AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SOCIAL CHALLENGES AND SOCIAL ISSUES SINGLE FEMALE HOMES EXPERIENCED IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS EFFECTS ON THEIR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL LIVES

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Abstract - This study is a work in progress and seeks to examine social challenges and social issues single female homes experienced in South Africa and its effects on their children's social lives. The study is designed to utilize primary data approach and employes qualitative analysis which will make use of interview and focus group discussion to examine the causes of single mothers' households, Examining the educational outcomes and opportunities for children growing up in single female-headed households in South Africa, compared to those from two- parent households, examining the impact of mentorship programs and strong male role models in households headed by single women and emphasizing their potential to improve the general development and well-being of children in South Africa. Apart from qualitative approach, quantitative approach to data analysis will also be adopted to make sure that these aforementioned objectives are realized. The study hopes to contribute to the existingknowledge by suggesting ways to reduce this menace in South Africa and its implication on Childrenupbringings in the society.

Keywords - Social Challenges, Single Female, Single mothers, Children

I. INTRODUCTION

Universally, the family is viewed as an essential sector without which societies cannot function (Ziehl, 2003; Bidandi and Roman, 2020). Ideally, family units are viewed from the traditional setting of a married couple comprising a father, mother(s), and children. Over the years, the ideology has changed worldwide, witnessing an increasing number of single-parent households, thus becoming the norm today. South Africa is not immune to these changes, with recent statistical data showing 44.7% of single-parent households in the country.

Single-parent households are headed by either a father or a mother alone. In this context, the study focuses on a single-mother household, defined by Rebecca and Alex (2017) as a household headed by a woman as the provider for the entire family member. Globally, single-mother parenting is on the rise, as is the case in South Africa. According to the Pew Research Center (2020), the United States has the highest population of single mothers, followed by the United Kingdom. According to the US Census Bureau (2022), statistics have shown that 80% of single female households in the United States (unmarried 51% and divorced 29%) The research also shows that Kenya has the highest single-mother population in Africa. Recent statistics have shown that single mothers' households in South Africa are 41.4% (Stats SA, 2018). Single mothers have become the norm in society (Department of Social Development, 2021) with illustrations that show the data of single female households collected from different provinces in South Africa. The statistics indicate that Kwazulu-Natal has the highest population of lone mothers (mothers living with a child or children without a partner), with over 47.1%, and Gauteng has the lowest, with 33.9%. Several factors may have fueled single parenting, such as divorce, separation, the death of a spouse, individual choice, and unintended pregnancy (Rebecca and Alex, 2017). Also, the likelihood of a woman becoming a single mother is undoubtedly affected by, cultural, and patriarchy (Mbanefo, 2013). Single female households face many social challenges and social issues in society, especially when they take responsibility for providing for their children all alone (Pooja, Apparan, and Niharranjan 2021). However, their social challenges differed depending on their social class or social status. For instance, lone mothers with professional jobs or from wealthy homes may not suffer the same financial crises as female mothers with unprofessional skills or poor backgrounds. In many cases, unemployment and employment in low-income positions may be associated with a lack of educational opportunities (Garenne, Tollman, and Kahn, 2000). The limitations on socioeconomic mobility imposed on women by cultural, legal, and labor market factors, as well as their greater workloads and lower pay, are some of the difficulties single mothers face in society (Husmiati et al., 2020). Moreover, the absence of a father in child upbringing is the root cause of the socioeconomic challenges single mothers are facing. Nevertheless, children from women-headed households lack much parenting care, ranging from poor time spent with them to exposure to gender-based violence and less supervision. Also, the child grows up in a single-mother household lacking a father-child relationship (Koketso et al., 2019).

II. SOME LITERATURES

Numerous studies on single-mother parenting have been conducted globally. Single mothers can experience certain social obstacles, though, and more research is still needed to fully understand how this affects children's social lives in South Africa. Due to a rise in divorce and separation, "lone mothers" are becoming more common in South Africa. Talib et al. (2020) state that South Africa is one of several nations where single parenting is not a new family structure. According to another researcher, the rising rate of single-mother households is not just a Western phenomenon because more women are also giving birth outside of marriage in several African nations (Dlamini, 2006). Shitindi and Lubawa (2022) report that the prevalence of single parenting in South Africa and other African nations is rising. Approximately 85% of all single-parent families in South Africa are headed by women, and 16% are by men, according to Husmiati et al. (2020). Flatø, Muttarak, and Pelser (2017) and Datta and McIlwaine (2000) characterize single mothers as mother-centered, woman-maintained, female-led, and lone mothers.

Husmiati et al. (2020) minimize the true definition of a single mother by classifying single mothers as those who become pregnant outside of marriage, hence disregarding widows as single mothers. A woman who has never married, been separated from her spouse, divorced, or widowed and provides for at least one child is referred to as a single mother by Tanusha and Vimbainashe (2021). According to Essien and Bassey (2012), single mothers are also considered circumstantial, deriving from events and circumstances like divorce, death, child abuse, and personal preference. Talib et al. (2020) and Koketso et al. (2019) assert that the death of a parent is the most common cause of single parenting. However, in the case of South Africa, despite spousal death due to HIV/AIDS being among the major causes, quite a few are also related to spousal abandonment, divorce, accidental pregnancies, and single parenting by choice. The study points out that some causes of divorce or separation are interference from in-laws, unplanned marriages, and incompatibility between partners (Pooja, Apparao, &Niharranjan, 2021). Another factor that causes single mothers is the result of men's migration or incarceration, as well as little or no access to contraceptives and sex education.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Shitindi&Lubawa (2022; and Talib et al. (2020) highlights that lone mothers are more prevalent than married mothers with children and are more likely to experience social problems. Research has suggested that two-parent families have an advantage over one-parent families due to the increased availability of resources (Daniels, 2019). According to Sartor, Lange, &Tröster, (2023), as the majority of single mothers have few resources, they are more likely to experience physical issues than mothers in couple families. In other words, in societies where two-earner households are the norm, single parents are fundamentally in a lower economic position. In the 21st century, the emergence of women-headed households in Africa is mainly a result of globalization, moderation, and Westernization (Pooja, Apparan, and Niharranjan, 2021; Shitindi and Lubawa, 2022). Single-women households have become the norm in most of the communities in South Africa, especially in the urban areas. Most women choose low incomes rather than being dependent on or dominated by men. Pooja, Apparao, &Niharranjan (2021) argue that the gender discrimination and subordination women experience in societies due to patriarchy (male-dominated society) However, in this time of economic crisis, the social obstacles faced by single mothers remain either unchanged or worse. Koketso et al. (2019) claim that the socioeconomic difficulties faced by single mothers are primarily caused by the father's absence. Single mothers are at a greater socioeconomic disadvantage than their married counterparts. They are more likely to have fewer household resources, lower income, to rent rather than own a house, and to be unemployed, poor, and suffer from low self-esteem (Roman, 2011). Mkhize and Msomi (2016) pointed out that female-headed households comprised the majority of chronically poor households in KwaZulu-Natal at the beginning of the 21st century.

According to Koketso et al. (2019), the increase in unemployment, especially among black female South Africans, limits the ability of lone mothers to provide financially for their families and children. Earlier studies identified that low female participation in the labor market contributed to poverty among single mothers (Tilab et al., 2020). Husmiati et al.'s (2020) recent work argues that parents' divorce affects children either shortterm (behavior at home or school) or long-term (bad experiences or traumatic experiences). For instance, out of anger and frustration, most children from divorced families are normally involved in promiscuous sexual activity and smoking cigarettes. Children from divorced single mothers, usually Husmiati et al. (2020) and Lu et al. (2020), show strong negative feelings towards their mother on financial matters compared with children from widowed single mothers. Poverty has detrimental effects on children for the entirety of their life course, especially in terms of educational and cognitive outcomes. Lu et al. (2020) found that children from low-income families perform worse on academic achievement and have more behavioral problems than children from higher-income families and two-parent families. According to Husmiati et al. (2020), the children of divorced mothers are likely to have low IQs, become school dropouts, and diminish the likelihood of attending college. Roman (2011) added that single mothers are considered to create dysfunctional children and families.

The research conducted by Husmiati et al. (2020) points out that divorce harms children in many ways, ranging from school-less supervision of children to conflict between parents and economic hardship. Other recent scholars, such as Pooja, Apparan, and Niharranjan (2021) and Husmiati et al. (2020), added that divorce is more harmful when it occurs during childhood and adolescence than during the preschool or college years. In order to handle the duties of parenthood, single women frequently need social assistance from the government or community (Tanusha and Vimbainashe, 2020). Another researcher added, women can acquire useful skills and support their families with the aid of financial stability, equitable appointments, social assistance, and empowerment. Another source of financial security is government grants or scholarships (Vyskocil, 2018). According to Husmiati et al. (2020) and Shitindi and Lubawa (2022) suggested that social intervention by government and non-governmental organizations might help single mothers develop valuable skills to sustain their families' needs and ease their financial challenges.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research effort is an exploratory one that will adopt primary data approach by collecting data on the field from prospective respondents which are basically single mothers in South Africa. Interviews and focus group discussion will be embraced in the study and they will be analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Population

The study hopes to focus on South Africa as a country covering the entire single mothers in the area further delineations will be adopted using the appropriate sampling technique that will bring out a true representative of the population.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The Kwazulu-natal province of the country will be special focus of the study. Purposive sampling technique will be adopted covering about 50 to 100 female households that are mainly single mother.

Method of data Collection

Primary data approach will be adopted. Well structured questionnaire will be designed to harvest information from the respondents. Basically, interview and focus group discussion are main approach to the data collection apart from the questionnaire.

Method of data Analysis

Quantitaive and qualitative analysis will be adopted to analyze the data collected. Software such as SPSS and NIVO will be employed to do the analysis. Percentages and frequency analysis will be used in the study especially the biodata aspect. Apart from the descriptive statistics, inferential statistics that will cover correlation and regression as well as content analysis will be adopted.

IV. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study is expected to make original contributions in the following areas; reveal the causes of single mothers' households in South Africa?. Bring out the social challenges single mother faces in South Africa, enunciate the social issues do single-female households face, and hoe do those issues affect their children, reveal how the single-female households viewed in the 21st century. Find out the differences in educational prospects and outcomes between children from twoparent households and women-headed households in South Africa and finally to advise based on the empirical analysis mentorship programs and strong male role models in households headed by single women and emphasizing their potential to improve the general development and well-being of children in South Africa

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