

# The Perceived Effect of Single Parenting on Interpersonal Relationships Among Learners in Public Day Secondary Schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-County, Embu County in Kenya

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**Abstract**—The family's main responsibility is to train and bring up children in the norms and values of society, and therefore, it affects the child's psychosocial development. There has been an increase in the number of single-parent families, which has been perceived negatively by African society. These perceptions may affect the, interpersonal relationships of children. This study aimed to determine the perceived effect of single-parenting on learners' interpersonal relationships. The study was grounded on the psychoanalytic theory of identification. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 1466 learners and 92 teachers, making a total of 1558. The study was done in the 8 public day secondary schools and it constituted 306 form three learners, 30 class teachers and 8 Guidance and Counselling heads, making a total of 344 respondents. The study's chi-square tests found a statistically significant association between single parenting and interpersonal relationships of learners in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu County in Kenya. They will also be used to highlight the counselling needs of the learners whose perceptions might be warped. The study recommended the formulation of guidance and counseling programmes and other policies that will help the learners who need guidance and counseling in the areas covered in this research. Moreover, the findings are also expected to help formulate guidance and counseling policies for learners from duo-parent families who have negative perceptions of learners from single-parent families.

**Index Terms**— Perceived effect, Single parenting, Interpersonal relationships.

## 1. Introduction

### A. Background of the Study

A single parent is a parent, living without a spouse or a partner, who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities of raising a child or children (Rosewell, 2020). Single parenting is therefore the raising of a child or children by one parent, without the input of the spouse or a partner. Raynor, (2021) observed that the foundation of what the person becomes in the society is laid in the home at the initial stage of life. However, there are certain circumstances in families which dictate that the parenting role is left in the hands of one of the parents. These

include, but not limited to, divorce, denied paternity, rape, separation of various kinds, death of one spouse and deliberate single parenting (Zhang, 2019). The society continues to grapple with the breaking down of family structures which adversely affects the psychological and social development of a child.

The raising of a child or children by a single parent has its own fair share of psychosocial issues because it is a relatively new phenomenon that has not been studied well enough and research in this area is scanty thus varied and especially negative perceptions on the single parent families abound (Kiptui, 2019). There are also perceived problems associated with the absence of one parent in the family that may affect interpersonal relationships of children from those families. Society understands and defines the family unit within the confines of a pair, a couple, or two spouses – a man and a woman, and their children (Salma *et al.*, 2021). Single parenting or one-parent family defies the norm and the expectations of the society at large whereby a single parent with his or her children are often treated with suspicion and viewed with a lower opinion rating than a duo-parent family. Society members have differing views on single-parenting, whether they are in a duo-parent family or a single-parent family (Evans *et al.*, 2018). The views and perceptions on the single families can either be positive or negative. Not only do the children from single parent families have certain perceptions about their families but the children from duo-parent parent families also have perceptions about the single parent families that emanate from the fact that they are not used to this kind of family set up and might therefore view it with suspicion (Kwagala, 2017). In addition to this, the traditional family, which is viewed as a bread-winning man, a housekeeping and child bearing woman and their offspring, persists as an ideal family for most of the people. Adolescents, may be affected by perceptions because at such a sage of developmental human beings seeks identity thus conscious of the status of their families (Barnes, 2021).

Single parenting is viewed as having the potential to create psychological and social problems for children. Findings

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suggest that one-parent families are often poor because of the absence of any other income other than the earnings of that one parent (Maldonado and Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Low living standard raises concerns about the possible adverse effects on the development of children in these families, and also raises social policy issues. The parent might be unable to cater for the needs of the children causing them psychological issues like low self-esteem due to the increasing unfamiliar family background yet the single parent might lack some degree of control over the child, and therefore posing a social concern that might lead to antisocial or socially unacceptable behaviour (Park and Lee, 2020). Social control efforts are normally required to help reduce the gap between individual interests and collective group interests for the purpose of harmonious living (Adhariani, 2022). As a result of these social issues, the rate of indiscipline of learners in schools in Kenya has been on the increase as postulated by Kagema and Kagoiya, (2018). Social issues may include but not limited to poor social adjustments, poor interpersonal relations, poor lower social-economic achievements, vulnerability to criminal offences and emotional disorders.

Single parents and children from single parent families constitute a rapidly increasing population with special needs that have been insufficiently recognized, infrequently studied and poorly served (Connell, 2020). Although there is no such thing as a perfect family, even in those cases, children raised by one parent are in a different league due to their troubles from those faced by children raised by two parents. The incidences of single parent families have been increasing rapidly in many countries in the world, particularly since the 1970's (Nunes *et al.*, 2021). Marital dissolutions have been primarily responsible for the single parent family increase and low marriage rates magnifies its effects. Single parent families have also been created by births outside marriage, the death of a spouse, separation of spouses as well as divorce, deliberate choice to raise children alone, rape and incest (Arslan, 2018). In other words, single parenthood could be circumstantial or by conscious and deliberate choice (Hanks, 2021). The society is dynamic; it is ever changing as a result of mutual interaction among different type of individuals thus Continuous change characterises the real nature of society and the advent of single parenting.

In the United States one third of the American families were headed by a single parent in 2019. The 2019 American statistics indicated that single parent families represented 30% of US households; while 25% represent two-parent households (Brooks 2020). Based on the current trends therefore, there are predictions that 70% of children born since 2018 will spend some time living in a single parent home before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, says the same source (Bennouna, 2019). While the number of never-married parents is increasing, this number is still small in comparison to divorced single parents, the latter being the most significant factor increasing the number of single parents, with one in two marriages now ending in divorce in the U.S. (Goldberg, E., Allen, K. and Smith, J., 2021). Further, the projection shows that one out of every two children born in the U.S. during the 2020-2030 decade would spend time

in a single-parent family (Aizer, 2022).

In Great Britain the number of single parent families increased by 80% between 1980 and 1990, in early 1990's, one-parent households were a fifth or more of the households in the industrialized countries of Northern and Central Europe and North America (Evans *et al.*, 2018). In addition, Sobotka and Berghammer, (2021), assert that the number of divorce cases has risen considerably in Europe since the 1970s and that the most affected countries include the United Kingdom, Portugal, Denmark and Belgium. The writer notes that it has resulted in one-parent families soaring in Europe. (Sow, 2021) observes that the percentage of single-parent families among the eight highly industrialized countries (i.e. the G-8) were: U.S. 30 per cent, Sweden 17 per cent, Australia 15 per cent, U.K. 13 per cent, West Germany 12 per cent, France 10 per cent, U.S.S.R. 9 per cent and Japan 4 per cent. Latin America is equally experiencing a rise in one-parent families.

In Asian countries such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the Mainland China, a steady increase in the divorce rate leading to single parenting was evident in the past few decades, particularly after year 2000 (Lai & Song, 2022). In 1995 there were only 0.8 divorces per 1,000 people in Hong Kong while in other Asian countries the divorce rate was much lower than the same figures at the time. In 2006 the divorce rate in Hong Kong rose to 2.5, which was already higher than most in Asian countries (Arslan, 2018). The rise of divorce rate has increased the number of children living with a single parent. From 2001 to 2011 the annual growth rate of single parents was 2.8% in Hong Kong, currently, in Hong Kong, there are 81,680 single parents who have children under age 18 (Laursen *et al.*, 2019). Most children living with a single parent are children of divorce (Zartler, 2021). In India, 1% of marriages end in divorce, and there are over 13 million single mothers in the country while, the number of single-parent households is steadily increasing (Bhattacharya, 2021).

Studies in Africa by Ntoimo and Mutanda (2020) indicate that out of 22% of women aged between 22 to 49 years in Africa were unmarried mothers. In Nigeria, 4% of children live with one parent while in South Africa 60% of children have absent fathers and more than 40% of mothers are single parents (Yimer and Ashebir, 2019). According to Mangena, (2021), research conducted in some counties of Liberia found that about 9 percent of Liberian women in the country were single mothers, raising children single-handedly. The prevalence of single parenting is also increasing in South Africa, and the pool is a composite of unmarried mothers, including many teenagers, divorcees and families separated by migrant labour arrangements (Stassart *et al.*, 2021). According to Tanle and Abane, (2018), population which is twelve years and above in Liberia constitute 16,886,306 people. Out of the total, (42.9%) of them are married; (1.9%) are separated; (3.4%) are divorced while (4.9%) of them are widowed. This indicates that in Liberia, about (10.2%) of the marriageable people are single parents.

In Tanzania, single parenting is prevalent and it could be as a result of broken marriages, the death of a partner or individuals choosing to be single parents without getting into

the bond of marriage (Zeifman, 2019). It is generally acknowledged that regardless of how single parenting is viewed, the increase in single parenting and incidences of families headed by one parent has effects on the psychological and social wellbeing of learners. In Kenya, changes in society have been blamed for the increase in student's undesirable social behaviour with erosion of indigenous cultures destabilized the foundations of behaviour considered desirable (Ciarrochi et al 2018) Schools, as socializing agents, have therefore taken up the role of socializing the adolescents - what structures within traditional society did before (Kupchik, 2020). Single parenting, not traditionally encouraged, seems to have effects on behaviour of offspring and mental health as the 2001 FIDA Kenya Annual Report indicates that 40 formal divorce cases occurred in Nairobi and 19 in Kisumu, while in 2002, Nairobi had 171 and Kisumu 29 cases. The same report indicates 60 cases of domestic violence in Nairobi, 54 in Kisumu, and that of year 2002; 529 in Nairobi and 126 in Kisumu (Bennouna, 2019). Families with absentee parent, especially the father, who comes home after a long absence may lead to single parenting (Haider, Kingori & Gebre, 2020). A survey by Kenya Demographic and Health Services (2018) revealed that nearly 30% of all the children in Kenya do not live with both of their biological parents Further, the survey revealed that those children who live with only one parent were about 30% with the numbers having increased in recent years as shown in Table 1.

In Mbeere North Constituency, also referred to as Mbeere North Sub-county, about half of the parents that applied for secondary school bursaries in 2021 were single parents (Mbeere North Bursary Committee, 2021), an indication that the rate of increase in single parenthood within Mbeere North is alarming, with Ishiara zone leading with single-parent applicants. Moreover, the findings indicate that single parents are sometimes unable to provide family basic needs such as education that may adversely affect the self-esteem, interpersonal relationships and discipline of children and the adolescent (Muindi, Ileri, and Menecha, 2020). The increasing prevalence of single-parent families in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-County, Embu County, Kenya, has raised concerns about the psychosocial wellbeing of learners in public day secondary schools. These learners face unique challenges, including emotional instability, social isolation, and economic hardships, which can significantly affect their academic performance and overall development (Nguni, 2019). Despite the critical role that psychosocial wellbeing plays in a learner's success, there is limited research specifically addressing the

impact of single parenting in this region. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the perceived effects of single parenting on the psychosocial wellbeing of these learners, with the aim of identifying the specific challenges they face and proposing targeted interventions to support their holistic development.

### B. Statement of the Problem

Single parents and their children constitute a rapidly increasing population around the world and in Kenya in particular. Although there is nothing like a perfect family, there is a general agreement that children raised by one parent are in a unique category, and their challenges are different from those of children being raised by both parents. It therefore follows that those children from single-parent families have special psychosocial needs, but those needs have been insufficiently recognized, infrequently studied and poorly served. Studies suggest that a child that is brought up by the two parents will be better taken care of and better socialized than the one brought up by one parent. This is because the process of bringing up a child highly depends on the complementary roles played by the parents as the child learns from each parent the roles played by each gender in the family and is normally proud of their family. However, the absence of one parent, which results to single parenting, creates a gap in that the child does not get to learnt roles from both parents. Absence of the best level of socialization will lead to a gap in the child's social relations. The absence of one spouse leaves the role of raising the child in the hands of a one parent, and whatever vulnerability persists can create a gap where a youngster's self-perception and interpersonal relationships. Since single parenting is a relatively new phenomenon, there might also be a negative perception of single parenting which might imply that children brought up in such family structures may not get adequate acceptance, support and recognition from teachers, fellow learners and the society at large. This is an indication that society does not seem to have adjusted adequately to accommodate this development of single parenting. Incidents of student's undesirable social behaviour have been increasing over the years. This is in spite of rules governing student's behaviour in schools, the many efforts being made through guidance and counselling, and statements and actions of disapproval and concern voiced by the Kenyan society in general. The high occurrence of antisocial behaviour in Kenyan schools has become the concern of parents, teachers, social workers, the church, government officials and the society at large. The researcher, therefore, sort to examine the perceived effect of single parenting on the psychosocial wellbeing of learners in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu

Table 1

Increase in number of single parent families in Kenya by regions in percentage

Region	Number of Single Parent families in Percentage in 2013	Number of Single Parent families in Percentage in 2018
Nyanza	28.5%	35.0%
Coast	28.2%	34.3%
Nairobi	26.9%	33.0%
Rift Valley	27.6%	31.8%
Western	27.8%	31.0%
Eastern	24.5%	27.6%
Central	20.1%	24.4%
North Eastern	19.3%	21.5%

Source: Kenya Demographic and Health Services, 2018.

county in Kenya.

### C. *Objective of the Study*

To establish the perceived effect of single parenting on interpersonal relationships among learners in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu county in Kenya.

### D. *Research Question*

What is the perceived effect of single parenting on the interpersonal relations of learners from single parent families in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North sub-county, Embu county in Kenya?

## 2. Literature Review

A study done in the U.S. by the United States Bureau of Census (2018) revealed that single parents suffer from economic difficulties, with mother only families suffering more than father only families. According to the study, nearly three times as many mother-only families as father-only families are poor - 35 percent as compared with 13 percent. Single mothers in particular, often suffer from the mother's low earning capacity and the father's failure to pay child support. This is in tandem with the findings of McLanahan and Booth (2019) who in a study found that learners from one-parent homes tend to have more problems in school among them poor discipline and poor interpersonal relationships due a poor economic background.

A study done by Derella and Milan (2021) on single African mothers of seventh and eighth - graders in the Mid-western city in South Africa that was experiencing widespread unemployment, indicated that unemployed mothers, especially those without outside help and support, tended to become depressed. Young people who saw their relationships with their mothers deteriorate due to their mothers' depression tended to be depressed themselves and to have trouble in school. Further, the study suggested that the children's psychosocial wellbeing was affected by the single parent's mood (Nguni, 2019). The depressed mood of the parent impacts the children's social relations with others. In addition, the psychosocial well-being in an adolescent may predict future adult well-being. Depressive episodes in the adolescent are likely to be chronic and recurrent throughout the adolescent's life course. Depressive moods early in life are also a suggestion of developing serious depressive disorders later in life (Muindi, 2019). One generally-accepted, research finding is that the long-term effects of single parenting are greater for boys than for girls (Hetherington, 2019). Boys are much more likely to suffer psychological and social problems. Boys are also more likely to show acting-out behaviour than girls (Hetherington, 2019). The reason for this may be explained by the fact that in the majority of the cases, mothers gain custody, and perhaps the absence of the male authority figure may have an especially injurious effect on boys (Principe & London, 2022). Psychologists now appreciate the effects fathers have on their daughters. Studies of adolescents for example, suggest that paternal absence may have delayed effects on the girl's gender

typing. Father's absence may cause adolescent daughters to have difficulties relating to other males; these difficulties may take different forms for daughters of widows and divorcees. In other studies, adolescent girls from divorced homes appeared to be more sexually precocious and assertive with males. Those whose mothers were widowed were characterized as excessively anxious about sexuality and as shy and uncomfortable around males (Hetherington, 2019). Indeed, paternal absences have negative impact on both daughters and sons. The impact of family type as well as parental rearing practices have been found to be crucial in as far as the development of a child's self-view, interpersonal relationships and discipline are concerned (Coopersmith, 2018). Boys brought up by single parents are, for instance, much more likely to suffer psychological and social problems than girls of the same family background. Girls raised in one-parent families have more difficulty relating to men later on due to low self-esteem and poor interpersonal relationships skills (Mendez, 2020). Researchers have further found that girls from single parent families were more sexually promiscuous and seductive, while girls raised in widowed families were more withdrawn. Therefore, paternal absence affects daughters as well as boys (Hetherington, 2019).

According to Mandara and Murray (2009), Single parenting is associated with the risk of a number of negative social, behaviour and emotional outcomes for children. The two argued that single parenting has adverse mental, emotional, psychological and social effects on the child and this has been validated and advocated by psychologists from time to time. They also found out that single parents commonly experience difficulties with role identity. Some social stigma is attached to single parenting and the children from those families are psychologically affected (Kagoya, 2019). A study by Peretti and Di Vittorio (2019) examined the effect of the loss a father due to divorce on children. Social withdrawal, guilt, depression and self-confidence were all found to be characteristics of these children. They often believed that they were responsible for the divorce and felt guilty that the father had to move away. Negative and conflicting acts, such as fights between parents, were seen as consequences of their actions. These children had less interest in social relationships and social initiatives.

According to Emery (2019), adolescents are the worst affected by divorce of their parents. Most of them find it difficult to adjust to the change. She added that some adolescents, due to failure to accept the change, abandon their home and opt to deal with the situation individually. Adolescents from single parent homes have challenges in expressing their emotions with the younger children being the most affected by this. Later in life, this leads to failure of handling relationship issues.

### A. *Theoretical Framework*

The psychoanalytic theory of identification was used to explain the variables in this study. Sigmund Freud (1917; 1932) saw identification as the process by which children take on the characteristics and match the behaviour of the parent of the same sex. He believed that the process plays an important role

in the development of moral standards, sex roles and social attitudes. Freud observed that identification resulted from children's psychosexual conflicts with, and attachment to their parents. Thus, a child identifies with the parent of the same sex as personality undergoes structural changes (Mullahy, 2018). According to Freud, the young male experiences sexual feelings towards the mother and desire to possess the mother sexually and that he father becomes a rival for the same affections, thus desires to rid self of the father. Freud called this *Oedipus* complex. The sexual attachment of the boy to the mother is defined as exclusivity and jealousy (Mullahy, 2018). However, the young boy later learns that a girl does not have a penis, assumes that it was cut off, and worries that the father will castrate him too if he discovers his desires. The young boy resolves such a dilemma and anxiety by identifying with the father and repressing own feeling towards the mother deep in the unconscious mind. On the other hand, the girl experiences what Freud calls penis envy (*Electra Complex*) and blames the mother for not having a penis, making the mother turn her affection and attention to their father (Mullahy, 2018). Eventually, however, the young girl resolves the anxiety by identifying with the mother and continues to build on the relationship she established before the Phallic stage (Chodorow, 2021). The relevance of the Psychoanalytic theory to the study is the identification with the same sex parent thus sex-typed behaviour is learned. Freud also explains how an infant's self-concept presumably grows out of social encounter with the parent and others during the first months of life. Hence the single parenting disadvantages a child in that he or she will lack identification with the parent who is absent. The child sees their family as lacking an essential member of the family since other families around have two parents and this may lower his or her self-esteem. The child may also lack to learn gender roles leading being poorly socialized so that interpersonal relationships might affected negatively.

**B. Conceptual Framework**

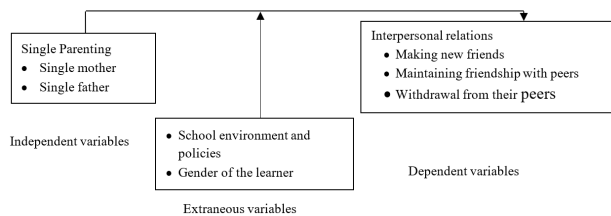


Fig. 1. The influence of Single Parenting on Student's Self-esteem, Interpersonal Relationships

This is a figure showing the relationship between the independent, the intervening and the dependent variables as an attempt to connect all aspects of the inquiry.

Figure 1 illustrates how single parenting, which is the independent variable, affects the dependent variables, which is

the learner's interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the extraneous variables, which the researcher has no control over, may also affect the dependent variables as well.

**3. Methodology**

**A. Location of the Study**

The study was carried out in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North sub-county, Embu county in Kenya.

**B. Research Design**

The researcher adopted the descriptive survey design.

**C. Study Population**

In this study, the target population was 1558, comprising of 1466 learners from 8 public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone and 92 teachers in those schools, as shown in the Table 2.

**D. Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

Purposive sampling was used to select 8 Public Day Secondary County Schools. Day schools were selected for the study because day school learners have contact with their parents on daily basis and the psychosocial effect under the study may be strongest in such learners. The target respondents are shown in table 3.

Table 2  
Summary of the sample size

	Number	Sample
Schools	8	8
Class teachers	30	30
Teacher Counsellors	8	8
Learners	1466	306
Total	1504	344

**E. Research Instruments**

Questionnaires and interview schedule were used to collect data.

**F. Reliability**

The reliability of the instruments was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 2019). A reliability coefficient of 0.7 and above was acceptable for the study, as recommended by Mugenda (2018). The reliability results are shown in Tables 4.

The results in Table 4 show that the study obtained a Cronbach Alpha of above 0.70 for all variables. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, and the nearer the coefficient is to one, the more the inner consistency. Cronbach (1951) recommended an acceptable minimum value of above 0.60. Therefore, data obtained by the current study was reliable. This means the study instrument can produce consistent results every time it is administered. The instrument's internal consistency was therefore considered to be satisfactory for further data analysis to meet the study's objectives

Table 3  
Results of reliability coefficients test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha coefficients		Comments
	Teachers	Learners	
Single Parenting and Learner's Self-Esteem	.773	.834	Reliable
Single Parenting and Learner's Interpersonal Relationships	.708	.727	Reliable
Single Parenting and Learner's Discipline	.763	.893	Reliable



Table 4

Perceived effect of single parenting and learner's interpersonal relationships (teachers' responses) relationships (teachers' responses)							
Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Family status of learners affects the ability to interact with others	27.7	40.0	9.3	10.7	12.3	2.40	1.324
Learners from single parent families like making friends despite their family background.	41.0	23.3	7.3	20.3	8.0	2.31	1.388
Learners from single parent families feel uncomfortable talking to age mates of the opposite gender	39.0	28.0	8.3	8.3	16.3	2.35	1.470
Learners from single parent families feel confident to stand in front of the class to make a presentation	31.0	30.0	15.3	12.7	11.0	2.43	1.336
Learners from single parent families like to stay alone most of the time	35.7	31.3	17.7	5.7	9.7	2.23	1.259
Learners from single parent families are afraid of making friends in school	30.0	24.7	16.3	17.3	11.7	2.56	1.378
The family status affects how learners from single parent families relate with fellow learners in school	22.0	29.0	19.7	19.0	10.3	2.67	1.291
Learners from single parent families feel a positive connection with other learners	31.0	38.0	19.3	7.3	4.3	2.16	1.079
Learners from single parent families feel that being in a single parent family is a disadvantage in social relationships	29.0	23.7	20.0	13.3	14.0	2.59	1.391
Aggregate	31.8	29.8	14.8	12.7	10.8	2.41	1.32

### G. Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used for data analysis. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were coded and entered into the computer for computation of descriptive statistics. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26.0) was used to run descriptive analyses to produce frequency distribution and percentages. Tables were also used to summarize data. The qualitative data generated from interview guide were categorized in themes in accordance with research objectives and reported in narrative form along with quantitative presentation. The qualitative data was used to reinforce the quantitative data. Inferential statistics such as chi-square was used to analyze data and the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

## 4. Research Findings and Discussions

To accomplish the objective the study sought descriptive statistics from both the learners and the teachers. Moreover, teacher counsellors were interviewed and inferential statistics were analysed to determine association between single parenting and learner's self-esteem. The results are presented in the subsequent sections.

### A. Perceived Effect of Single Parenting on Learner's Interpersonal Relationships (Teachers Responses)

The section presents the descriptive findings on the effect of single parenting on learner's interpersonal relationships from both the learners and the teachers. The respondents were tasked to rate their level of agreement on the extent to which single parenting affects learner's interpersonal relationships in terms of making new friends, maintaining friendship with peers and withdrawal from their peers. Several parameters were considered on a five point Likert scale rating where 1 was Strongly Agree (SA), 2 was Agree (A), 3 was Undecided (U), 4 was Disagree (D) and five was Strongly Disagree (SD). Table 4 presents the results from the class teachers' learners, while table 5 presents results from the learners; further interview results from the teacher counsellors are presented.

As shown in table 4 from the nine parameters evaluating respondents level of agreement with the impact of single parenting on the learner's interpersonal relationships the results shown that the majority (61.6%) respondents generally agreed on most statements with an aggregate of 61.6% (31.8-A)+

29.8SA) (Mean 2.41 and SD=1.32). Specifically, As 27.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 40% agreed, 10.7% disagreed and 12.3% strongly disagreed on the statement that family status of learners affects the ability to interact with others. On the following statement that learners from single parent families like making friends despite their family background 41% of the respondents strongly agreed, 23.3% agreed, 20.3% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed. On the statement that learners from single parent families feel uncomfortable talking to age mates of the opposite gender 39% of the respondents strongly agreed, 28% agree, 8.3% disagreed and 16.3% strongly disagreed. 31% of the respondents strongly agreed, 30% agreed, 12.7% disagreed and 11% strongly disagreed on the opinion that learners from single parent families feel confident to stand in front of the class to make a presentation. In addition, 35.7 % of the respondents strongly agreed, 31.3% agreed, 5.7% disagreed and 9.7% strongly disagreed on the view that learners from single parent families like to stay alone most of the time.

On the opinion that learners from single parent families are afraid of making friends in school 30% of the respondent's strongly agreed, 24.7% agreed, 17.3% disagreed and 11.7% strongly disagreed. 22% of the respondent's strongly agreed, 29% agreed, 19% disagreed and 10.3% strongly disagreed on the opinion that the family status affects how learners from single parent families relate with fellow learners in school. On the statement that learners from single parent families feel a positive connection with other learners, 31% of the respondents strongly agreed, 38% agreed, 7.3% disagreed, 4.3% strongly disagreed while 9.3% were undecided. Lastly, on the statement that learners from single parent families feel that being in a single parent family is a disadvantage in social relationship 52.7% agreed, 13.3% disagreed, 14% strongly disagreed while 20.3% were undecided.

### B. Perceived Effect of Single Parenting on Learner's Interpersonal Relationships (Learners Responses)

The results in table 5 show the learners descriptive analysis of single parenting and learner's interpersonal relationships.

These findings from students correspond with those of teachers. From the eight parameters evaluating respondents level of agreement with the impact of single parenting on the learner's interpersonal relationships the results shown that the majority (65.1%) respondents generally agreed on most

Table 5  
Perceived effects of single parenting and interpersonal relationships (earners' responses)

Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Learners from single parent families relate well with other learners	13.8	34.5	31.0	13.8	6.9	2.66	1.11
Most learners from single families feel that they are lonely	17.2	34.5	20.7	20.7	6.9	2.65	1.20
Most learners from single families are bullied by others	13.8	51.7	17.2	10.3	6.9	2.45	1.09
Many learners from single parent families do not like participating in co-curricular activities	34.5	31.0	20.7	6.9	6.9	2.21	1.21
Most learners from single families are rude	27.6	41.4	10.3	3.4	17.2	2.41	1.40
Learners from single parent families are able to start and maintain healthy social relations with learners from dual parent families	17.2	58.6	13.8	6.9	3.4	2.21	.94
Learners from single parent families make new friends easily	20.7	48.3	13.8	10.3	6.9	2.34	1.14
Learners from single parent families like being alone	34.5	41.4	3.4	10.3	10.3	2.21	1.32
Aggregate	22.4	42.7	16.4	10.3	8.2	2.34	1.17

statements with an aggregate of 65.1% (42.7-A)+16.4SA) (*Mean 2.34 and SD = 1.17*). Therefore, from the results obtained, it is evident that respondents agreed on most of the opinions provided. Specifically, On the statement that learners from single parent families relate well with other learners 48.3 % of the respondents agreed while 20.7% disagreed. Secondly, on the statement that most learners from single families feel that they are lonely 51.7% of the respondents agreed while 27.6% disagreed. 65.5% of the respondents agreed while 17.2% disagreed on the statement that most learners from single families are bullied by others. As noted from the results above, on the statement that many learners from single parent families do not like participating in co-curricular activities 65.5% agreed whereas 13.8 of the respondents disagreed. In addition, 69% of the respondents agreed while 20.6% disagreed on the statement that most learners from single families are rude. 75.8% of the respondents agreed while 10.3% of the respondents disagreed on the opinion that learners from single parent families are able to start and maintain healthy social relations with learners from dual parent families. On the statement that learners from single parent families make new friends easily 69% of the respondents agreed while 17.2 % disagreed. Lastly, on the opinion that learners from single parent families like being alone 75.9% of the respondents agreed while 20.6% disagreed.

The nature of the descriptive results from both the class teachers and the learners lead to the conclusion that single parenting affects the interpersonal relationships among learners in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu County in Kenya. This was because respondents were in a consensus agreement that single parenting was influential in interpersonal relationships among learners through making new friends, maintaining friendship with peers and withdrawal from their peers. Therefore, single parenting as noted by (Hetherington, 2019) indeed, paternal and maternal absences have negative impact on children. The impact of family type as determined by the current study and supported by literature by Coopersmith (2018) are crucial in, interpersonal relationships. In addition a study by Mendez (2020) concurs that learners raised by one-parent families have more difficulty relating due to poor interpersonal relationships skills.

### C. Thematic analysis on the Perceived Effect of Single Parenting on Learner's Interpersonal Relationships

The findings are also consistent with the findings from teacher counsellors' interviews. In response to the question

whether they encounter interpersonal relationship issues due to the family background of the learners. According to the interviewee A: Sometimes learners might be adversely affected by the background and therefore they become resistance to counselling. Most learners from single parents families bully one another due to their family background because most of them felt that they neglected, hated, disrespected because of that of that one parent missing. According to the interviewee B: Interpersonal relationship among the student is very common. Though guidance and counselling I am able to follow issues keenly and most of them have family background issues and resolution given. According to the interviewee C: Learners from single parent families have difficulties starting friendship with other students. Moreover, when there is no bullying they don't have difficulties but when they are bullied, they have issues with relationship. According to the interviewee D: They feel lonely and sometimes retreat especially when other learners sharing their stories about their parents. Sometimes they feel as if they are children of a lesser God hence making them hard to make friendship. Guidance and counselling are of great benefit to our learners in that it helps to relate well in the class, field hence enabling them do well in academics. According to the interviewee E: On whether children from single parent families are able to maintain relationships the interviewee responded that in a conducive environment where they are accepted, they can maintain relationship. These learners find it difficult to maintain relationship because most of them are rude and rough depending on how they have been brought especially most parents from this category over protect their children. According to the interviewee F: Most of the children from this category are not able to have relationship due to over protection and love given by their parents. Moreover, these learners are able to start and maintain relationship in school although a few have difficulties in maintaining relationship due to luck of role models. Teachers are like the second set of parents to learners. Therefore, guidance and counselling held in dealing with social issues in learners. With proper guidance on acceptance of our background some are friendly and other not. This takes effort to change them.

### D. Inferential Statistics of Single Parenting and Learner's Interpersonal Relationships

To further establish the association between single parenting and learner's interpersonal relationships; Family type and interpersonal relationships was cross tabulated and chi-square test were used to further analyze the data in order to establish the association between the variables. Table 6 provides results

Table 6  
Cross tabulation of single parenting and learner's interpersonal relationship

		Learner's Interpersonal Relationships		Total
		Yes	No	
Family Type	Single parent	22.3%	4.3%	26.7%
	Two parent family	57.0%	16.3%	73.3%
Total		79.3%	20.7%	100.0%

Table 7  
Single parenting and learner's interpersonal relationship (Chi Square)

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.298 <sup>a</sup>	1	.025		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.957	1	.028		
Likelihood Ratio	1.348	1	.046		
Fisher's Exact Test				.333	.164
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.294	1	.055		
N of Valid Cases	300				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 16.53.  
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

on cross tabulation between family type and learner's interpersonal relationships and table 7 provides the chi-square results on extent and significance value of relationship between family type and interpersonal relationships.

The results show that majority respondents 79.3% were of the view that learner's interpersonal relationships is affected by single parenthood. Only 20.7% of the respondents were of the view that learner's interpersonal relationships is not affected by being from a single parent family. From the results it can be concluded that learner's interpersonal relationships is really affected by the type of family. Table 7 presents the Chi Square interpretation of this finding.

Chi square results  $X^2(1)=1.298$ ,  $p=0.025$  showed that single parenting significantly influences learner's interpersonal relationship. The Chi-square test results determined that there was an association between single parenting and learner's interpersonal relationships in public day secondary. The value of Pearson chi square  $p(0.025 < 0.05)$  demonstrated statistical significance at the 0.05% level. Contingency Coefficient measure of Association (CC) illustrated that 12.5% of the total variance in learners' self-esteem could be attributed to type of family. This suggests that if single parents' families were reduced then we would have learners with enhanced interpersonal relationships in terms of making new friends, maintaining friendship with peers and less withdrawal from their peers. Since the p value (0.01) was less than 0.05, we may be certain that the observed relationship between the two variables is not merely coincidental.

Therefore, single parenting was found to influence learner's interpersonal relationships and therefore the conclusion that learners who have trouble making new friends, maintaining friendship with peers and those who often withdrawal from their peers can be associated with single parenting. This finding concurs with the study done by Derella and Milan (2021) in south Africa that suggested that the children's psychosocial wellbeing was affected by the single parent's mood. The study by Hetherington (2019) adds that single parent learners tended to be excessively anxious about sexuality and as shy and uncomfortable around males. The assertions by Coopersmith (2018) that family type is crucial for child's self-view, interpersonal relationships has been proved by the empirical

results of the current study. This is in tandem with the findings of McLanahan and Booth (2019) who in a study found that learners from one-parent homes tend to have more problems in school among them poor discipline and poor interpersonal relationships due to a poor economic background. The study by Derella and Milan (2021) was a critical review of Coopersmith (2018) who studied adults while the current studies focused on learners in secondary schools.

The results emphasize the significance of upbringing, specifically single parenting to a learner's interpersonal relationship. This is in agreement with the postulates of the social - learning (social - cognitive) theory of identification by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory posited that behaviour of learners is also affected by reinforcement from others. By being reinforced for some behaviour and not reinforced or perhaps even punished for others, a child learns socially approved behaviour. According to Mandara and Murray (2009), Single parenting is associated with the risk of a number of negative social, behaviour and emotional outcomes for children. The two argued that single parenting has adverse mental, emotional, psychological and social effects on the child and this has been validated and advocated by psychologists from time to time. They also found out that single parents commonly experience difficulties with role identity. Some social stigma is attached to single parenting and the children from those families are psychologically affected. According to Emery (2019), adolescents are the worst affected by divorce of their parents. Most of them find it difficult to adjust to the change. She added that some adolescents, due to failure to accept the change, abandon their home and opt to deal with the situation individually. Adolescents from single parent homes have challenges in expressing their emotions with the younger children being the most affected by this. Later in life, this leads to failure of handling relationship issues.

## 5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

### A. Summary of the Findings

The objective of the study was to determine the perceived effect of single parenting on interpersonal relationships among learners in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone,



Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu County in Kenya. Descriptive statistics on the objective determined that both teachers and learners were generally in agreement with various statements indicating that single parenting affected the learner's interpersonal relationships. These findings were backed up by six teacher counsellors' interviewees who concurred that single parenting affected the learner's interpersonal relationships through influencing learners' ability of making new friends, maintaining friendship with peers and withdrawal from their peers. The cross tabulation and chi-square results pointed out that there was an association between single parenting and the learner's interpersonal relationships, whereas the corresponding result for the Contingency Coefficient measure of Association determined that the total variance in learners' self-esteem could be attributed to type of family. Therefore, the variations in the learner's interpersonal relationships can be explained by single parenting.

### B. Conclusions of the Study

Basing on the finding of the objective that there is statistically significant association between single parenting and interpersonal relationships among learners in public day secondary schools in Ishiara Zone, Mbeere North Sub-county, Embu County in Kenya. The study concludes that public secondary schools have to adopt proactive creation of school cultures that accommodate learners from all family types in order to succeed in encouraging interpersonal relations through making new friends, maintaining friendship with peers and withdrawal from their peers.

### C. Recommendations

The study recommends that school administrators in public day secondary schools should deliberately introduce, sustain and continually improve measures that may assist learners from all types of families to adjust socially, boost their self-esteem thus arresting the situation and tapping the would-be wasted talents in learners. Teachers, and counsellors and other stakeholders should be trained to provide appropriate guidance, be accommodative and on personal and psychological issues those learners from single parent families face in order to improve the interpersonal relationships between the learners. Public day secondary schools should organise cross cutting and multi stakeholders seminar/workshop/capacity building programs and organized activities that will equip parents, teachers, non-teaching staff with appropriate skills and knowledge on effect of single parent families on learners disciplinary matters.

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