

The Influence of Perceived Economic Benefits on Single Parenting among Unmarried Mothers in Nigeria



Temitope J. Owolabi¹  & Tendayi C. Garutsa² 

¹ Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

² Department of Sociology, North-West University, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

This study, with a specific emphasis on the lived experiences of single mothers, explored the perceived economic advantages of single parenting among Nigerian single women. The study tackled the growing apprehensions over the financial difficulties encountered by families headed by single mothers, highlighting the growing number of low-income families in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. The study employed a combination of qualitative (Key Informant Interview) and quantitative (Survey) methods to investigate their viewpoints on the financial benefits of being a single parent. The theoretical framework explained the intricate relationship between socioeconomic issues and single parenting by integrating social exchange theory and rational adaptation theory. 450 respondents participated in the quantitative study, while 30 respondents were selected for the qualitative study. According to data collected, single mothers frequently enter into several partnerships to obtain a variety of financial support for both themselves and their children. The study emphasized asset accumulation and emotional benefits as ways that single mothers can reduce poverty in addition to financial rewards. The study further highlighted the significance of social protection frameworks and all-encompassing initiatives aimed at tackling the distinct obstacles encountered by single mothers, eventually promoting the welfare of mothers and their offspring in an emerging country such as Nigeria.

Correspondence

Temitope J. Owolabi

Email:

jtowolabi@unilag.edu.ng

Publication History

Received: 22nd January, 2024

Accepted: 21st March, 2024

Published online:

3rd May, 2024

Keywords: *Single Mothers, Economic Benefits, Low-income Families, Social Protection*

INTRODUCTION

Around 40% of single-mother families in Africa were reported to be living in poverty in 2016.¹ This finding raises the possibility that the percentage of low-income single-mother homes will continue to increase. Single-parent parents are more likely than other families to have consistently low incomes, and their periods of hardship are among the longest, according to a longitudinal investigation.² With specific reference to Nigeria, the single parents' population is vast and rapidly increasing.³ This has attracted

¹ O. Odumosu, "Impact of Economic Recession on Marital Stability in the Southwest, Ibadan," *Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research NISER 2* (2017): 9–38.

² A. Otite and P. Ogonwo, *Problems of Culture in Africa* (Ibadan: Opex, 2016).

³ Gay C Kitson and Leslie A Morgan, "The Multiple Consequences of Divorce: A Decade Review," *Journal of Marriage and Family 52*,

widespread concerns and attention from development experts and critical stakeholders in the country because of the disadvantaged position that single mothers are placed in, especially from an economic point of view. In Africa, divorce rates and the expansion of single-mother households are comparable to those in other Western nations. Since divorce rules were loosened in 1965, especially in the Western world, divorce rates have been gradually increasing.⁴ Economic hardships have thus made these trends worse since women have extremely low remarriage rates,⁵ even if they have lately been growing, and non-marital births have been rising quickly.⁶

In recent times, the entire workspace has accommodated more women into paid employment. For example, Ntoimo and Mutanda discovered that around 70% of women of working age are employed in Africa.⁷ This is also associated with the fact that women had higher levels of education than males. These were made possible because of the state's policies, especially in guaranteeing equality of females with other males and ensuring the independence and rights of women. A notable example of the latter is the legalization of abortion. Aside from this, reforms that carved a comprehensive program for the vulnerable in society including those targeting single mothers and their children in social welfare programs were instituted.

Thus, the trend is changing. Single mothers participate in the job market at a higher rate than married women. According to data, married women with children have a lower participation rate in the workforce than single mothers do.⁸ This demonstrates that, compared to 71% of mothers in nuclear families, 80% of single mothers who are raising children are actively employed. Therefore, single mothers may devote more time to working. Because of this, they devote more time to their jobs, increasing their earnings and returns.⁹

This study aims to find out the perceived economic benefits of single parenting among unmarried women in Nigeria. The following section will review the relevant literature aligned with the objective of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humans are rational beings who need to make decisions for survival in society. This basically informs the role of the economic system in the actualization of this.¹⁰ Economic advantage, according to Perry-Jenkins, is a reward that may be substantial and in the form of money and material benefits.¹¹ The economy knows no bounds, making survival applicable to both genders. This is why empowering women economically is just as crucial as empowering men since it is essential to achieving gender equality and advancing women's rights.¹²

Asset accumulation is viewed as a means of escaping hardship, and it is crucial to take into account a person's economic situation.¹³ When utilized in this sense, the term "asset" often refers to conventional, private, financial, and productive resources as well as positions that give single mothers economic advantages due to geography, social status, and market access.¹⁴ The function of assets is fundamental to

no. 4 (1990): 913.

⁴ J. J. Macionis, *Society: The Basics*, 8th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2016).

⁵ Maria Ivers, "Journey to Resilience: Impactful Relationships and Supports of Adults with a History of Childhood Adversity" (Southern New Hampshire University, 2022).

⁶ Otite and Ogionwo, *Problems of Culture in Africa*.

⁷ Lorretta Favour Chizomam Ntoimo and Nyasha Mutanda. "Demography of single parenthood in Africa: patterns, determinants and consequences." *Family demography and post-2015 development agenda in africa* (2020): 147-169.

⁸ Odumosu, "Impact of Economic Recession on Marital Stability in the Southwest, Ibadan."

⁹ Melissa S Jones and Hayley Pierce, "Early Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Youth Delinquent Behavior in Fragile Families," *Youth & Society* 53, no. 5 (2021): 841–67.

¹⁰ Dries Van Gasse and Dimitri Mortelmans, "With or without You—Starting Single-Parent Families: A Qualitative Study on How Single Parents by Choice Reorganise Their Lives to Facilitate Single Parenthood from a Life Course Perspective," *Journal of Family Issues* 41, no. 11 (2020): 2223–48.

¹¹ Maureen Perry-Jenkins and Naomi Gerstel, "Work and Family in the Second Decade of the 21st Century," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82, no. 1 (2020): 420–53.

¹² Chris M Herbst, "The Rising Cost of Child Care in the United States: A Reassessment of the Evidence," *Economics of Education Review* 64 (2018): 13–30.

¹³ Caroline Moser, "Asset-Based Approaches to Poverty Reduction in a Globalized Context," *Global Economy and Development Working Paper*, no. 01 (2006).

¹⁴ Glory E Edet and Nsikak-Abasi A Etim, "Poverty and Gender Inequality in Asset Ownership among Households in Southern Nigeria," *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2014).

understanding changes in welfare outcomes, according to modern sociology of development theories and studies. Evidence from the 2015 Global Monitoring Report shows that the ownership of the assets by single mothers to which they have access is significant since assets may help decrease vulnerability, a significant aspect of poverty. There is ample proof that having assets may assist offer insurance against shocks, decrease feelings of insecurity, and frequently reduce risk-averse behavior and dependence on more damaging coping mechanisms. All of these typically require having fewer assets, such as withdrawing children from school. In many countries, single mothers may not have recourse to enough resources, which reduces their capacity to deal with susceptibility.

Likewise, assets have a significant impact on what single women may do in terms of earning and several other consequences.¹⁵ For instance, single mothers who have more assets are frequently better equipped to increase their income and, as a result, take part in more activities that support economic growth. This report also pointed out that they are better equipped to defend themselves against unfavorable economic circumstances since they have better access to finance. There is no denying that women have a far lower capacity to accumulate money and assets than males. This was explicitly justified in explaining why most households headed by single mothers experience persistent poverty.¹⁶ A key factor in determining a household's and an individual's longer-term prospects is their access to tangible and intangible assets. When permanent income drops below the poverty line or asset holdings fall below a key level, a decline in current spending is frequently perceived to have a structural component, which is more concerning.¹⁷ A nation's development and economic growth are hampered in one way or another by household poverty, which is caused by the crippled rights of women, which have naturally limited their ability to accumulate assets and riches.

In response to the global need for protection from specific life dangers and social needs, social protection is a human right. Efficient social security systems ensure health and financial stability, which helps to prevent and reduce poverty and inequality and to advance inclusivity and human dignity. They do this by offering benefits, in cash or in kind, that are meant to guarantee access to medical care and health services as well as financial security throughout a person's life, especially in the event of an ailment, joblessness, workplace injury, maternity, family commitments, incapacity, and the death of the family head of the household, as well as during retirement and old age.

It was claimed that social security helps to increase productivity, employability, and economic development.¹⁸ Social security assists businesses and employers in retaining a steady workforce that can adjust to change.¹⁹ Finally, guaranteeing good living conditions for all strengthens social cohesion and so contributes to the development of social harmony, inclusive communities, and a fair effect of globalization.

Future development potential is jeopardized by the low expenditure levels in low-income and lower-middle-income countries like Nigeria, many of which do not offer any benefits for either single mothers or their children. Single mothers are financially handicapped because they take care of their children all alone. This is worsened when adequate social protection and services are not available to cushion this effect; and if funding for children's social protection of single mothers is not increased, it is unlikely that the SDGs on children will be achieved.²⁰ A nation like Nigeria must take the initiative to look into all available financial options to promote the well-being of single mothers and their children.

For a developing nation like Nigeria, developing human capital is a huge task.²¹ Given how far behind the world as a whole is and how much time and effort it would take to catch up with them, this is

¹⁵ UN Women, "Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," 2018, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/2/gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018>.

¹⁶ Erin Ruel and Robert M Hauser, "Explaining the Gender Wealth Gap," *Demography* 50, no. 4 (2013): 1155–76.

¹⁷ Morenike O Adetunji, "Determinant of Urban Poverty in Osun State Nigeria," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business* 3, no. 11 (2012): 261–81.

¹⁸ Sebastian Gechert, Christoph Paetz, and Paloma Villanueva, "The Macroeconomic Effects of Social Security Contributions and Benefits," *Journal of Monetary Economics* 117 (2021): 571–84.

¹⁹ Biljana Todorova, "New Forms "of Employment, A Challenge for Social Security System," in *Proceedings Of The 5th International Conference on New Findings On Humanities and Social Sciences* (Diamond Scientific Publishing, 2020), 1–13.

²⁰ Sri Wening Handayani, "Closing the Gap: Potential Contribution of Social Assistance for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals," 2017.

²¹ Christian K Chikwe, Reuben C Ogidi, and K Nwachukwu, "Challenges of Research and Human Capital Development in Nigeria.," *Journal of Education and Practice* 6, no. 28 (2015): 44–47.

to be expected. The proportion of single mothers in the workforce has increased, and with it have come new risks and challenges in juggling and managing their roles in their roles at work and in their families.²² As documented in a report by McKinsey, more than one in four women are reportedly thinking about leaving their jobs or downgrading their careers.²³ This demonstrates the serious issues with keeping these single mothers in the workforce.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on two sociological theories which explained the relationship between socioeconomic factors and single parenting. These theories complement each other in explaining the concept of single parenting. They are Social Exchange Theory and Rational Adaptation Theory.

The Rational Adaptation Theory argues that sexuality and pregnancy are used as strategies by young females to achieve financial stability. For example, transactional sex is used with older males to cope with poverty. Some adopt this rational adaptation by engaging in sexual activity without the desire to get pregnant. This is solely aimed at paying their bills and school fees²⁴ while others utilize childbearing as a logical adaptation method in and of itself. This will help them to increase their chances of getting married.²⁵ Recent research has revealed that these females can get married because of pregnancy, despite studies showing that the likelihood of getting married might be decreased as a result of giving birth outside of marriage.²⁶

The Social Exchange Theory holds that social conduct results from an exchange connection. The initial social exchange theory's applicability in family science was inspired by sociological publications,²⁷ which focused on the rational evaluation of self-interest in human social relationships. The concept of the theory may well be viewed as a basic economic paradigm for social interactions. The primary principle of the theory is that people behave in social circumstances in a way that increases their likelihood of succeeding in their objectives. A connection between Social Exchange Theory and single parenting demonstrates that, depending on the adult's social standing, being a single parent may have both higher costs and higher levels of rewards as compared to those who do not. By subgroups of marital status and gender, single parents have different costs and benefits. Findings show that having children is not only related to improved mental health in terms of depression for married women but it is also connected with increased expenses in terms of more housework and arguments with husbands.

The Social Exchange Theory holds that as people communicate over time, they develop a need to return the other person's support and aid, which is known as the reciprocity norm. For instance, if someone helps a person, he or she will feel obligated to repay the favor at a later date by providing aid of a comparable value. If the reciprocity rule is followed, a trustworthy and enduring relationship develops.²⁸ In this situation, there will be a duty to repay the government if it helps single parents by providing for their children's fundamental necessities (healthcare, education, and shelter) (Give back to society what you have been given). The responsibility to raise their children in a way that will benefit society and to raise a generation of law-abiding, crime-free citizens is therefore paramount in their plans.

Consequently, there will be a reduction in the cycle of fatherlessness or separation in marriage (single parenting except in cases of death) and criminality. This will also bring about the desired stability in marriage and family structure. Therefore, society will be more at peace with individuals trying to see how they can benefit (give back) the government rather than what the government can give to them, especially in a society like Nigeria where everything seems to be in the hands of the government.

²² Temitope Joshua Owolabi and Kayode Agbolahan Ajibose, "Work-Family Conflict: Coping Strategies to Optimise Healthy Living and Wellbeing among Career Couples in Lagos Metropolis," *Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 9, no. 8 (2019): 54–61.

²³ Emily Field et al., "Women in the Workplace," 2023, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>.

²⁴ Bruce J Ellis et al., "Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy?," *Child Development* 74, no. 3 (2003): 801–21.

²⁵ L. Richter, *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007).

²⁶ Monica J Grant and Kelly K Hallman, "Pregnancy-related School Dropout and Prior School Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa," *Studies in Family Planning* 39, no. 4 (2008): 369–82.

²⁷ P. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964); George C Homans, *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

²⁸ Mathew Hayward, Richard Hunt, and Danny Miller, "How Vulnerability Enriches Family Firm Relationships: A Social Exchange Perspective," *Journal of Family Business Strategy* 13, no. 1 (2022): 100450.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed method approach, that is, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods to examine the perceived economic benefits of single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria. While various qualitative methods like phenomenology and ethnography exist,²⁹ they may not be suitable for this research due to their focus on broader experiences. Phenomenology explores individual experiences of a phenomenon.³⁰ Ethnography examines the way of life of a culture or social group.³¹ A narrative approach was deemed more aligned with the study's goals, focusing on personal experiences and interpretations.³² The study aimed to collect perspectives of single mothers, making narrative research apt for exploring their experiences and perceived economic benefits of single parenting.

For the qualitative method, key informant interviews were utilized, as a result, 30 respondents were selected purposively from a group of single mothers. For the quantitative study, 450 respondents were selected randomly from a group of single mothers on Facebook. The justification for the utilisation of this platform was the need to reach a wider audience because they demonstrated a rich and robust online presence. An advert was initially placed on "The Community of Single Mothers" group, and eligible participants, unmarried mothers with at least one child, residing in Nigeria and aged over 18, were selected using a random number generator. The study focused on women who had given birth but were never married, excluding those due to divorce or spousal death.

Participants participated voluntarily, providing informed consent; for the qualitative study, the first 30 respondents were selected based on interest. Interviews were conducted through media platforms like Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom, with questions arranged in a semi-structured format. On the other hand, 450 respondents were recruited from a group of single mothers through Facebook. Ethical clearance from the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) was obtained, ensuring the accuracy and trustworthiness of results through consistent data analysis and ethical considerations.

For the qualitative study, thematic analysis was employed to analyse, examine and interpret the meaning and themes within the data collected from single mothers. Firstly, a variety of textual data was gathered to ensure a range of opinions from the respondents. Afterward, this was coded into themes to capture the insights that aligned with the research questions. While for the quantitative study, data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. For the former, tables and simple bar charts were used to explain the data collected. For the latter, the Chi-square test and regression analysis were used to explore the relationship between perceived economic benefits and single parenting among unmarried mothers.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Perceived Economic Benefits and Single Parenting

Some of the female respondents admitted financial benefits from their current living situation, in which they gather some cash and material goods for their child's or children's upkeep and so profit from such resources. These are presented in this section with the following themes (Table 1)

Table 1. Identification of themes from responses

Objective	Sub-Theme for Analysis
Perceived economic benefits of single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria	Single parenting, dating multiple partners, and numerous income possibilities
	Dating multiple partners for economic gains

Source: Authors (2022)

²⁹ Nollaig Frost and Deborah Bailey-Rodriguez, "Doing Qualitatively Driven Mixed Methods and Pluralistic Qualitative Research," *Enjoying Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Research*, 2020, 137–60.

³⁰ Sophia Lin et al., "Curated Collections for Educators: Nine Key Articles and Article Series for Teaching Qualitative Research Methods," *AEM Education and Training* 7, no. 2 (2023): e10862.

³¹ Claudette Duggins, "Understanding Lived Experiences of Correctional Officers' Reintegration Back Into The Work Environment Post-Assault," 2023.

³² Ana María Téllez-López et al., "Methodological-Theoretical Approach to Phenomenological Studies on the Experience of Medication Use: A Systematic Review," *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* 19, no. 6 (2023): 845–58.

Single parenting, dating multiple partners and numerous income possibilities

Due to the constrained economic situation of Nigeria, there has been the need to seek multiple streams of income to cushion this effect. Most people employ various means to sustain their families, and single mothers are not left out. This was supported by single mothers when asked if it was a worthy venture to have several sources or streams of income. Basically, the majority, representing 86.7% agreed to this fact because it enables single mothers to achieve financial independence and have the capacity to cater for their needs and that of their children if the need arises (see Figure 1 below).

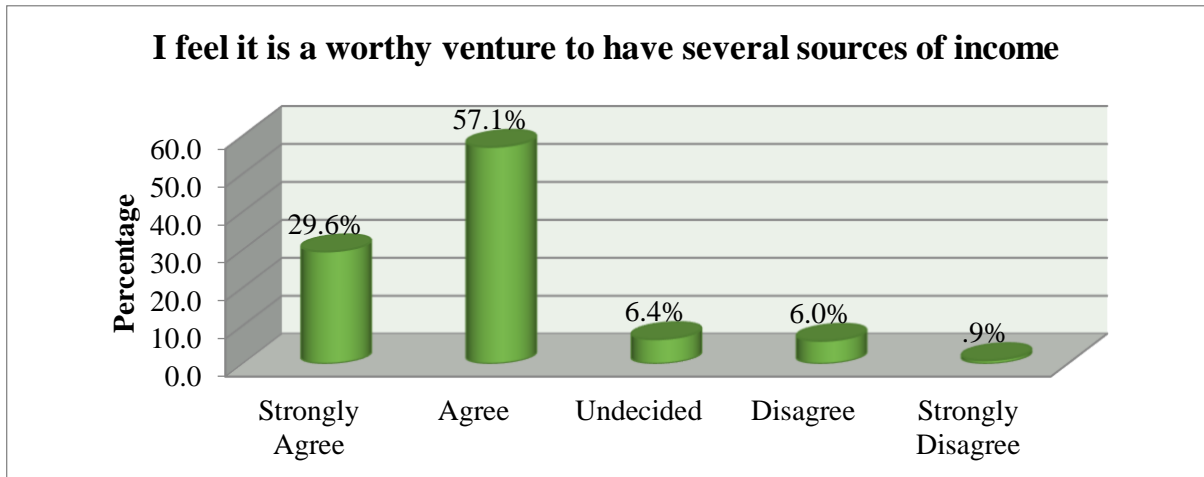


Figure 1. The worthiness of having several streams of income
Source: Authors (2022)

Against this backdrop of the need to have multiple sources of income, some single mothers who participated in this study expressed the following:

“I am a teacher, and there are other avenues where I get money to fend for my children. I know there is no support from the fathers of my children, so I had to come to my senses” (Interviewee No. 14, January 2022)

“Going by the economic realities of Nigeria, depending on one’s source of income would lead to (...a...) heart attack because your take-home pay is not capable of taking you home. Tell me, how do you survive? Best thing is to look for side hustles to complement what you do. I am a living example of this” (Interviewee No. 26, February 2022).

As noted by the respondents, a reward that comes in the form of money or other financial advantages is called an economic benefit. They also held the opinion that financial advantages encourage women to have only one child. This is explained by the idea that because people are rational beings, they engage in and interact with other people in society for their private gain. Based on the research, some mothers decided to stay at home with their children just to receive financial and material benefits from their husbands. Even if this philosophy is only held by a small number of participants, those who supported this action said:

“Men are not worth suffering for. I have three children from three different men who provide financial assistance to me and their various children. As a single mother, it pays me, because I have access to this money collected for my children and I can use it as I like. Well, it is stigmatizing, but I don’t care what people say. I am happy as I am” (Interviewee No. 4, January 2022)

“My desire was to have children for a man who is so rich and I don’t have to be married to him. All I wanted was for him to take care of my children and pump more money into my account. I have achieved this, and I am presently living alone with my children and their father has been a

responsible man. I don't care what anyone feels about my status, because I am very happy” (Interviewee No. 19, February 2022)

“The father of my children was very rich at the time I met him, so his wealth attracted me to him. I got pregnant for him, just to tie him down. I had a baby boy for him and he was very happy. Little did I know that he had a family abroad. He relocated back to his family in London. He called me from there that he wouldn't be returning to Nigeria. He sent money a few times and finally stopped sending us money. I had to carry my cross alone. My boy is 15 years old now; I really regret this lifestyle” (Interviewee No. 21, February 2022).

Based on these findings, one can comprehend how women accept single parenting due to the changing meanings associated with family. These roles have become less important in modern society, which has forced women to turn to single parenting as a result of their increasing independence.

Dating multiple partners for economic gains

Findings from Table 2 below show that 55% of the respondents reported that they dated multiple partners for economic gains. While 10.4% were undecided, 34.7% disagreed with the notion that they currently have more than one partner.

Table 2. Single mothers having more than one partner

I currently have more than one partner	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	89	19.8
Agree	158	35.1
Undecided	47	10.4
Disagree	125	27.8
Strongly Disagree	31	6.9
Total	450	100.0

Source: Authors (2022)

Some responses that were captured to validate this are:

“I cannot kill myself because of any useless man. I have two children from a man, for the past six months, he has not sent any upkeep for his children, and he will be enjoying with his wife. Well, I had to talk to my senses by having some men friends who are quite generous to give me money to fend for myself and my children” (Interviewee No. 8, January 2022).

“It is not easy having to depend on one man. How much is my salary? Nigeria is not even helping matters. If you go abroad, there are numerous social care programs and child support platforms that single mothers benefit from. What did I do, of course, I am still in my mid-30s, so, I have both single and married guys who pursue after me. Though not all of them crave sex, at least we hang out and they give me money” (Interviewee No. 12, January 2022).

“I do not see anything bad in having more than one. To be honest, I am sexually active, and I have like 3 married men I date. We have nothing to lose, it's just fun and I use them as a means to survive” (Interviewee No. 13, January 2022)

“I am just a civil servant earning a minimum wage which cannot cater for just my transportation, talk less of feeding and the upkeep of my three children. Yes, I have three children for two different men, they have both been so useless that they hardly send money for their children's school fees. I don't know how men are just so useless like this. Let me be honest with you, I am still marketable, so I have male friends, most especially politicians that I date and they assist and support me financially” (Interviewee No. 19, February 2022).

These views are in tangent with the economic benefits this objective (relationship between single parenting and perceived economic benefits) attempts to explain because as they are entangled with different men at the same time, they not only benefit financially, but they also meet their emotional needs which are lacking because of their status (single mothers).

Chi-square test on the relationship between the perceived economic benefits and single parenting among unmarried mothers

This result was also justified in the Chi-Square test (please see Table 2 below) conducted to examine the relationship between perceived economic benefits and single parenting among unmarried mothers. This hypothetical statement used the following:

H₀: There is no relationship between perceived economic benefits and single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria

H₁: There is a relationship between perceived economic benefits and single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria.

Table 2. Chi-Square result showing the relationship between perceived economic benefits and single parenting

		I feel content with being a single mother					Total
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Apart from financial gains, there are numerous benefits I get from being a single parent	Strongly Agree	34 7.6%	8 1.8%	7 1.6%	14 3.1%	25 5.6%	88 19.6%
	Agree	22 4.9%	59 13.1%	24 5.3%	40 8.9%	18 4.0%	163 36.2%
	Undecided	3 0.7%	7 1.6%	26 5.8%	37 8.2%	20 4.4%	93 20.7%
	Disagree	3 0.7%	21 4.7%	14 3.1%	44 9.8%	7 1.6%	89 19.8%
	Strongly Disagree	2 0.4%	6 1.3%	1 0.2%	5 1.1%	3 0.7%	17 3.8%
	Total	64 14.2%	101 22.4%	72 16.0%	140 31.1%	73 16.2%	450 100.0%
	X ² = 133.544; df= 16; Sig=<.000						

Source: Authors (2022)

The Chi-Square Table 2 above shows the test between perceived economic benefits and single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria. Perceived economic benefits (Independent variable) were measured using the question – "...apart from financial gains, there are numerous benefits I get from being a single parent" while single parenting (dependent variable) was measured by the question – "...I feel contented with being a single mother". Therefore, if this value is similar to or lower than the set alpha level, the result is significant (normally .05). With a Chi-Square value of 133.544 and a degree of freedom (df) of 16, we can rule out the null hypothesis in this situation and accept the alternative, which states that there is a connection between unmarried mothers' perceptions of economic benefits and their decision to raise their children alone.

Binary Logistic Regression Results**Table 3. Logistics Regression Table**

Variable		Odds Ratio	p>z	95% Conf.	Interval
Family background	Grew up with both parents	1			
	Grew up with a single parent	1.450348	0.047	1.005511	2.09198
Perceived economic benefits	Receive social security	1			
	Does not receive social security	1.8903278	0.535	0.6167527	1.285254

Source: Authors (2022)

The logistics regression table 3 above revealed the adjusted odds ratios of the selected independent variables on single parenting. Girls who grew up with single mothers and in single-parent homes are 45% with 95% confidence (1.005511 to 2.09198) more likely to become single mothers, compared to those who grew up with both parents, holding age, educational level, and perceived economic benefits constant. Overall, findings from the study indicated that female children who grew up in single-parent families, also turn out to be single mothers. With a 95% confidence level, it was shown that these girls are 45% more likely to be single mothers compared to those who lived with both parents while growing up.

It can also be shown from this table that women who did not receive any form of social security or benefits are 89% with 95% confidence (0.6167527 to 1.285254) are more likely to be single mothers, compared to women who receive social security/benefits; hold family background, age, and educational level constant. Social benefits in Nigeria exist, but only on the pages of newspapers; that is, there are plans put in place for these, but they are never implemented due to the level of inefficiency of the government and lack of accurate data to capture single mothers and other vulnerable groups in Nigeria. Ideally, the vulnerable groups should have an effective social register with the government, and single mothers should be beneficiaries. This support can take various forms. While this system has not been adequate enough, some social outlets like religious institutions and NGOs have taken up this responsibility to provide social security and benefits to single mothers. This study shows that when single mothers do not have opportunities to get social security, there is a higher likelihood that they will opt for several partners because of the feeling of being independent. As a result, they get multiple streams of income to continuously cater for themselves and their children.

DISCUSSION

Perceived economic benefits contribute to single parenting among unmarried mothers in Nigeria. Single mothers have different avenues and outlets where they get support from, aside from the responsibility of the fathers of their children and what they get from their lovers. Financial aid is common in terms of these benefits, but the study identified other benefits like assets (land, buildings, etc), romance which make them fulfil their love needs, and childcare support).

Findings from the study revealed that a reason why some women may decide to continue living single lives while having children is the perceived economic rewards as stated by some participants. Results are in line with an earlier study by Victor who argues that utilizing numerous streams of income enables greater stability and safety for single mothers, and ultimately, ensures a fulfilled life.³³ Apart from the fact that this was evident in this study, as responses from the interviews show that women have children for more than two men; it was also shown that single mothers have the capabilities to take care of their children without the presence of any man.

³³ H Victor, "Tenacity and Welfare on the Road to Elsewhere: One Woman's Efforts to Make Stable Life from Marikana Informal Settlement, Potchefstroom, South Africa" (2021).

The findings further showed that unmarried single mothers dated multiple men for economic benefits. However, there was a deviation to the assertion of unmarried single mothers as discovered in this study. For instance, a previous study by Jasmine and Nduna linked this approach of getting multiple partners for economic benefits with the socialization process.³⁴ Some unmarried, single mothers had mothers who had several partners while they were young, and as a result, they developed their mothers' romantic past. People are more likely to live with several love partners or have multiple marriages if their mothers have done so. Other single mothers who have several partners may find that this makes them completely content even though they have no wish to get married. Similarly, previous studies have demonstrated that children of single mothers who engage in multiple partnering experiences are more likely to do the same because they tend to imitate their parents and enter into relationships with lower levels of commitment.³⁵

This has already been established in the economic hardship theory; by implication, as unmarried single mothers partner with several men, economic resources increase,³⁶ therefore, exiting the poverty bracket and their initial level of being poor.³⁷ Currently, the majority of unmarried single mothers in Nigeria, as reflected in this study are young, making it possible for them to have increased opportunities for multiple partnerships to build and drive their economic conditions.

Economic hardship for mother-only families is the most severe result of single parenting, particularly when they are less educated and exclusively reliant on resources. However, in Nigeria, child support is non-existent,³⁸ and if at all, money is being paid by the noncustodial parent (father) to the custodial parent (mother) toward the support of their children. This is either not done regularly or it does not offset the economic deprivation experienced by these single mothers.

Worse still, they constitute a majority of the poor and are often the poorest of the poor.³⁹ They are also socially disadvantaged and face inequality as women, which shapes their experience of poverty differently from that of men. With the fact that these single mothers retain custody in the majority of cases, in a bid to survive, they would go for multiple partners.⁴⁰

Findings are also in line with Ben-Willie et al. who gave a sociological explanation of primary socialization as the process of acquiring the values and principles which set the foundation and groundwork for subsequent socialization.⁴¹ By implication, as these grow and socialize into this type of family, they tend to live with the ideology of a single mother, which they take through their adulthood. Sometimes, these learnings might not be from their immediate families, it could also be engendered through secondary socialization agents (like someone they know, or some members of their immediate or extended families.⁴²

SUMMARY

Findings show that single mothers dating multiple partners are driven primarily by the goal of securing diverse sources of financial support to meet both their immediate needs and those of their children. Beyond the evident financial and economic advantages, the research also highlighted additional benefits, including

³⁴ Umme Habiba Jasmine and Mzikazi Nduna, "Parenting in Bangladesh: A Review of the Literature from 2006 to 2018," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 53, no. 1 (2022): 76–103.

³⁵ Lucinda Soltero-González and Cristina Gillanders, "Rethinking Home-School Partnerships: Lessons Learned from Latinx Parents of Young Children during the COVID-19 Era," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 49, no. 5 (2021): 965–76; Tania A Reynolds, "Our Grandmothers' Legacy: Challenges Faced by Female Ancestors Leave Traces in Modern Women's Same-Sex Relationships," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 51, no. 7 (2022): 3225–56.

³⁶ Nevena Kulic and Giulia M Dotti Sani, "Within-Couple Distribution of Economic Resources. A Critical Review of Extant Studies and Avenues for Future Research," *Rassegna Italiana Di Sociologia* 61, no. 3 (2020): 623–50.

³⁷ Susan Harkness, "The Accumulation of Economic Disadvantage: The Influence of Childbirth and Divorce on the Income and Poverty Risk of Single Mothers," *Demography* 59, no. 4 (2022): 1377–1402.

³⁸ Oluwadamilola A Adejumo et al., "Experience of Gender-Based Violence by Internally Displaced Women in Southern Nigeria: A Cross-Sectional Study," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 15–16 (2022): NP12794–819.

³⁹ UNDP, "25 Countries Halved Multidimensional Poverty Within 15 Years, but 1.1 Billion Remain Poor," 2023, <https://www.undp.org/press-releases/25-countries-halved-multidimensional-poverty-within-15-years-11-billion-remain-poor>.

⁴⁰ Judith Lewis, "The Stability Paradox: The Two-Parent Paradigm and the Perpetuation of Violence against Women in Termination of Parental Rights and Custody Cases," *Mich. J. Gender & L.* 27 (2020): 311.

⁴¹ Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo et al., "Primary Religious Socialization Agents and Young Adults' Understanding of Religion: Connections and Disconnections," *Religion* 49, no. 2 (2019): 179–200.

⁴² Warunee Fongkaew, "Gender Socialization and Female Sexuality in Northern Thailand," in *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia* (Routledge, 2020), 147–64.

emotional support, aligning more closely with fulfilling the emotional and sexual requirements of these single mothers. Despite their status as single parents, there is a clear indication that they harbor social needs for love and companionship, extending beyond their relationship with their children. These emotional benefits serve as a means for them to confide in a partner. Furthermore, there is a notable aspect of asset accumulation that these single mothers perceive as a strategy to alleviate poverty or enhance overall welfare.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, the study recommends that the government must enhance and broaden social safety programs designed especially for single mothers in Nigeria, given their economic vulnerability. To lessen their financial responsibilities, this may entail providing them with specialized financial aid, health support, and educational advantages.

Government and non-governmental groups should also endeavor to provide job placement assistance, entrepreneurship initiatives, and skill development programs in order to create income possibilities for single mothers. This can enable them to become financially independent and make a beneficial contribution to the economy.

Furthermore, there is a need for educational initiatives and awareness efforts to lessen the stigma attached to being a single mother. Single mothers might have better access to community services and employment possibilities if society as a whole is made more sympathetic and supportive of them.

In light of the rational adaptation hypothesis discussed in the literature review, women can be empowered to make informed choices about their reproductive decisions by having access to extensive reproductive health services, such as family planning. This could help lower the number of unwanted births and, as a result, the financial difficulties brought on by single parenting.

Organizations must think about introducing flexible work arrangements to address the particular difficulties experienced by single mothers. This could involve childcare assistance, remote employment opportunities, and flexible work schedules. By taking these steps, single mothers can successfully manage their obligations at home and at work.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight the intricate interactions between financial need, emotional satisfaction, and social relationships that drive single mothers to date many partners. It has become clear that these women are looking for emotional support and companionship in addition to the practical goal of obtaining a variety of money sources, realizing the value of meeting both their own and their children's requirements. This demonstrates how deeply ingrained their social desires are and how important close relationships are to them. Additionally, the strategy of asset accumulation appears as a means of reducing poverty and enhancing general well-being, highlighting the ingenuity and tenacity of these people. To sum up, this study illuminates the complex dynamics at work in single mothers' dating habits and highlights the significance of comprehending and meeting their holistic needs to promote both their own and their family's well-being.

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Temitope Owolabi (PhD) is a distinguished University Lecturer at the prestigious Department of Sociology, University of Lagos, where he imparts knowledge and fosters intellectual growth. With a stellar academic journey, he holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Sociology from the esteemed University of Lagos, Nigeria, and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the eminent North-West University, South Africa; showcasing his commitment to education and research. Temitope's research interests, focusing on Sociology of Work/Industrial Sociology, Gender, and Youth Studies, highlight his commitment to understanding and improving society.

Tendayi C. Garutsa (PhD) is an Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at North-West University, South Africa. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Fort Hare. Her commitment to social justice and gender issues is evident in her diverse research interests, spanning gender, social justice, and rural development, specifically in the realms of food security and Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Throughout her academic positions she has actively contributed to the field. Noteworthy roles include National Research Funding Proposal Evaluator, and a post-doctoral fellowship under the Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa (CIRCLE) project. Recognized for her contributions, Garutsa has received various awards, including the Teaching and

Excellence award and the Top Senior Lecturer Researcher Faculty of Humanities Award from North-West University in 2022. Her extensive list of published works in reputable journals reflects her commitment to advancing knowledge, particularly in areas like feminist pedagogical strategies, maternal healthcare experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of NGOs in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations.