



## **A STUDY ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SINGLE PARENT ON TEENAGER CARE**

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### **Abstract:**

In India, single parents mean father or mother the one who is living alone with their children without his/her partner, because of death, divorce, or separation. In a case of divorce/separation generally, the mother is given custody of the children. Divorce is the most street-full experience that one can have in adulthood. It can be also extremely upsetting to children. Life is hard for most single parent families in India. Yet many people choose to divorce or separation rather than remain in an unhappy relationship, even though they know the difficulty of adjustments. A single parent need not be the natural mother or father of the child as some individuals choose to become the single parent by adopting the child. The biological parents are unable to take care of the child due to sickness, a death of one or both parent, an inability of the extended family to care for the child or parental abandonment, extra-marital affairs etc. Most of the time if a mother is alive; she retains the custody of her child or children. In this paper, the attempts have made to list out the problems of single-parent father and mother separately and the problems faced by the teenagers of the single parents its impact and the management of the situation in detail. The study is conducted based on both primary and secondary data and exploratory method with 50 teenagers from Dakshina Kannada district with snow ball sampling method. The interview schedule is used to collect data.

**Index Terms:** Teenager, Single Parent, Divorce, Separation, Single Fatherhood & Single Motherhood

### **Introduction:**

The term single parent family is different from the term female-headed family. A single parent family, by definition, can be either male headed or female headed. According to Thompson and Gongla, "single parent families are those in which there is a single parent father or mother raising his or her children". In many societies, the functions of the mother are more clearly defined than that of the father. (1, 11) To be mothered means to be nursed, diapered, cuddled, loved, played with, smiled at, talked to, and cared for. The need for maternal care is biologically determined. Lack of mothering endangers the child's mental health and threatens their survival. In contrast fathering involves less nature and more culture. In former times mother represented love and sympathy, while father personified discipline and morality. Single parent father is involved in mothering activities such as feeding, diapering and bathing the baby etc. If the fathers are away for long period this can harm a child's psychological development, especially if happens before school age. In families where fathers or controlling, super visionary personality is not in the house, boys may run and greater risk of becoming delinquent (11, 13). Single parenthood can be the very difficult task and it is challenging (10). The interaction and they are brought up in the family the difference can be very visible while comparing to the both parents family. In single parent family, they include their children in the day to day running of the family. The children may have to share more responsibility of doing chores and looking after themselves than other children (7). The Single parent often discusses things with their children that parents in two-parent families often discuss with each other; they think the children in the family are the right person to discuss their difficulty. The adolescent may experience many adult responsibilities far earlier. In the case of divorce, the children have to move from one parent to others for interaction and bridge the gap. Income of the family will be very less which cannot be affordable for the teenagers to fulfill their basic needs.

### **Need of Parents:**

It is a good idea of having both mother and father activity involved in child rearing. Of course, many single parents get their children off to an excellent start in life, and many parents do a fine job when forced to fly so much of the time. However, in general, the process to appear to go better why pursued as a partnership. Raising a baby involved a lot of hard work often induces a great deal of stress. (8) The more evenly difficult duties can be distributed between two people, the easier it will be for each person. And also raising a baby brings about some of the life's sweetest pleasures and richest rewards. Furthermore, such things tend to be magnified and more appreciated when shared. Mixing the personalities of two different individuals into the parenting processes has a beneficial effect similar to the one that comes from combining separate sets of chromosomes. As in the case of genetics, a weak line in one parent can be canceled by a strong trait in the other, and when two strong traits are intertwined, the result can be superior to either one alone (10)

**The Need of Father:** The child needs fathers who accept his role masculinity which cannot acquire by a formal course of study. It may be learned in the course of daily life from a father who is there from his infancy. The child needs to be aware that he/she has a father who can protect him/her from danger. The child also needs father's help in dealing with his angry wishes and fearful fantasies. Father's role is important to view sympathetically the child's frustration, fury, and fear at the same in silent strength, convey their reassuring message, "Don't worry, I shall not let you carry out your fearful wishes". Children especially boys, tend to idealize their father young. Every little boy wants to grow up to be just like little girl thinks their father is the smartest man on this earth. It is not that difficult either. Children will truly enjoy spending time with father, not just when they are kids, but also when they are adults (8, 12)

**The Need of Mother:** A mother is an important person in each child's life. There are three styles of infant attachment to mother, that is, secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant. In a secure attachment, the infant feels secure when the mother is out of sight and confident that the mother is taking care and protection. In an anxious-ambivalent attachment, the infant shows anxiety when a mother. He/she feels insecure when the mother is not present. In an avoidant attachment, the infant senses the mother's detachment and rejection, when he/she desires close bodily contact. The infant shows avoidance behaviors with the mother as a means of defense. A single mother feels lonely depressed and without hope. Sometimes this frustration can lead them to take it on the child. (4,2,3)

#### **Single Parents:**

The day's fathers, married or single have been changing their roles in the family setting. Today they can be found more in helping children in the classroom setting, threes, they are involved in house chores, they held out in the kitchen other and previously considered 'mother roles'. Before this, a father just was not socialized to be primary care gives although of course, many men did raise children on their own due to high rate of maternal death, divorce or separation. Father often does not communicate as well with their children as mothers do. Most people think that father is stricter than a mother; however they tend to be less disciplinary than single mothers. Father can have a great influence on their child because the best way for a son learn to be a good father is watching his own. Some biological factors that affect children living in a single father home are that females tend to reach menarche at an earlier age. One reason for this is that single and two parent families have different patterns of parental care resulting in difference in reproductive development. Also social learning may account for developmental differences as father absent girl's model their mothers sexual behavior and reproductive strategies may be heritable (6). The problems that single mother faces that they have a harder time providing for their families because feminist studies conclude that woman generally has lower paying jobs. Some positive things that may be associated with being a single mother are that opposed to males, they usually have a more extensive support system. They are often closer to friends and families who can help them through tough times and even be there to support the mother in raising her children.

**Single Father:** The role of fathers, married or single, has been changing. Today fathers are more likely to help children in a classroom setting and do household chores than in the past. Historically fathers were not socialized to be primary care givers, although many men did raise children on their own due to high rates of maternal death, divorce or separation. The majority of single fathers may remarry later and the children deal with a 'step mother' figure that came in their lives (1, 10)The financial and lifestyle hardships of single fathers are similar to those of single mothers. But income disparity is less hard on men raising any children alone and many single fathers find their family offer support, but even to today 's gender- neutral society, most seem to favor single mothers as the ideal natures or caregivers; than single fathers, a problem that may men faced by societal pressure.

**Single Mother:** Single motherhood is by far the most common instance of single parenting. Single mother something have a hard time providing for their families. Something they have given more responsibility of care giving to their parent or another relative. Even they encounter less open criticism from society at present as compared to earlier decades when the single mother was more likely shunned for her choice to raise a family alone. The majority of studies on the issue conclude that they generally have lower paying jobs, although this income disparity has been decreasing. A single mother failed to graduate from high school and is unable to obtain a college education. Thus they aren't able to have an average wage or income. This is a difficult situation unless there are welfare and health care programmed available to support mother and child (2, 4).

#### **Single Parenting and Teenager Development:**

Various studies from around the world have demonstrated a number of negative trails characteristic to children who grew up in single-parent homes. Children growing up with a single mother are likely to be poorer than children from two parent homes since poorer children are generally more likely to drop out of school or commit a crime (1, 11) Even in a situation where single parenting dose have a negative effect on child development, this effect may be offset or countered by the presence of other earning adults in a child's life. The loss of partner, whether as a result of death, divorce or separation presents many adjustment problems for the man or woman but especially for the woman? The middle-aged woman whose husband dies or who is divorced or separated may experiences extreme feelings of loneliness. This is intensified by frustration of the normal

sexual desires, which are far from dormant but inactive, a person who loses his/her partner and remains alone for two or more years generally makes satisfactory adjustments to being single, although he may tend to be lonely and finds the single state unsatisfactory. Loss of a spouse as a result of divorce or separation affects middle age people very differently, depending upon who wanted the divorce. The man whose wife dies or who is divorced experiences a disruption in his pattern of living unless a relative can manage the home for him. A woman who is widowed, divorced or separated in middle age often must give up her home, go to work and live very differently from the way she did when her husband was alive or before her divorce or separation. She may be unwilling or reluctant to go out by herself, and the problems of entertaining is likewise awkward for divorced or separated woman, the social activities but also even worse, she often loses her old friends.

#### **Problems Faced by Single Parents:**

The plight of the single parent is one of our most difficult social problems. Single parent households are the fastest growing category of all family units. Approximately one out of every four children will spend some part of their childhood under eighteen living with a single parent. This single parenthood occurs because of death, divorce or separation. If it is any reason, it will affect the partner as well as the children (10).

**Single Parent Mothers:** If the single parent is a mother, she may face the conflict between the continuing role of mother and additional role of worker outside the home. After the loss of father, it is common for children to increase their demands which come at a time when the mother is also trying to redirect her own life. Most often the mother performs a career outside the home, for financial reasons and for a psychological boost to her already weakened self-esteem. All over the country widows are found to have many problems in common. Economical and emotional setbacks are inevitable for them. Indian widows are specially the target of superstitious and backward social attitudes. In India, there was a practice on 'sathi and purdah'. They were expected to shave off their hair, wear white clothes, eat almost nothing and keep themselves away from all auspicious functions. Their sinfulness was thought to be the cause of the death of their husband. Thus they were forced to lead a life of deprivation and misery. At present we can see there are lots of changes in the single mother's life. But still there are lots of problems that death husband brings for the widow. She realizes that for her parents she belongs to another house, whereas, for the in-laws. She is a burden on the family economy and hence not welcome. All of a sudden she is exposed to face the pain of bereavement as well as realign herself to a new life.

**Single Parent Fathers:** Single parent father also has to face a lot of problems, especially in a case of child rearing. They have to change their roles in the family setting. Today they can be found more in helping children in a class room setting, they are involved in house chores, they help out in the kitchen and other previously considered 'mother' roles. Before this, fathers were just not socialized to be primary caregivers, although of course, many men did raise children on their own due to high rate of maternal death. Fathers often do not communicate as well with their children as mothers do; this does contradict the fact that most people think that fathers are stricter than mothers, however, they tend to be less disciplinary than single mothers. Fathers can have a great influence on their child, though, because the best way for a son to learn to be a good father is by watching his own. But most of the single parent father cannot be a role model because of stress and problems.

#### **Reasons for Single Parenthood:**

The effects are mainly for the single parents and the dependents, mainly due to two reasons, one is natural and another one is manmade. Death in the family is a natural way and divorce is the extreme step when there is no solution for the problems.

**Death:** The death of one partner ends the family life cycle. The remaining partner either lives alone or with some other relatives and with the children. In many families, husband dies first leaving the widow to finish her remaining years alone. The death of a spouse leads to bereaved partner to deal with socio-emotional loss as well as adjust to a new life style. Personal freedom is also affected. The loss of income, health and the ability to care oneself are hard to accept. The death of a partner is very difficult because it means the loss of a companion; sex partner leaves the other partner lonely and gives single status to the spouse. They not only face the loss of partner but may also face reduced income and other economic resources. In India widowhood is extensively looked down upon especially in rural areas.

**Divorce:** The effects of divorce vary from person to person. There are frustration and feeling of emptiness. Some people feel divorce is a good escape from all sorrows of life. But it is not easy to forget the past. For some, it leaves deep wound because of the traumatic effect of death, which leads to bitterness and emotional tension and also the social attitude towards divorce. There are five phases of adjustment to divorce, anger towards those involved, bargaining on the part of children to bring parents back together, depression and acceptance of divorce (5).

#### **Effects on Teenagers:**

Children feel embarrassed. This is very damaging to their self-concepts unless they live with other such children. They are most hurt by divorce when their love is divided and when they suffer from anxiety of the uncertainties a custody is fought in court and it is decided to live with both alternately. There are also signs that children who have gone through a divorce have problems with depression (mood), emotional stress, difficulties in school. Problems like these however may not be because of the parent who raise them, but can be linked to

other things that are also related to single parenting. When there is only one parent, the family is often less weak of financially and this is the main reason for so many family problems. The effect of coming lower education levels, lower economic achievement and even leave the child isolated and lonely. Present and future security of a child is threatened. He experiences feeling of uncertainty and loneliness. Children have so many needs that one parent alone has a difficult time meeting those needs (8).

- ✓ **Depression:** Depression manifests in different forms according to a child's age and personality. There may be overt signs of depression such as withdrawal, sadness and multiple psychosomatic complaints (headache, tiredness etc) child may compensate for his depression with "acting up" behaviour becoming the class clown, getting into trouble, forming sexual alliances.
- ✓ **Anger:** Teenage Children of single parent usually live in a house hold in which anger and resentment persist for several years.
- ✓ **Low self-esteem:** In security, depression and anger all have a bad effect on a child's self-esteem. A child with a poor self esteem is less able to bounce back from the effects of lost parent. All of these have a curative effect on the child who has no support resource to handle it. Along with this we can see that there are other problems faced by the children, crime and delinquency, depression and suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, emotional and behavioural problems, learning difficulties, school problems, poor grades, running away from home. Sometimes these problems result from unhealthy social and family relationships.
- ✓ **Separation:** Separation always precedes divorce but not all separation leads to divorce. A legal separation is a legal agreement for the couple to live a part, to divide their property and provide for their children. Most of the separation or divorce occurs in the first ten years of marriage, many involve small children. Following the breakdown of marriage. Other partner may want to invest in new relationships straight away, and may not want to have further contact with the both parents and will worry about new relationships. However in many situations, partners are affected by the stress and bitterness of separation and they are unable to plan their lives according to their children's needs, especially when these needs come into conflict with their own.

#### **Other Problems:**

- ✓ **Economic Problem:** Single parents reported a variety of problems in the financial area. A majority of single parents experienced financial difficulties in meeting the basic needs of children such as providing good food, clothing and school fees. The most frequent item on which they tried to cut down the expenses were clothing, food, social and recreational activities.
- ✓ **Problems Related to Child Rearing:** 90% of the single parent has the problems in the field of child rearing. Many of them experienced difficulties in taking care of the daily needs of children, taking when they were sick and disciplining them. Problems of helping children with their school assignment, choosing subject for their higher studies, taking them out for recreations like movies picnics and trip to hill stations and making arrangements for their wedding were also expressed by single parents (10).
- ✓ **Emotional Problems:** Nobody is satisfied in the plight of single parenthood. In many of them the feelings of guilt, shame, resentment, anger, sadness, depression and anxiety about the future are so dominant, that they bring about personality changes.
- ✓ **Social Problems:** Most of the single parents found difficulty to entertain male or female visitors in the house and felt the lack of a male or female escort for social functions. Their social lives are limited mainly to relatives and friends of the same sex. They also face social disgrace and lack companionship.
- ✓ **Problems of Loneliness:** Having been accustomed since childhood to the constant companionship of family members and then of a lonely spouse, single parents are lonely when they find the selves deprived of the constant companionship of a person of similar interest and values.
- ✓ **Problems of Custody:** When custody of Teenage children is divided between divorced and separated parents, each experience adjustment problems themselves and for the children. After being with one parent, for example, the other parent often encounters rebellion on the part of children against home rule and responsibilities (5, 10).
- ✓ **Sexual Problems:** After death, divorce or separation of partner both men and women are deprived or regular sexual outlets unless they remarry shortly after death, divorce/ separation of their partner.
- ✓ **Change of Marital Status:** Regardless of which spouse was responsible for the problems that lead to divorce/ separation both spouse tend to experience feelings of failure. Their status will change from Married to Separated or Divorce.
- ✓ **Care:** It is to provide opportunity for physical, mental, social behavioral, emotional and intellectual growth and development. Child care is not only providing physical care and comfort but also love, attention, discipline and socializing children. Parents should spend time with their children and engage them in enjoyable activities. Child care is the balance struck between the needs and rights of the child. Each parent has responsibility for a child unit the time of maturity, death or adoption.

**Major Findings:**

- ✓ Age of the respondent's majority (40%) of the respondent belonging to age group 36-45 and another 36% of the respondents belonging to 25-35 age groups.
- ✓ The gender of the respondent majority is a (68%) female and (32%) of the respondent is a male.
- ✓ Occupation of the respondents are most of them (38%) are domestic workers and 32% of them is working in the teaching field.
- ✓ Monthly income for the respondent is a 42% and 42% of the respondents are 5000-10,000 and 15,000-30,000 for a month.
- ✓ The marriage of the respondent is a majority of them (76%) are give a arranged marriage and 10% of them is the love marriage.
- ✓ Religion: large majority 50% of the respondents belong to Hindu religion.
- ✓ Size of the family: a majority (92%) of respondent belonging to small size families that are nuclear families.
- ✓ Majority (54%) of them confidently has the ability to manage children's needs
- ✓ Areas of psychological problems are facing isolated, insecurity, uncertain of future, feel sad, scared. This area mostly single parents are faced to (78%) uncertain of future and (74%) of them is facing scared and (72%) of them is faced isolated and feel sad.
- ✓ The majority (52%) of the respondents are saying that the most of the time is spent with children and 60% of the respondents are the society reaction is accepted in a single life.

**Management:**

Life is today's society has undergone many changes. Many of the social practices of the past have lost their relevance. Some of such practices are in the process of changing. Education has improved the condition of the people. And they themselves engage in gainful employment. The government has provided financial support in the form of insurance, pension and welfare programmers to single parents to cope up with their economic problems (10). With the help of NGO's many people have managed to get credit at an affordable rate of interest through formal financial institutions to meet their various children's needs such as education, marriage, and health care. Along with this, they have provided emotional support to female single parents to recover early from the loss of their partner and to take up their family responsibilities. Single parents especially male were motivated and trained to take care of their children at home to avoid institutionalizing the children. Some parents have able to manage by getting a help of their parents and siblings.

**Conclusion:**

The family is a backbone of all children. William Gladden says that parents love their children and want the best for them, that understanding, not desire is why families fall apart and children suffer the consequences. We further believe that parents armed with knowledge will make the right decision on behalf of their loved ones, for that is the essence of parenting. Being a parent is tough work, however being a single parent is perhaps even a tougher. If he/she is the main breadwinner, problems are certainly compounded. Single parenting today is becoming very common, whether by choice or because of divorce, separation or death of a spouse. Whatever the reason, single parent face challenges that require a lot of courage, determination and emotional strength to overcome. Adequate steps should be taken by the government to provide the conducive atmosphere to the children reared in single-parent homes to develop their capacities to cope up with their problematic life situations and become responsible citizens of the nation.

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