An Investigation into the Challenges Single Mothers Face in Households in the Central Region of Ghana

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Abstract

This study sought to find out the challenges facing single mothers in households in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (KEEA) municipality. The study was a descriptive survey and employed the quantitative approach. Data were collected using a self-designed structured questionnaire. Snowball and purposive sampling technique were used to select 150 single mothers for the study. Data analyzed were presented using frequency and percentage tables. The study revealed that the single mothers faced a combination of challenges including work-related, financial and psycho-social. It was also established that the dual parental roles played by the single mothers made them highly unproductive both at work and at home. It was recommended that the society, churches and the courts should enforce the regulations and laws on marriages to minimize the rates of desertions/divorce/separations to help recognise the importance of fathers and extended family to take up the responsibility of the welfare of their children.

Keywords: Challenges, Single Mothers, Households, Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (K.E.E.A) municipality, Central Region, Ghana

1. Introduction and Background

This paper presents the outcome of the challenges single mothers face in households in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (KEEA) municipality, Central Region, Ghana. The paper is structured into five (5) main sections namely; the Introduction and Background, Review of the Literature, Methodology, Findings and Discussion and the Conclusion. The first section introduces the structure of the paper, the context and aims and objectives of the paper. The literature review section reviews the relevant literature on issues pertaining to the challenges single mothers face in the household. The methodology section presents a broad description of the methodology and procedures adopted in the conduct of the study on challenges confronting single mothers in the households in Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem municipality.
Findings resulting from the study are presented and discussed in the section following the methodology and conclusion and recommendations.

Statistics indicate that women make up the majority (70%) of the 1.3 billion people who live in poverty [11]. However, almost 60 percent of the world's population, contribute two-thirds of all working hours, receive only one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one percent of the world's wealth [37]. The poverty of families headed by women can be attributed to the fact that women's roles are primarily domestic (mother, homemaker), undervalued, and unpaid. In addition, when women work for wages they make significantly less than their male counterparts. Even full-time employment does not guarantee financial security, given the structure of the labour force, the lower wages paid in female-dominated occupations, and the lower human capital investment of single mothers (education, training, and work experience). However, even when controlling for education and work place experience, women earn less than men, a global pattern that holds true across all racial and ethnic groups throughout the occupations [30]. In the developed world for example, the United States and Canada have the highest wage gap of 75% [38].

In Ghana, single parent families are more common today than in the past, resulting in many women being placed in headship positions regardless of whether they are re-married or not. Systems of descent and residential patterns are very important as far as female headship is concerned. A research on nuclear family noted that female headed household is considered as abnormal by reason of the general breakdown of the social and moral systems, by ways of abandonment, divorce and improper motherhood [27]. A book titled “The role of women in Ghana's economy” opined that, female-headed households are a widespread and increasing phenomenon in Africa and it is common in societies that practice polygamy and spousal separation of residence or in which divorce had been easy and frequent [3]. It is also common in areas where the rural-urban drift is prevalent. Single parent families are found everywhere in the world. In Ghana, they are in the rural as well as the urban areas. Cases of single parenthood abound in our extended families. It has become a fact of life that female-headed households account for about 33% of all households. These single parents are often women, though there are few men [7]. They are found in all socio-economic groups in Ghana. However, over 90% of them are in the low and middle-income groups.

Close to one and a half decades ago, a World Bank Report rated the Central Region as a whole as one of the poorest regions in Ghana and ranked the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (KEEA) Municipality as a reflection of the “worsening welfare situation” of female-headed households in the country [40]. Since the publication of this report, not much has been done to alleviate this menace. Mere observation is not giving clear status of the situations on the ground in those communities. Moreover, the silence from government NGOs, international organisations and academia appears to portray that the problem (the plight of the women) has subsided. The role of single parenting is challenging especially when the family is headed by a woman. Problems of single mothers are linked with economic and the upbringing of children, their future and
settling down in life. Aside the challenge of being the sole breadwinner, most single mothers complain about loneliness, traumatic and depression, layoffs, demotions, accidents, and find it difficult to handle the responsibility of childcare and to establish a routine for the children. The Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (K.E.E.A) Municipality has a considerable number of single mothers who are mostly engaged in the informal sector for survival. The main purpose of the study was to examine the challenges facing single mothers in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem (K.E.E.A) Municipality. The study was guided by three research questions-1. What work-related challenges do single mothers in the K.E.E.A Municipality face as female heads of households? 2. What financial challenges do single mothers in the K.E.E.A Municipality face as female heads of households? 3. What psycho-social challenges do single mothers in the K.E.E.A Municipality face as female heads of households?

2. Review of the Literature on Challenges face Single Mothers

The world has historically experienced single-parent families as a result of parental death; about one-fourth of children born around the turn of the nineteenth century experienced the death of a parent before they reached age 15 years [1]. The factors most commonly related to the contemporary single-parent family today are changing social and cultural trends, increased rates of divorce and non-marital childbearing, increased employment opportunities for women, decreased employment opportunities for men (especially African-American men), and the availability of welfare benefits that enable women to set up their own households. On the other hand, it was estimated that, 50 percent of children born in recent cohorts will spend some part of their childhood with a single parent as a result of separation, divorce, or out-of-marriage births [31]. Many of the special cases of single parenting involve older women- mothers, grandmothers, aunties and sisters [28]. Notably, these women are unskilled, having dropped out of primary school or early in secondary school, during their teen years. They engage in petty trading or undertake menial jobs to earn an income. Hence, they earn very low incomes with which they cater for their families. A very small percentage (about 5-10%) was professional women in the middle and high income levels. Almost all of them were engaged in income generating activities to boost their earning power. They seem to always need money all the time in order to meet life’s basic needs [28].

Parenthood is challenging under the best of conditions [7]. Hence, with one parent, the challenges are multiplied economically, emotionally, psychologically, mentally, socially and physically. A study indicated that financial crisis is a standing situation with most of the single parent families [19]. It becomes difficult for the single mother to meet the basic needs of the children such as food, clothing, school fees, maintaining the previous standard of living and meeting personal expenses. A single mother can stay home to attend to her children if she does not have to work. However, in order to relieve herself from boredom and also meet the needs of the children, she can engage in some work. Single parent families are at a higher risk of poverty than couple families. Many single parent households that are female-headed have much greater financial/economic burden than that of male-headed families [7]. This issue results from the fact that single women typically do not earn the same income as a single man;
thus, there is a consequent economic struggle not experienced in the single-father household. It worthy to note that, single parenting has become more difficult to survive because of responsibility overload on the part of the single parent who makes all the decisions and provides for all the family needs [15]. The life of single mothers is full of many pressures which increase their dependency. In an effort to decrease their dependency, they worsen matters by overtaxing their strength and endanger their security and health. If single mothers do not take it easy and are not kind to their body, the pressures of ill health can further increase their insecurity and helplessness.

A reported on some single mothers revealed that, there was need for both parents to train their children to enable the children to grow physically, spiritually, emotionally and become responsible people in society [10]. They added that provision of basic needs becomes a major challenge when the father is not there because women need to be helped by the man to keep a happy home. Single mothers have difficulties involved in combining a career with parenthood. Findings on “coping with single parenting” states that inter-role conflicts usually exist when expectations in one of these roles are incompatible with the expectations of the other. Single mothers, who also have children to look after, do not have an easy life [28]. An empirical evidence on motherhood, family and career explained that single working mothers in particular have divided attention because of the demands of their other roles [32]. This coupled with other factors, naturally lowers output and progress at work. Challenges of single mothers in West Africa authored identified two major forms of inter role conflicts to be time and strain-based [28]. The time-based conflict occurs when time pressures form one role and makes it physically impossible to meet expectations arising from the other role such as having a number of small children to take care of and inflexible work schedules. Strain-based conflicts arise when strain in the job affect participation in the family and vice versa. With the two responsibilities or roles, being a home maker (mother) and a worker at the same time can be very stressful because there is a great demand on the woman’s energy and time. Both require careful management. Single mothers actually have difficulties in performing their dual roles. Research findings on expenditures of single parent resounded that the inability of single mothers to provide their children with life’s basic needs is a worry to them [9]. They worry about money for the children’s school fees, providing shelter or paying the house rent, paying for medical expenses when the children fall sick and so on occupy their mind all the time, which affect the emotionally.

Dissolution of marriage is a painful experience and causes numerous emotional and psychological problems [34]. It is a source of pain because of the losses built into the major life change of the single mother after the dissolution. The losses may range from the loss of a valued relationship; loss of power and old friends; the loss of confidence in dealing with the new situation; and the loss of identity and social supports. The aftermath feeling of a marital separation, thus the feelings of guilt, anxiety, fear, and isolation hinders the restructuring of the woman’s life as a single mother. Often the single mother faces a variety of emotional problems such as loneliness, boredom, loss of self-esteem, the feeling of being trapped, sense of guilt and insecurity [5]. Research work on “women–headed families: Problems and coping strategies”
published in Equal Opportunities International journal indicated that the loneliness of single mother’s stems from not only the absence of the husband but also from the loss of their friends before their broken marriage [33]. In my opinion, I believe this situation can occur even after marriage. When some people actually sympathize with their husbands, they feel misunderstood, rejected, betrayed, isolated and lonely, and often become victims of self-condemnation. This implies that loneliness can drain one’s emotions and negate creativity. Most importantly, single mothers have the tendency to undergo feelings of restlessness and lack of identity after the death of their husbands or divorce. This situation is especially true of women whose identity were formerly associated with that of their husbands [17]. As already pointed out in this chapter, among many single mothers, the feelings of guilt, shame, resentment, anger and anxiety about the future are very dominant and these bring out personality changes in their lives. One’s self-esteem can easily be shaken as one experience rejection, sense of failure, ambivalence, and frustration which usually accompany the process of separation and the dissolution of a marriage. Many women never get over desertion by their husbands [33]. Empirical findings on working class mothers face a lot problem from family members, neighbours and friends and hurts their pride as women [39].

Organizing the material and non-material resources for their children, developing their potential, creating conducive environment, and being able to find places to call for help in an emergency give a sense of confidence and build self-esteem for single mothers [27]. Emotional life of single mothers is also affected by their single status. Single mothers have to go through a lot of new situations every now and then with a continuous atmosphere of some pressure [5]. Basically majority of single mothers feel trapped and guilty and their Children of all ages have greater needs for reassurance, contact, comfort, stability, and love at the traumatic changes in their life [16]. These needs often clash with the single mothers needs for time to be alone, to think about her own feelings, to plan or to go to work. In struggle to strike equilibrium between the two conflicting demands, the single mother easily neglects herself because of the tremendous pressure to be a good parent. The feeling of the guilt of depriving the children from the other parent that is separating them from the father and not being able to provide a fatherly role coupled with the sense of responsibility make the single mother deny her personal identity. Single mothers believe that emotional problems occur due to conditions of economic hardships, worries regarding their children and their future [28].

A study on the growing phenomenon on single parenthood in Accra reported that there are many cases of single mothers out there that go through the pain of raising their children with no or little support [10]. For the sake of their children, many mothers are going through pressures of getting things together that have left them emotionally and psychologically broken. Many single mothers and their children are hurting badly in their homes. However, the worrying life situations of some single mothers who struggle day and night for the sake of keeping the home is enough to send them to mental homes [17]. These single mothers go through mental challenges trying to balance their lives and that of the lives of their families. Kirby insisted that here are many todays who live with mental problems, but are not able to access any medical help either due to ignorance or fear of stigmatization by society.
A study on child-to-parent violence: an exploratory study of the roles of family violence and parental discipline through the stories told by Spanish children and their parents posits that adoptive single parents and guardians face many of the same difficulties experienced by other single parents. Sometimes, depending on the circumstances, they also must address the issue of not being a blood relative to the child [7]. Widowed parents often have difficult adjustment challenges as they have to face issues surrounding the loss of a loved one. They must work through such as grief, anger, resentment, helplessness, loneliness and fear. Many times, family and friends do not know how to react to the death, and may be confused about how to help the surviving parent and children. Society’s attitude toward death is different than towards divorce, because society tends to fear and reject death, widowed parents and their children also are sometimes feared and rejected [6]. Society seems to be less supportive of widowed parents. Widowed parents report greater feelings of loneliness and isolation than do divorced parents [28] also asserted that single parents also suffer from emotional overload and this happens because the single parent must always be available to meet her own emotional needs and that of the children. These overloads result in problems for the single parent, which include loneliness, anxiety, and depression. They have many physical and emotional burdens to bear alone. For those who do not have strong personality and support systems, there is the fear that they may crumble under the emotional strain resulting in Personal-Social Problems.

Studies on women–headed families: Problems and coping strategies published in Equal Opportunities International revealed that single mothers have a personal challenge of sexual needs [33]. The role of being single creates needs for sexual satisfaction, affection, and closeness with an adult of the opposite sex. He added that single mothers feel that it is sexually frustrating if they have the normal urges for sex. It is difficult for them because if they are going to have an affair, they will have to be very secretive about it or they risk embarrassing their children. Single mothers’ sooner than later discover that there is little place for them among married couples [19]. Most of the widow’s social life is centred on activities with other women and if she is economically handicapped, then she is unable to participate in many community social organizations. They further revealed that 44 per cent of the single mothers they studied always attended or participated in social functions as an attempt to compensate the absence of their husbands. Twelve per cent of them never attended any social functions after the death of their spouse due to the feeling of low self-esteem, lack of identity and financial problems.

Single mothers because of the difficulties associated with the provision of basic needs fear their children will be taken away from them by their fathers and/or given to the man’s relatives. The majority of single mothers do not want their children to be taken away from them either by their husbands from whom they are divorced/separated who have maltreated and rejected them or by another woman to look after their children for fear of the children being maltreated or starved [15]. Notably single mothers also face the challenge of losing the respect, sympathy and influence over their wards when they cannot provide their basic needs [19]. They worry about their children being negatively influenced either by their fathers or relatives. Many single mothers especially those divorced or separated face the challenge of rejection from the
family, friends and church. Findings on “assessing causality and persistence in associations between family dinners and adolescent well-being” published in a Journal of Marriage and Family pointed out that, single parents feel challenged that their children turn out well [25]. Some single mothers feel guilty that their singleness is all their fault, thus they and their children are disadvantaged people. Some worry that their children will end up like them, if not worse off. They fear the girls may follow material wealth and end up with teenage pregnancy. They fear that the boys may go onward and end as street children or social deviants. Children need to be provided with a good and conducive environment in which to develop spiritually, psychologically and physically. Most single mothers in their quest to meet the physical demands of their children may end up neglecting other needs of the children unknowingly. Single mothers are challenged with being there for their children when they are going through life’s stages. A book titled “coping with single parenting” stated that, children require the support of the parents during life’s challenges. Some of the situations where children need help include: Adolescent issues- handling relationships, peer pressures, pressures of boarding school, etc. others are examinations and studying habits, looking for jobs, working with people, early adulthood-taking responsibility, preparation for marriage, savings habits etc [28].

3. Methodology
The study was a descriptive survey and employed the quantitative approach. The target population for this study was single mothers in the informal sector of the KEEA Municipality, specifically hairdressers, market women (traders) and seamstresses. Non-probability (purposive and snowball) sampling techniques were employed to select the single mothers that constituted the sample size of 150. The instrument for the study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire items were grouped into three (3) sections made up of thirty (30) closed-ended questions scored on a 3-point Likert-type scale (3=agree, 2=undecided, 1=disagree) designed to answer the research questions. Section 1 consists of five items (1-5) which focused on respondents work related challenges. Section 2 also consists of eight items (6-13) which focused on financial challenges faced by the respondents. Section 3 of the instrument investigated psycho/social challenges faced by the respondents consists fifteen items (14-30). The data collected were coded and captured into the Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 16 and analysed to answer each research question.

4. Findings and Discussions
This section sought to find out the challenges that the female mothers encountered in the household. The researchers thus solicited information on the family-related challenges they faced in order to answer the research question one (1): what work related challenges do single mothers in the KEEA Municipality face as female heads of household? and the responses are represented in Table 1.
On the issue of work related challenges that single mothers faced in the informal sector, majority of the respondents, agreed to the fact that combining domestic activities (washing, cooking, etc.) with their work is difficult. In table 1, 132(88.0%) of the respondents agreed to this view that combining domestic activities with their work was difficult, whiles 17(11.0%) disagreed that combining domestic activities with their work was difficult.

However, 129(86.0%) of the respondents were in agreement that combining home making (caring for baby) with work was difficult and 21(14.0%) were in disagreement to the view that combining home making (caring for baby) with work was difficult. Again the results indicated that, 104(69.3%) of the respondents gave high level of agreement to the view that working and supervising children’s school assignment is difficult but 41(27.3%) were in disagreement to the same view.

Moreover, 105(70.0%) of respondents were in support (agreed) that they had nobody to help them care for their children, only 44(29.0%) were not in support (disagreed) to this fact. Also, 133(89.0%) of respondents asserted that their challenges affected their output either at home or at work, whiles 17(11.0%) were in disagreement.

Challenges of single mothers are multiple and could be economic, emotional (psychological) mental, social and physical challenges [5]. Here majority of the single mothers representing 88% faced challenges in combining their work and home duties. The findings also agreed with the assertions that single parenting is challenging especially when the family is headed by a woman [19]. Demands of maintaining a family alone compromises parenting because of the limited amount of time available in which to monitor children’s activities, supervise homework, and develop relationships with the children’s teachers and the parents of the children’s friends support the findings of this study [22] [4]. An increasing number of these one-parent families are multigenerational, that is, single parents (most of whom are mothers) commonly look to their own parents (again, typically, mothers) for help [21]. Per the findings of this study, the question is, how potent are even the traditional and legal systems in implementing successful joint legal child custody between parents who will not or cannot stay together in order to avoid irresponsibility in child rearing by men? Parenting support from grandmothers is part of the African American heritage that operates as a function of family closeness and the number of generations in a family’s lineage [13]. But as seen in this study, a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Agree No. (%)</th>
<th>Undecided No. (%)</th>
<th>Dis-Agree No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing household chores.</td>
<td>132(88.0)</td>
<td>1(1.0)</td>
<td>17(11.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for children.</td>
<td>129(86.0)</td>
<td>0(0.0)</td>
<td>21(14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of children’s assignment.</td>
<td>104(69.3)</td>
<td>5(3.3)</td>
<td>41(27.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care.</td>
<td>105(70.0)</td>
<td>1(1.0)</td>
<td>44(29.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low output both at work and home</td>
<td>133(89.0)</td>
<td>0(0.0)</td>
<td>17(11.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
similar findings entitled challenges of single mothers in West Africa posit that daily caring of children by single mothers is becoming extraordinarily difficult [6]. They discovered that nowadays, the child(ren) live(s) with their mother on fulltime as their primary custodian and sole source of livelihood. Similarly, the findings support a study titled “Single parent families in poverty” which revealed that single parents often face the challenges of childrearing, maintaining a home, establishing a supportive social life and working full-time with little assistance from other adults [17]. Because of these many responsibilities, single parents often feel overwhelmed. Time management is usually a major problem. Single parents sometimes feel socially isolated in our couples-oriented society. Because some people still consider single-parenting a non-traditional form of childrearing, single-parents sometimes experience discrimination.

Income is an important measure of the ability of parents to provide basic goods and services for their children. In order to answer research question two: What financial challenges do single mothers in the KEA Municipality face as female heads of households? information on the financial challenges they encountered were solicited from the respondents and the results were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Financial Challenges of Single Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Challenges</th>
<th>Agree No. (%)</th>
<th>Undecided No. (%)</th>
<th>Disagree No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem of paying fees</td>
<td>112 (75.0)</td>
<td>3 (2.0)</td>
<td>35 (23.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in paying utilities</td>
<td>119 (79.0)</td>
<td>1 (1.0)</td>
<td>30 (20.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in paying for my hospital bills</td>
<td>73 (49.0)</td>
<td>5 (3.3)</td>
<td>72 (48.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to provide three square meals</td>
<td>79 (52.7)</td>
<td>5 (3.3)</td>
<td>66 (44.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in paying rent</td>
<td>76 (50.6)</td>
<td>2 (1.0)</td>
<td>72 (48.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in clothing children</td>
<td>92 (61.3)</td>
<td>5 (3.3)</td>
<td>53 (35.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in clothing myself</td>
<td>76 (50.6)</td>
<td>2 (1.0)</td>
<td>72 (48.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to save money</td>
<td>92 (61.3)</td>
<td>1 (1.0)</td>
<td>57 (38.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2, it can be seen that majority of lone mothers face a lot of financial problems/challenges which brings about many worries and trauma to both mothers and their children. With the problem of paying school fees of children, as many as 112(75.0%) of respondents were in agreement of this view, meanwhile 35 (23.0%) of the respondents disagreed. However, 119(79.0%) agreed and 30 (20.0%) disagreed to the opinion that they faced difficulties in paying for utilities like water and electricity. It is also evident that 73 (49.0%) of respondents were in agreement that they were not able to pay for their hospital bills whiles
72(48.0%) were in disagreement to this opinion. Again, 79(52.7%) of the respondents agreed that, they were not able to provide three square meals in a day for themselves but 66(44.0%) disagreed. Majority of the respondents, 76(50.6%) were in agreement that they had challenges in paying for rent. All these show that separation and divorce invariably resulted in financial challenges and economic stress, and sometimes, different residential arrangements require different financial costs [34]. It is usually said, as confirmed by the data in Table 2, that single fathers are much more likely than single mothers to own their homes. Like income, homeownership is an important measure of economic well-being. For example, because owners can build equity in their property, they have greater access to loans in case of emergency or even when planning for events such as their children’s education.

The multiple consequences of divorce: A decade review, found out that divorce decrease in the income and standards of living for women, and single parent families were found to experience significant economic disadvantage [18]. In Australia, it was found that women and children were still more likely than men to experience financial hardship after divorce even after the introduction of the Child Support Scheme and increases in government income support, together with increasing availability of work for women [35]. This clearly shows the extent of devastation that permanent separation couples could cause. This implies that single mothers in the K.E.E.A municipality were suffering, and the results of this menace are evidenced in the poor life led by many children in the area. With the problem of having no money to clothe children well, 92(61.3%) agreed and 53(35.3%) disagreed. Also, 76(50.6%) of the respondents agreed that they had no money to clothe themselves well but 72(48.0%) disagreed. Furthermore, 92(61.3%) of the respondents were in agreement of the view that they were not able to save any money, however 38% disagreed to this view.

Findings from Table 2, indicated that 112(75.0%) and 119(79.0%) of the single mothers had problems in paying school fees of their children and difficulties in paying for utility bills respectively. About 50% were not able to provide three square meals and clothe their children well. The study was supported by similar findings which indicated that financial crisis is a standing situation with most of the single parent families [19]. It is a known fact that single-parent households spent slightly more per child than did married-couple households in the same income group [9] and over 60% of the single mothers could not save any money for their future.

Information on the psycho and social challenges faced by the single mothers were solicited to answer the research question three (3) *What psycho-social challenges do single mothers in the K.E.E.A Municipality face as female heads of their households?*. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Psycho-Social challenges of Single Mother**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Feel:</th>
<th>Agree No. (%)</th>
<th>Undecided No. (%)</th>
<th>Disagree No. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worried about being a single mother</td>
<td>126(84.0)</td>
<td>3(2.0)</td>
<td>21(14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset easily</td>
<td>55(36.0)</td>
<td>1(1.0)</td>
<td>94(63.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: revealed the psycho/social challenges that single mothers faced. Respondents gave various reasons affirming that they had diverse problems when it comes to psycho/social issues, 126(84.0%) of respondents agreed to the fact that they always felt anxious/worried whiles 21(14.0%) disagreed to this fact. Also, with the issue of respondents becoming easily upset at the workplace, 55(36.0%) agreed but majority of respondents, 94(63.0%) gave a high level of disagreement to this view.

Furthermore, 94(63.0%) of respondents were in agreement that they felt guilty that they did not have a husband. It is not surprising that [34] identified that women who become single mothers through break-up sometimes experience guilt about the marital break-up and the separation with their children is emotionally devastating for them. For example, in Table 3, 117(78.0%) of respondents were in support that they felt emotionally drained almost all the time. Similarly, on the issue of being depressed as a single mother, 91(67.0%) were in agreement but 57(38.0%) were in disagreement. This confirms the fact that divorce is generally viewed as a prominent cause of depression in adults [36]. A review of sex differences in a depressive reaction to major life stressors, found males and females were equally likely to experience depression following marital breakdown [20]. Single mothers (including those who are separated and divorced) have consistently been found to evidence higher rates of depression and psychiatric illnesses, relative to their married counterparts. Reasons cited include differences in stress and social support.

As seen in Table 3, 25(17.0%) of respondents agreed that they feel ashamed about being a single mother but the majority 122(81.0%) disagreed that they felt ashamed of being single mothers. Respondents who agreed they felt helpless in their condition as single mothers recorded 113(75.0%) with 34(23.0%) disagreeing to this view. According to the respondents, 78(52.0%) agreed to the fact that they felt frustrated, 69(46.0%) disagreed to it. With respect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
<th>3%</th>
<th>2%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guilty I don’t have a husband</td>
<td>94(63.0)</td>
<td>5(3.3)</td>
<td>51(34.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally drained</td>
<td>117(78.0)</td>
<td>5(3.3)</td>
<td>28(18.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always tired</td>
<td>136(90.0)</td>
<td>1(1.0)</td>
<td>13(9.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed as a single mother</td>
<td>91(67.0)</td>
<td>2(1.0)</td>
<td>57(38.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashamed as a single mother</td>
<td>25(17.0)</td>
<td>3(2.0)</td>
<td>122(81.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpless in my condition as a single mother</td>
<td>113(75.0)</td>
<td>3(2.0)</td>
<td>34(23.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated being a single mother</td>
<td>78(52.0)</td>
<td>3(2.0)</td>
<td>69(46.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like giving up in life</td>
<td>29(19.3)</td>
<td>2(1.0)</td>
<td>119(79.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to participate in social and religious activities</td>
<td>74(49.3)</td>
<td>2(1.0)</td>
<td>74(49.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about my children’s academics</td>
<td>44(29.3)</td>
<td>32(21.3)</td>
<td>74(49.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely</td>
<td>117(78.0)</td>
<td>3(2.0)</td>
<td>30(20.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to take decision on my children’s education</td>
<td>40(26.7)</td>
<td>24(16.0)</td>
<td>86(57.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to discipline my children</td>
<td>49(32.6)</td>
<td>4(2.70)</td>
<td>97(64.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to lone mothers who wanted to give up, 29(19.3%) of the mothers agreed and majority of the mothers 119(79.3%) disagreed. On the view of whether the respondents were unable to participate in social and community organization, Table 3: shows that 74(49.3%) were in agreement and 74(49.3%) were in disagreement. The Table 3: also revealed that 44(29.3%) of the respondents agreed to the fact that they worried because their children were not performing well in school, 74(49.3%) disagreed and 32(21.3%) were undecided. Majority of the respondents 117(78.0%) agreed to the view that they really felt lonely being single mothers and 30(20.0%) disagreed to it. With regards to the statement “I am unable to make decisions regarding higher education of the children” majority 86(57.3%) indicated their disagreement to the statement. Only 40(26.7%) expressed their agreement and 24(16.0%) were undecided to the statement.

Also the next statement “I feel unable to discipline my child/children”, majority 97(64.7%) disagreed, while 49(32.6%) agreed to it. Even though they disagreed, most of them reposed their confidence in me and told me that they still had certain issues to grapple with, namely, temper tantrums, fighting, cheating, lying, depression, academic problems, gang-related activity, and adolescent pregnancy. These very matters have been found to be more prevalent among children of single mothers [14]. A number of other studies also indicate that divorced residential parents, compared with married parents, invest less time, are less supportive, have fewer rules, dispense harsher discipline, provide less supervision, and engage in more conflict with their children [33]. In support of the study, children of single teenage mothers are more at risk for later criminal behaviour [23].

In all, majority of the respondents felt lonely being single mothers. The findings agree with the assertion that loneliness of single mothers’ stem from not only the absence of the husband but also from the loss of their friends [33]. Research work single mothers indicates that most single mothers face feelings of guilt and anxiety about the future and about 84% of the single mothers had similar feelings [19]. However, emotional problems occur due to condition of economic hardships, worries regarding the children and their future and this assertion was revealed in the findings as about 80% of the single mothers had these feelings. From the findings, majority of the single mother faced emotional challenges [5]. Their single status brought loneliness, helplessness, hopelessness, lack of identity and lack of confidence on them. All these made them lack self-esteem, feel rejected, experience a sense of failure, ambivalence and frustration [19]. The stress of separation and divorce places both men and women at risk for psychological and physical health problems. Alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, psychosomatic problems, and accidents are more common among divorced than non-divorced adults [12]. Research suggests that marital disruption and the associated distress also depress the immune system, making divorced persons more vulnerable to disease, infection, chronic and acute medical problems, and even death.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The dual parental roles played by the single mothers are making them highly unproductive both at work and at home. The challenges faced by the single mothers are firmly rooted in their acute financial problems. There was poor social support for single mothers in the K.E.E.A.
Municipality. It is recommended that, the society, the church and the courts should also enforce the regulations and laws on marriages so as to minimize the rates of desertions/divorce/separations. The husbands of the single mothers must take up the responsibility of the welfare of their children (financial, emotional, material and physical) to ease the pressures on the mothers. For the widows, the family of the deceased fathers should collaborate with the existing mother to take care of the children. The extended family must not die, relatives of the single mothers should come in and help the single mothers cater for themselves and their children with friends offering a buffer against loneliness and relatives giving more practical help.

References


