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Exploring Challenges Faced by Rural Zimbabwean School-Going Single Mothers in Nurturing Children: A Literature Perspective

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Abstract

In sub-Saharan African countries, school-going single mothers are a rapidly growing new form of family. However, this pervasive phenomenon and its influence on child development have caught miniature thought. It is in this context that this paper sought to gain insights from a literature perspective on challenges confronted by rural Zimbabwean school-going single mothers in child nurturing. This is a documentary review of information considered relevant to the issue under investigation. In this context, the literature method was used in generating, data from purposively sampled sources. Against this background, the analysis revealed that school-going single mothers encounter numerous challenges, such as the difficulty to maintain discipline and authority in their 'new' family setting, social ostracism through school-going single mothers, and their children's experience of adverse stances in social, emotional and economic obstacles. Thus, single mothers in these rural societies take on all the chores, child upkeep and in most cases are susceptible to social separation, which forms a situation, which does not bring up children's social and cognitive development. In this context, it can therefore be concluded that these detected challenges influence how school-going single mothers in the rural Zimbabwe context nurture their children. It is against this background that we recommend that school-going single mothers are encouraged to find means of exercising positive parenting that ensures that their children are well-groomed and provided for.

Keywords: Gender, rural context, school-going single-mothers, socialisation, social ostracism

1. Introduction

Globally, it's acknowledged that there has been a statistical upsurge in the transformation from the traditional form of two paternities to a single one in the household arrangement (Kang'ethe & Mafa,

2014; Landau & Griffiths, 2007). Under this scenario, parentage becomes a multifaceted challenge with far-reaching effects on children. We acknowledge that single parenthood encounters numerous obstacles, which they manage alone as compared to a combined effort by their counterparts in two parents household (Mugove, 2017). For the instance, some of the children might be inimical regarding their parentages as they grow up. It is against this background that, where resentment and insurgence seem to bear more effect on a school-going single parent than when it's shared by both parents.

From the above, it is critical to note that a family is seen as an important agent for the children's socialisation to enhance the continuity of any culture (Akida, Ali &Karama, 2018). In support Agulana (2010); Kösterelioğlu (2018) advance that the family sets the mental, ethical, and psychic underpinning in the inclusive growth of the child. For instance, in most indigenous societies children are traditionally nurtured through an organised and meticulous approach since parents could inculcate rudimentary ethical, religious, social, bodily, and mental standards (Santrock, 2002). This was made possible through the existence of a belief system premised around the notion that children were supposed to be brought up by both parents since one of them had particular enshrined responsibilities in as far as child nurturing was concerned. However, customary African family arrangements have of late been upset (Mbithi, 2019). These disintegrated deep-rooted traditions practiced for several years and were imparted in the family setup are causing social deviation among children as they are presumed either over-or under-protected (Mkapa, 2005).

From the above, it is crucial to note that in Zimbabwe, single motherhood families constitute 33% of the population and these remain side-lined in the society, at workplaces, and in education (Chikuvadze, Matswetu & Mugijima, 2015; Mataure, et al., 2002). In addition, the number of children living under singlehood have increased from 9% to 28% (Child Trends, 2015). Amusingly, few studies have look at the influence of women's matrimonial status on children's welfare (Clark & Hamplová, 2013) in Zimbabwe. This acted as a motivation for us to have a close look at these emerging phenomena, which has now become the norm rather than the exception (Mutemeri, 2019; Ramos & Tus, 2020). This shaped the need for ***an analysis of challenges faced by Zimbabwean rural school-going single mothers in nurturing their children***.

2. Methodology

This paper was guided by a qualitative approach in understanding school-going single mothers' experience and their interpretation of the issue under investigation (Boeije, 2010; Seidel, 2010; Willis, 2007). This is followed by the researchers with the view that we attain a rich and full comprehension of the issue under investigation through profound questioning and dialogical strategies to extract relevant information from different sources (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Mufanechiya & Mufanechiya, 2011; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2007). This was done through a desk review of purposively sampled relevant sources on parenting concerns. An analysis of the information from selected sources (Creswell, 2007) was carried out to extract single mothers' experiences on the issue under investigation.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework based on feminist and social role standpoints informed this analysis. Thus, the framework was premised around the acceptance of the existence of differences between females and males in as far as social roles within the rural family context (Wood & Eagly, 2012). With this in mind females as self-organizing, active, and self-regulatory proxies in pursuit of their anticipated aspirations (Jackson & Scheines, 2005). It is against this background that we focus on single motherhood was arrived at through the following pathways: pre-marital and post-marital (Clark & Hamplová, 2013). Hence, this analysis centres on gaining insight into school-going single mothers (Barret, 2010; Endendijk, Groeneveld & Mesman, 2018; O'Connor, Orloff, & Shaver, 1999) and

their influence on child nurturing in rural parts of Zimbabwe. This calls for an analysis of rural school-going single mothers' lived experiences under the auspice of 'ubuntu/unhu' values and the need to address all forms of marginalisation in society (Seidel, 2010). Thus, in this paper school-going single mother refers to a 'lone parent' who stays with her children independently and is primarily enrolled at a learning institution (Gordeev 2008; Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). In some cases, as these 'lone parent' persists due to her inventiveness and strength, she is dehumanized (Moyo & Kawewe, 2009). It is against this background that the next sections are grounded following themes: family status and beliefs, with the view to gain an understanding of their influence on school-going single mothers' role in child nurturing.

4. Influence of Poverty on School-Going Single Mothers on Child Nurturing Strategies

It is conceded that single motherhood in many societies it's no longer a symbol of socially degenerate behaviour, it remains associated with great risk of poverty (Shore, 2019). In support of this argument, Ganong, Colman and Johnson in Roman (2011) put forward that some societies perceive single mothers as deviant and this creates a stereotypical environment. For this reason, we call for the comprehension of single motherhood's poverty, through disentangling its effects on their day-to-day interactions in society (Hübgen, 2020).

Rural school-going single mothers are at a socio-economic inconvenience, since they have insufficient domestic possessions and inferior revenue, resulting in them being economically insecure compared to their married counterparts (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002). It can be noted that rural school-going single mothers and poverty can be comprehended as two interrelated processes of accumulative detriments (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006). This creates poor quality school-going single mother-children relationships, with the latter at times encountering behaviour challenges (Burk & Laursen, 2010; Hao, 1995). The aforementioned can be supported by Harknett (2006) who put forward that single mothers assume two-fold functions that of being fiscal benefactors and principal child nurturers. These roles to some extent limit school-going single mothers' interface with their children due to energy restraints (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). Under such a scenario the rural school-going single mothers might be seen as failing to accord children adequate support and in turn, this affects their self-esteem.

5. Influence of Beliefs on School-Going Single Mothers' Child Nurturing Strategies

Single motherhood has long been considered a social problem (Alm, Nelson & Nieuwenhuis, 2019; Li, 2020). For instance, the absence of the other parent might lead to failure to provide the basis for positive attachment between the absent parent and the child (Kail, 2002). Therefore, it can be noted that single mothers experience exceptional challenges that are psychological nature, which affects children's learning and development (Craig, 2005). Thus, school-going single mothers, have more children nurturing challenges than those encountered by single fathers (Kail, 2002). This is mainly due to resentment towards the absent partner, isolation, and anxiety about nurturing children alone without assistance from the other partner.

Also, the absence of the other partner confines the school-going single motherhood's ability to balance and share the responsibility in child nurturing and domiciliary chores (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). Under these conditions, children are more and more socialized by influencers external to the proximate family. In this case, children are deprived of maternal attention and direction, thereby exposing children to possibly detrimental circumstances such as lying, stealing, and playing truant in school (Adelani & Ogunbanwo, 2008; Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010). Ultimately this increases the manifestation of physiological indicators of arousal in children from single parenthood. Therefore, this calls for the current section to discuss factors (parent-child relationship, social ostracism, and emotional challenges) that influence school-going single mothers in nurturing their children.

Also, in this analysis an explanation of the failure by children from one-parent families (school-

going single mothers), centres on socialization and its influence on the continuity of the indigenous culture. Thus, most indigenous societies are well defined and disciplined, with parents having the responsibility to inculcate expected ethical, religious, bodily, and intellectual values in their children (Santrock, 2002). From this perspective, a family is acknowledged as the utmost socialising agent, particularly for children. However, this requires both parents to playing complementary roles in impacting positively their children's social and psychological development (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010). It is against this background that this article discusses how the children from school-going single mothers' deprivation of chances to interact with both parents might negatively their psycho-social development and participation in learning activities (Azuka-Obieke, 2013). In this context it is significant to acknowledge that in most instances parents are concerned with how children are socialized, hence marital disruption, which results in school-going single mothers may interfere with the transmission of cultural norms and values.

School-going single mothers encounter some challenges in their endeavour to make ends for the family to meet in various social settings on account of gender. Thus, in rural context school-going, single motherhood at times experience family captivity from their in-laws due to the patriarchal nature of the society and issues around the inheritance that do not consider the equality of sexes (Kang'ethe, 2009; UNDP, 1995). This may result in school-going single mothers experiencing some form of either sexual or emotional abuse (Chipaziwa, 2011). Thus, this practice is more prevalent in remote rural areas where she might not have any societal system to protect or consider her rights over the spouse's assets, hence has to go along with the notions and directives of the existing traditional beliefs. This creates a struggle for school-going single mothers to prove a point against the skewed cultural belief systems, which position them in a less influential status in dealing with children's misbehaviour.

Under these cultural expectations school-going, single mothers tend to alter their decision-making methods and this weakens children's behaviour management at home. This is against the background that whatever their capabilities for managing their children, school-single mothers can encounter challenges in dealing with adolescents on the issue to do with drug and substance abuse, earlier sexual activity, and pre-marital births (Munanie, 2016). In this context, school-going, single mothers were portrayed as being less authoritative in dealing with issues to do with children's discipline. In this context, the lack of recognition of single motherhood as one of the forms of family in contemporary societies leads to their disempowerment (Moyo & Kawewe, 2009). This endures societal arrangement, where females are socialised to consider males as being the central figure in a patriarchal family structure (Ramos & Tus, 2020). According to Baharudin, et al (2010); Rani (2006) this concurs with claims from socialization perspective that the non-existence of one parent impedes a child's development due to the waning of functions in the family.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the issue of challenges encountered by single mothers in a rural context by examining school-going single mothers' experiences (Kagaba, 2015; Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2013; Lloyd & Mensch, 2008). From the current argument, this paper concludes that from a literature perspective, school-going single mothers in a rural context in Zimbabwe encounters parent-child relationship, social ostracism and emotional challenges in the nurturing their children. Thus, as school-going single mothers are confronted by a multitude of challenges in their everyday lives and in nurturing their children, we make a recommendation that indigenous rural societies ought to desist from traditional beliefs which encourage stigmatisation, side-lining, and exclusion of school-going single-mother families.

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