-10).

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it can be seen that single motherhood is an age-old phenomenon. It has been viewed differently and handled differently down the ages, from the Old Testament times, to New Testament times, in our African traditional setting, and now in the modern times. The sacred scriptures in both testaments concentrated mainly on the widows, who were to be well treated, cared for, and treated justly.

In the traditional African setting, the phenomenon of single mothers was not so much widespread. It could be contained at the community level. The then strong community bond and community living, as well as the strong sense and value for the family worked to prevent the phenomena from becoming an issue as such. But in the modern times, with the break down of the traditional values especially those regarding the clan and the family, single motherhood as a phenomenon has gone to the increase and already is spreading at a very high rate. This has posed a great Challenge to the society and the church. Something is being done to handle the issue and much remains to be done.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A). Site Description

Nairobi city was one of the major sites of study that was chosen by the author for some obvious reasons. Being a city, it has almost all kinds of people, thus making it easy to get in touch with various targeted respondents. Secondly, with the fast rate of urbanization, Nairobi becomes the central stage for change from the traditional view of life to the modern one. As such, even this phenomenon of single motherhood is more prevalent in the cities. Besides, most of the effects of this phenomenon are seen mostly in Nairobi.

The other place that was chosen was Murang'a diocese. This was done in order to get at least something from the rural setting. In the category of single mothers, a total of 120 questionnaires were sent out, 62 came back and out of these, 60 were chosen, leaving aside 2 very incomplete forms. The second set of questions was addressed to the youth. A total of 90 questionnaires were sent out but only 52 came back and were all considered. The third set of questions was addressed to children of single mothers. Here the sampling was restricted majorly to street children in Nairobi, otherwise very few were interviewed from their own families in the city. 58 samples were taken.

B). Data Collection Methods

The principle method used was through questionnaires. Since the researcher could not approach all the respondents individually, some friends helped in the exercise. Besides, friends at the University of Nairobi also helped in this exercise, especially with the questionnaires for the

youth. While the first two sets of questionnaires followed the above-mentioned method, the third set addressed to children of single mothers was dealt within a different way. The children in the streets could not fill the forms themselves. So the researcher using the questionnaire as his basis used to interview each child and took the data himself. A few of single mothers were also interviewed directly especially during Sunday apostolate

C). Problems Encountered

Generally it was not an easy task doing the questionnaires and getting them filled. The framing of the questions had to be thought and rethought owing to the sensitivity of the whole issue. This was to avoid provoking people's sentiments.

Some people expected some payment especially the single mothers. Others had to question seriously the intention of the researcher in giving them a questionnaire to fill. Some of the single mothers had an earlier experience with similar kind of questionnaires, and so they complained that they had filled forms before but nothing was done. At times, this would mean going around again looking for other people who had not filled questionnaires before.

Another problem was to get back the forms. Many just got lost as some people just took them and never bothered anymore. Yet even for those that came back, one had to really keep on running up and down constantly reminding the people and pressing them to fill them. With regard to the third set of questions to the children of single mothers, it was also not easy. First of all they were children in the streets, hungry and always asking for something to eat. They place very high hopes on the researcher regarding giving them something. Besides, some could cheat and therefore the researcher had to make a lot of discernment and repeat questions in different ways.

Very often, cross-questioning got the right answers out of them. All the same, despite the difficulties, the research was a success.

CONCLUSION

The kind of method adopted for data collection in any kind of research determines to a large extent the clarity of the data to be received. In the present case, the author by distributing well-organized questionnaires with simple and clear questions facilitated the clarity of the data. Likewise, the direct interviews conducted by the author brought out very clear answers to questions asked. Nonetheless, research work is never without difficulties, and this calls for courage and a lot of patience. In chapter four, the author goes ahead to interpret and analyse the data collected.

Chapter 4

Analysis And Data Interpretation

A). Single Mothers And The Society

The phenomenon of single motherhood is growing at an alarming rate. Yet, it is a phenomenon that has a profound bearing on the society. Society is made up of individuals. What individuals are and what they do affect the society in one way or another. When my respondents were faced with the question as to why they chose to be single mothers, of the 60 respondents, 53 answered the question since they found it relevant. Out of these 53, 41 i.e. 77% answered that marriages were unstable in the society. This shows that majority are single mothers because there is something wrong in the society; the whole institution of marriage as something unstable.

Yet, as I have said earlier, single motherhood also affects the society in terms of morals, education, family structure, etc. Using the hypotheses earlier stated, and the data collected, the researcher will continue to explain these issues in a deeper sense.

Hypothesis 1. Single Motherhood And Low Economic Status has a positive relation.

Most of the single mothers live in lower than average economic conditions. They usually experience it hard supporting themselves and their children. Although some positively choose to be single mothers because they are economically stable, it is not the case with majority of single mothers. Within the city of Nairobi, many of them live in low-income neighbourhoods. Many are not employed, and those with temporary jobs do not earn enough to support their children. The research conducted among single mothers mostly in Nairobi tends to prove this.

Table 4.1.1: Employment And Economic Status of Single Mothers.

	Employed		Unemployed		Total
No.	33		27		60
%	55%		45%		100%
Can support Children	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	13	20	6	21	
%	39%	61%	22%	78%	

As the table can show, 61% of those who said were employed are still unable to support their children. This fact shows that they are low-income earners. They cannot therefore get enough to support themselves and the children. 45% of the respondents were unemployed. They live in poor conditions, doing petty businesses like selling vegetables and paraffin. In spite of all these hardships however, the heart of a mother for her children still prevails and many of them are

determined to look after their children, however little they may provide for them. Thus single motherhood and low-income status have a positive relation.

Hypothesis 2. Single Motherhood affects the Moral Standards of living

Single mothers are not bad people. They are all not evil intentioned. Nonetheless, from a closer look at life in the city of Nairobi, we find that in the class of single mothers, there is a lot of stress and struggle for survival. Most of single mothers in the city live in slums and low-income neighbourhoods. The stress and strains of life many a times force a good number of single mothers into doing things they would have hated to do in life. As most of them struggle to feed themselves and the children, they end up engaging in sexual relations with different men for money and some sort of security.

Now, even from a very general look at life in the slums, the fact of prostitution is clear. Unfortunately, “most of the commercial sex workers are single mothers”⁴⁰. Then a chain of evil habits start. These men who move with these women, a good number of them are married. Then here the question of adultery comes in. The worst comes when the children of these single mothers who are engaged in commercial sex come to learn about the activities of the mother. They develop a Very light idea of casual sex and grow with it. The environment in which they live in becomes so rough and this affects the attitude of these children towards life; some become rougher and move into the streets. Besides, these mothers lack the moral authority to discipline the children. All these factors contribute to the moral degradation in the society. Therefore, the second hypothesis that single motherhood affects the moral standards of living stands true.

⁴⁰ Rose Mwikali, 31yrs, a single mother of three, *discussing the point of survival for single mothers in the slums at Korogocho slums in Nairobi*, on 20th Aug., 2000.

Hypothesis 3: Academic status has a bearing on Single Motherhood.

As the educational status of a woman goes up, she can largely rely on herself and choose to live alone without a male partner and yet bring up children. On the other hand, as the educational status goes down, young girls may be moved by emotions, act out of ignorance, thus getting easily cheated and end up as single mothers. Below is a table regarding some of the findings of the researcher.

Table 4.1.2: Level of Education Among Single Mother Respondents

	Primary school	Secondary school	Higher Education	Total
No.	28	19	13	60
%	47%	31%	22%	100

Of the 60 single mother respondents, 28 of them dropped out of primary school. This accounts for 47%. 19 of them dropped out or completed secondary school. This accounts for 31%. Lastly, 13 of them, that is 22% had reached university or higher education. Here below, the three groups are analysed each at a time.

Table 4.1.3: Table Showing how university and higher education Women became single mothers

	Choice	Widowed	Cheated	Total
No.	8	3	2	13
%	62%	23%	15%	100

The data shows that majority of them became single mothers by choice. This accounted for a good 62%. This shows that as one's educational status goes up, one is able to better analyse things, issues, and environment, and decide for herself. A very low percentage was cheated - only 15%. It was also interesting to note that all these thirteen respondents of higher education got their first child after they were twenty years of age. Academic status has a bearing on single motherhood.

Table 4.1.4: Table showing how Secondary School girls became single mothers.

	Choice	Widowed	Cheated	Total
No.	4	2	13	19
%	21%	11%	68%	100%

In the category of secondary school women, those who felt that they were cheated topped the group. The group seems very vulnerable. The young people in secondary schools have not yet attained that maturity to decide wisely and stand on some principles. It is a period instead, of fantasy, experiments, and empty promises. Here, it is not just a matter of being cheated, but also a good deal of ignorance. A good number felt older men or boys cheated it. Out the thirteen who felt they were cheated, nine got their first child before they were twenty years of age. Only 4 out of 19 chose to be single mothers by themselves. They were already employed and over 20 years of age when they got their first child.

Table 4.1.5: How Primary School girls became single mothers

	Choice	Widowed	Cheated	Total
No.	3	4	21	28
%	11%	14%	75%	100%

Again in this group, those who were cheated topped the group. This figure speaks more on the lack of education and it's effect especially when it comes to sexual matters. The lower the level of education, the more the ignorance and the higher the chances of accidents and being cheated. According to the study done by the researcher, the highest percentage of single mothers was cheated. Trial marriages and 'come-we-stay' relationships are forms of cheating. The less educated and less fortunate easily fall prey to it, as compared with the highly educated. Those highly educated take greater care in reflection and are more serious.

Educational status has a bearing on single motherhood. When one is more educated, she is more responsible, can sit and reflect, has a higher sense of self-dignity, and hence is less prone to being cheated. One who is less educated and her economic status is low can easily be deceived. Besides there are more factors that come into single motherhood, not just educational status. Nonetheless, this later factor also counts a lot and as far as the study is concerned, the third hypothesis stands proved right.

Hypothesis 4: Proper And Timely Family Life Education can reduce early and Irresponsible Parenthood.

It is already a very hot issue in Kenya today. The main question regards who should teach family life, where it should be taught, and the contents. The Catholic Church has had suspicions that the government of Kenya, through the ministry of education wanted sex education in schools disguised as family life education. It is unfortunate that the traditional educational forums, where community and family values had a place, have broken down. Hence, there is an increasing need for proper value centered family life education. Adolescence stage calls for guidance. From what the researcher gathered from young people, the youth really felt the need to be directed by older responsible people as the table below shows.

Table 4.1.6: Youth on the need to be directed by someone older on matters of sex and family.

	I need to be directed	I do not need to be directed	Total
No.	48	4	52
%	92%	8%	100%

Most youngsters felt that they needed to be guided and helped. This accounted for 92% of youth respondents. Besides, 58 out off 60 single mother respondents, i.e. 96% too felt that family life education for youngsters should be provided to help them be more aware of themselves and

responsible. If this type of education is needed, who should provide it and where should it be provided? It is a need in the society today to have a value centred family life education. But by whom? Let us look at the opinion of the youth and the single mothers.

Table 4.1.7: Youngsters on who should conduct family life education

Group	No.	%
Church	28	54%
School	11	21%
Family	8	15%
Government	2	4%
Others	3	6%
Total	52	100%

In this case, the Church comes into focus. The young people feel that the Church has a sacred duty towards them, to guide them in matters of morals and family life. Of the 52 youth respondents, 28 of them, i.e. 54% felt that family life and morals should be taught in and by the Church. 21% voted for school and 15% were for the family to teach them. These two later forums are also quite fitting if well used.

The opinions of Single Mothers were as follows: -

Table 4.1.7: Single Mothers on who should conduct family life Education.

Group	No.	%
Church	33	55%
School	15	25%
Family	10	17%
Government	1	1.5%
Others	1	1.5%
Total	60	100%

Here too, the focus is mainly on the Church. The parents feel that they can easily entrust their children to the Church to teach them matters regarding the family and morals. 33 respondents out of 60 of them i.e. 55% voted for the Church. They also felt that the school also can be a good forum, and so 25% voted for the school. 17% of them saw the family as the best place for this teaching and guidance. Nonetheless, the Church, school, and family should have a joint effort to see to it that our young people are well directed on matters of family and morals.

Yet, the Church has to put extra effort and arm herself the more so as to more strongly face the situation. From a general view of what we see in the society, things are really not in the right direction. Most of the young people are going astray. But if the Church, school, and family get serious, proper and timely family life education can help reduce early and irresponsible parenthood.

B). Single Motherhood And The Church

Most of the respondents were Catholics. Of the 60 respondents, 53 were Catholics, the major reason being that the greatest part of the study was conducted within a Catholic setting. The Catholic Church has a good number of single mothers. The major question here regards how the Church is dealing with this phenomenon of single motherhood. How are single mothers treated in the Church?

Here below, the author presents his findings on the feelings of single mothers, and how the Church authorities treat them. We shall also see how much the Church offers on morals and guidance on matters of family and sex education as testified by the young people.

Hypothesis 5: Single Mothers do not feel fully accepted in the Church.

We cannot deny the fact that at times there are temptations to take a condemnatory look or even have that attitude towards single mothers, and especially those who are single mothers by choice, and some accidental cases. Not all single mothers feel unaccepted in the Church, but there is a good number that feel discriminated against and even looked down upon. Some cases do not offer an admirable picture. At times, some even had to bear with harsh words from some priests. This is something unfortunate.

Out of the 53 Catholic respondents, 48 of them, i.e. 91% said that they frequent the Church. This is a clear show that they feel that they belong to the family of God and therefore they need acceptance there. Only 5 of them said that they do not frequent the Church. Unfortunately, the study showed that all of them five put down the attitude of Church community and authority as one of indifference and looking down upon. Probably, that is the reason why they do not frequent the Church. Let us take the 53 Catholic respondents and see their feelings on the attitude of Church community and authority towards them.

Table 4.2.1: Attitude of Church Community Towards Single Mothers.

Attitude of Church community	No.	%
Supportive	28	53%
Indifferent	15	28%
Looks down	10	19%
Total	53	100%

Slightly more than half of the respondents felt that the community is quite supportive towards them. This is a good sign that to a large extent single mothers feel at home in the family of God. Nonetheless, it is a matter of great concern that almost half of them also do not feel so at varying degrees. This is a call to the Church community to be more open to the situation, and face it with more understanding and love.

Now, what about the Church authorities? Let us have a look at the table below:-

Table 4.2.2: Attitude of Parish priests towards single mothers

Attitude of Parish Priests	No.	%
Supportive	39	73%
Indifferent	11	21%
Looks down	3	6%
Total	53	100%

When 73% feels that the Church authorities in the Parish are supportive, this is an encouraging picture. Nonetheless, the 27% that feels otherwise although at varying degrees calls for some critical attention. There are instances where single mothers are even insulted by the priest. Dr. P.N. Wachege narrates an incident about a Catholic single mother respondent who had this to say:-

*“When I presented my child for baptism, father demanded to know the child’s biological father. I humbly told him the child has no father, since I didn’t want to defame his Parish council chairman who was my child’s biological father. Then father shouted at me as if he was exorcising an evil spirit. “Are you Virgin Mary to bear a child without a man?” I answered him visibly humiliated and horrified: “No father. I am just a single mother who refused to abort pretending to be a virgin”. Then he said to me, “well, I will baptize this one, but if you collect another one through fornication, I will never baptize”. I was left confused on whether I could have used contraceptives or aborted. But father finally baptized my child and I believe the baptism of my child was valid”.*⁴¹

I think the ministers as well as other Church leaders are called to be more prudent when it comes to pastorally dealing with single mothers. The compassion of our Lord and pastoral charity

⁴¹P. N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, pp 143-144

should be put into consideration. Of course there are cases where the pastor has to be stern and serious especially with young girls so as to express vividly the gravity of the matter. Nonetheless, prudence and fatherly love and charity are called for. The document, *familiaris consortio*, says, “among families needing special attention of the Church are incomplete or single parent families”.⁴² The document also calls upon pastors and the whole community of the faithful to help the divorced, who are also in the category of single mothers with solicitous care, to make sure that they do not consider themselves separated from the Church.⁴³ The fifth hypothesis that single mothers do not feel fully accepted in the Church, though not true for all cases or 100% in every case stand true to a given extent.

Hypothesis 6: The Church provides her faithful with sufficient Instructions on matters of family life, marriage, religion, and morals.

As the Church has a sacred duty towards its faithful, it has to look after their spiritual and moral welfare. It is a great challenge to the Church, and especially in the modern world when many of her members hesitate to live her teachings. But majority of single mothers and youth respondents felt that the Church is doing her duty to instruct the faithful.

Out of the 53 Catholic single mother respondents, 45 of them i.e. around 89% felt that the Church is doing enough on this matter. In Nairobi, there are several initiatives from the diocese and from the part of individual religious congregations and groups to do something with single mothers. Some of these are the crisis pregnancy centre, the Maria House, single mothers project in Ziwani, etc. Many dioceses here in Kenya have organized single mothers groups. According to a survey done by Margaret Mwaniki of Kenya Catholic Secretariat, many of the dioceses in Kenya

⁴²*Familiaris consortio*, No. 77.

⁴³*Ibid.*, No. 84

have these groups starting with Murang'a, Nakuru, Kitui, Embu, Machakos, Meru, etc. Organized at the Parish level, they meet regularly, engage in some income generating projects, have religion and bible study lessons, and support one another very much.⁴⁴

On the side of the young people, they also felt that the Church is doing something to teach them morals, religion, and family. Let us look at the tables below.

Table 4.2.3: Whether the youth receive sufficient moral and religious education from the Church.

	No.	%
Yes	38	73%
No	14	27%
Total	52	100%

Table 4.2.4: Whether the youth receive sufficient family life education from the Church.

	No.	%
Yes	32	62%
No	20	38%
Total	52	100%

From the data above, we find that a great majority of the youth feels that the Church is really doing something sufficient to teach morals, religious and family life. The Church uses various ways, notably seminars, workshops, talks, etc. But now the critical point is that, though the youth feel that the Church is doing something sufficient on instructing her faithful, still the same young people say that the society is not in the right track especially in matters regarding sex. Why is this? Is it a call to design more effective methodologies of teaching? Or are there other forces

⁴⁴Margaret Mwaniki, *An Assessment of single mothers groups in Kenya Catholic Church* (Compiled by the author, for the Catholic secretariat, Nairobi; Unpublished, 1993) pp. 2-4.

working against the Church's efforts? And what do we do about them? This is a great challenge that faces the Church and need to be addressed. All the same hypothesis 6 stands proved true.

C). Effects Of Single Motherhood On The African Family

The traditional African setting had very strong family ties especially in its extended family system. Later on, more importance was laid on nuclear family. These days, looking at the trend of family structures, one is left wondering where all of those traditional family values have gone. The phenomenon of single motherhood has contributed a lot to this vague picture of the family. It has really affected the institution of marriage. This section will concentrate on the effect of this phenomenon on the family, notably on the children and on the institution of marriage, which forms the basis of the family.

Hypothesis 7: Children of Single Mothers feel the absence of a father figure in their life

In a complete family, naturally the mother and the father have their own proper roles to play. Single mothers try as well to play father role over their children. To a given extent, this works at the practical level, but emotionally speaking, it would be hard for the mother to fulfil a father role. From the study conducted by the writer, it was proved that really the children of single mothers feel the absence of a father figure in their lives, and suffer lack of a father's care and love.

Majority of my youth respondents, some of whom came from single mother families, affirmed that children of single mothers lack sufficient parental care following the absence of a father figure in their upbringing. The mother has to spend more time looking for something to keep the family going and so she doesn't get sufficient time to spend with the children. Let us look at the opinion of single mothers: -

Table 4.3.1: Single Mothers on whether their children feel the absence of the father figure.

Do your children feel the absence of a father figure	No	%
Yes	41	68%
No	16	27%
Sometimes	2	3%
Insignificant to feel	1	2%
Total	60	100%

The table shows that, a great majority of single mothers feel that really their children feel the absence of a father figure. A single mother of two told me that she has great difficulties digesting questions thrown to her by her two children, eight and five years old, regarding their daddy as they see their neighbours' children playing with their own fathers.⁴⁵ A father figure is very significant in a child's life. Then, what did the children themselves say? Let us observe the table below: -

Table 4.3.2

Do you feel the presence and father's love missing?	No.	%
Yes	41	71%
No	6	10%
Don't know	11	19%
Total	58	100%

41 out of 58 children of single mothers felt the absence of the love of the father in their lives. This accounted for 71%. Six answered no. That was 10%. They were only happy when their fathers left them because they were drunkards and brought fights in the house very often. The eleven who answered that they don't know were indifferent and some had not seen a father in their life. They knew only mummy.

Asked whether they would be in the streets if their fathers were at home, majority of these children said no. Some testified that when their father was at home, they were schooling. But when the

⁴⁵Nancy Wanjau, Aged 31 years, Interviewed at Kariobanji, Nairobi On 20.8.2000

mother pulled out or the father died, they visibly saw a change that forced them to leave school. There are other studies and documents that stress the role of the father in the life of the child. In the document *familiaris consortio*, it is stressed that efforts must be made to restore socially the conviction that the place and task of the father in and for the family is of unique and irreplaceable importance.⁴⁶ Even in the African society, whether the setting is patriarchal or matriarchal, the authority and place of the father is of great importance and the child has a special relationship to the father.⁴⁷

The Church continues to teach that when love and intimacy in marriage breaks, and when spouses are separated, the good of the child suffers in every respect, especially in the love and care and education they deserve.⁴⁸ From the discussion above, we can see that the absence of a father figure in a child's life inhibits its proper growth and development. Hypothesis 7 stands proved true, that children of single mothers feel the absence of a father figure in their life.

Hypothesis 8: Delinquency has a direct relation to single motherhood in the city.

Delinquency is nowadays is great problem in Kenya, and more so in the capital city of Nairobi. Thousands of children leave their homes to roam in the streets in the city, dumping sites, sniffing glue and begging around. Out of the 80 street children that the author interviewed around the city, 58 of them, that is, 73%, came from single mother households. Further asked whether they would be in the streets if they had a father caring for them, out of this 58, 39 answered no. They guessed they would be schooling. The indication is clear that, most of the delinquents come

⁴⁶*Familiaris Consortio*, No. 25

⁴⁷Kisembo, et. Al., *African Christian Marriage*, pp 103-104.

⁴⁸*Gaudium et spes*, No. 51

from single parent households. Few obvious reasons for delinquency pointed at lack of sufficient time on the part of the mother to spend with her children, lack of enough control over the children, plus lack of father assistance in parenting, and lack of finances to educate the children. Let us look at what the single mothers had to say: -

Table 4.3.3: Single Mothers on the Time they spend with their children

How much time do you spend with your children?	No.	%
No time	20	33%
Some time	15	25%
Plenty of time	25	42%
Total	60	100

Although 42% felt that they have plenty of time with their children, the 58% that have little or no time with them is alarming. Given that proper parenting calls for parents to find sufficient time to spend with the children especially in their tender age, lack of it on the side of some single mothers is a matter of concern. This has sometimes serious effects on the growth of the child. The mother would find it difficult to control the child or the children, and once left by themselves, they go roaming in the streets.

When these children were asked whether they were told by their mothers not to go to the streets, a good number said that they were really warned not to. This shows a lack of control over the children. Another thing is that some could not attend school due to of lack money. For this reason, they got bored at home and went to the streets. A study by UNICEF and government of Kenya in 1992 found that most street children came from very poor single parents homes, most unemployed or else engaged in unstable, unreliable, and illegal income earning activities like

prostitution, unlicensed hawking, brewing and selling 'chang'aa'.⁴⁹ Wachege's study also shows that there are even cases of children abandoned by mothers on the streets, as a result of which they became street children.⁵⁰ The Church in *Gaudium et spes* in the Vatican documents asserts that it is the duty of couples to regard it as their proper mission to transmit life and to educate their children.⁵¹ But then, when only the mother is there to cater for the children, and especially when she is poor financially, the proper parenting may lack. Not all delinquents come from single parents families, but the study carried out by the author shows that majority do. This is most true of the city of Nairobi. The eighth hypothesis, that delinquency has a direct relation to single motherhood in the city stands proved true.

Hypothesis 9: The Institution of Marriage, which forms the basis for the family is being undermined.

The core of a good family life rests on a good marriage. Traditional African families were well grounded on marriage. Today the attitude is changing at a very high rate. Instead of the most cherished good family life based on a clean well planned marriage, what we see in town are cohabitation, single motherhood, etc. From the study carried out by the author, the general attitude of the young people towards marriage was not very encouraging as the table below shows: -

Table 4.3.4: Attitude of Youth towards marriage

Attitude	No.	%
Good	25	48%
Indifference	20	39%
Farce	7	13%
Total	52	100%

⁴⁹Government of Kenya and UNICEF, *Children and women in Kenya*, p. 112.

⁵⁰P.N. Wachege, *African Single Mothers*, p. 134.

⁵¹*Gaudium et spes* No. 50.

With 39% of the respondents being indifferent to marriage and a 13% having no taste for it at all, is not an encouraging trend. Where is the future of the institution of marriage? The young people are so much influenced by what they see around: - broken marriages, divorce, single motherhood. The traditional clear mind and taste for marriage is being eroded.

Coming to single mothers, the attitudes were as shown below: -

Table 4.3.5: Attitude of Single Mothers towards Marriage

Attitude	No	%
Good	20	33%
Indifferent	32	53%
Farce	8	14%
Total	60	100%

The data clearly shows that the society is not fully in the right trend. The traditional clear mind and good taste for marriage are quickly disappearing. Nowadays marriage as an institution is being gradually undermined and the traditional strength of this institution continues to shake. And this is strongly true especially in our urban centres. Single motherhood therefore is not something to be taken lightly. As has already been observed, it is a phenomenon that has a great bearing on the society, the church and the family in general and especially on the institution of marriage. It remains a great challenge to the society, and more so to the church.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAJOR FINDINGS, PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Introduction:

As this piece of work on single motherhood comes close to the end, the author wishes to highlight some of the major findings resulting from the research done. Besides, there will be highlighted the pastoral implications and some recommendations will be given, which can help in tackling the issue of single motherhood more efficiently. A general conclusion will be given, which will summarise the author's views and the general study.

A). Major Findings

From the current study, there came up some major findings, which are outlined below.

- a). Single motherhood is becoming rampant in Kenya today, and the Church is facing a major challenge in this field.
- b). The study has also found out that in several dioceses in Kenya there exists organized groups of single mothers mostly at the parish levels. In these groups, the spiritual welfare of single mothers is catered for, as well as general counselling and guidance.
- c). Seminars, workshops, and meetings for single mothers conducted in some parishes have really helped single mothers to take care of themselves and their families.

- d). There is a growing need to put more effort to make single mothers feel more welcome and more accepted in the Church and in the Christian communities.
- e). It has also been found that most of the single mothers especially in the urban places live in poor economic and social conditions. They find it difficult to support themselves and their families.
- f). The poor economic and social living conditions, coupled with the stress and strains of life have forced some of the single mothers in urban places into immoral practices.
- g). The higher the level of education, the lesser one would fall prey to being cheated into irresponsible sexual acts and deviations.
- h). To a very great extent, the Church provides her faithful with sufficient instructions on matters of family life, marriage, religion and morals. Nonetheless, much remains to be done.
- i). The absence of a father figure has adverse effects on the wholesome growth of a child.
- j). Most delinquents in town are children of single mothers.
- k). Finally, following the rampant growth of this phenomenon of single motherhood in our society, marriage as an institution and basis of the family, is loosing its impact.

B). Pastoral Implications and Recommendations

The current study on single mothers has brought us in touch with some of the major problems and needs that they face. There is an urgent call to deepen the pastoral care for single mothers. It is a group that needs a special ministry in the church.

Counselling is one thing and a great tool that can help single mothers first accept themselves and develop a positive attitude in life. In their organized groups, bible sharing ought to be more encouraged, in the light of seeing and encountering the loving Jesus our Lord, who

identified himself with the poor and the marginalized and the so-called public sinners. In this way, Jesus becomes for them a source of consolation and self-confidence. A good number of single mothers families are broken hearted, and therefore stand in need of Christ's liberating message.

Pastors of souls and the Christian community should work to help single mothers and their families to continue growing in Christian maturity and holiness as Vatican council II states it very clear that "all faithful whatever their conditions or state of life are called by the Lord, each in his or her own way to holiness according to the hidden plan of God."⁵²

The question of the family is central when it comes to discussing single motherhood. Family values are getting lost at a every high rate. There is need to stress more strongly the family values and especially it's completeness and unity. The necessity of a mother and a father in a family need to be taught and stressed to our people. This calls for organization of seminars and workshops on family and Christian marriage regularly for our young adults in the parishes. Family life education ought to prepare the young people for life in general and especially responsible parenthood. On the other hand, the rampant sexual immorality in the society calls for an evaluation and a reaffirmation of the religious and moral formation of our young people. This ought to be considered in homes, in the Church and in the schools.

Single mothers in the Church also rightly belong to the family of God. The Church at all levels is called to be docile and empathetic when it comes to especially pastorally dealing with single mothers. They need acceptance and guidance, and this would help them to learn from their new situation that grace is possible in any situation. The Christian community should as well be taught and encouraged to always develop a genuine respect for single mothers and their families. This would enhance a peaceful and loving coexistence in the Christian community. Then on the

⁵² *Lumen Gentium*, in Vatican II Documents (21st Nov., 1964), no. 40.

side of Church leaders, there is a strong recommendation to try as much as possible to get in touch and be more informed on the growing phenomenon of single motherhood. This would offer them more light when it comes to understanding single mothers, in guiding them, counselling, as well as catering for their spiritual needs. Pastors need to know and understand the dynamics behind the phenomenon of single motherhood.

Finally, high standards of education should be promoted so as to help many young people out of ignorance and falling prey to deceptions and cheating. Single mother groups should be helped to help themselves through promotion of income generating projects with them.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The whole idea of single motherhood is a complex one. The way these women landed in this state each in her own way and circumstances brings about the complexity of the whole issue, and hence not quite simple to deal with. This issue calls for great care and attention, and especially in the church. Pastoral ministry for single mothers need to be clearly addressed in all the dioceses. As we saw in the categories of single mothers, there are those who are so out of their own deliberate choice, and there are those who are single mothers by accident, not out of their own deliberate choice. The church finds it a bit complex to deal with single mothers by free choice than it does with those by accident.

Single mothers by choice seem to be rejecting the noble idea and the ideals of marriage as our cultures have it. Yet, they want to engage in sexual affairs out there so as to beget some children. Well, as far as they exist, we cannot deny the fact and they need care and guidance. But at the same time, single motherhood by deliberate free choice should be discouraged as much as possible. It is an outright violation of a child's right to love and care of a father.

Now taking into consideration those who accidentally without choice of their own become single mothers, there is an ardent call to greater understanding, love and empathy. They need to be accepted, treated well, and cared for. They need guidance and counselling so as to be helped to cope. It is my hope that my readers will benefit from this piece of work, which has cast more light into the phenomenon of single motherhood, now better understood. It also leaves room for further research on the issue.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

This questionnaire is meant for research on the fact of single mothers, their role in the Church, and the attitude of the Church towards them.

This is for academic purpose and all information gathered will be kept confidential. The name can be optional, or you put a pseudo-name.

Name:(optional).....

Age:.....

Religion: Catholic..... Protestant.... any other.....

My family of origin is:

Rich..... Middle class..... lower middle class..... poor.....

From which kind of family do you come from?

Monogamous Polygamous

Relationship between my parents:

Love Tension Indifference

Concerning my education, my parents were;

Very interested A bit interested Not interested

I have completed: Primary Secondary Post-sec. school

If you are a school dropout, why?

No school fees Family problems some other (name).....

I am a single mother by: Choice Chance

Others:-

Divorced Raped Cheated Widowed

My attitude to marriage:

Good indifferent Bad

At what age did you begin to have a boyfriend?

Between: 11-15yrs 16-20 21-25 above 25

At what stage of education did you begin to have a boyfriend?

Primary school Secondary Post secondary

I got my first child when I was:

Below 15 yrs 15-20yrs Above 20

How do you get the resources to bring up your children?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Do you find enough resources to support your child/children?

Yes No

How much time do you get to spend with your children?

No time little time a lot of time

As a single mother, I live: Alone With my parents other....

What is your parents' reaction to your present state?

Supportive Angry Just tolerant

Do your children ever ask about their father?

Yes No Sometimes

How often do you go to Church? Often not often

Frequently never attends

Reaction of the church community to my present state:

Supportive Indifferent Looks down on me

In the Church, I feel:

Accepted Neglected Humiliated

Whom do you propose to give family life education?

School Church Family (parent/s)

How is the Church involved in family life education?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix II:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE YOUTH.

This is meant for research on the fact of single mothers; views the young people have on the issue, and what the Church and the community is doing to handle the phenomenon.

Note that there is no right or wrong answer; the best response is what is true for you.

Name is optional or put a pseudo-name.

Name..... Age..... Religion.....

Your attitude to marriage: Good Bad Indifferent

Given the choice, you would prefer;

Normal marriage Cohabitation Single parenthood

Do you think a child from single motherhood gets all the parenting he/she deserves?

Yes No

Do you feel the society is moving in the right direction on matters relating to sex?

Yes No

I am a regular Church goer: Yes No

I get sufficient moral and religious nourishment from the Church:

Yes No 50:50 Somehow

Family life education should be left to;

The Church Government Family School

Other than sermons, in what other ways does the Church offer family life education? During

seminars Workshops

Home visits Marriage encounters

Do you feel the need to be directed by someone older in your sexual problems?

Yes No

I receive most of sexual information from;

Peer group Older friends Parents

Appendix III

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILDREN OF SINGLE MOTHERS

This is to help me get a more sure idea of the state and the feelings of the children of single mothers.

Name.....

Age.....

Religion.....

Do you remember your father?.....

Why did he leave your mother?.....

Do you stay with your mother?.....

Where does she stay?.....

What work does your mother do?.....

Does she get enough money to feed you.

What are your feelings towards your mother?.....

How do you feel about your father's absence?.....

In what ways does your mother express her love for you?.....