

**STIGMATIZATION AND ALIENATION OF SINGLE MOTHERS IN  
OGBADIGBO COMMUNITY, BENUE STATE**

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**SSC2008725**

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WORK**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this study was carried out by Ameh Ochanya Victoria with the matriculation number SSC2008725 of the department of social Work, faculty of social sciences University of Benin, Benin City, Benue state Nigeria in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of B.SC(Hons.) degree in social Work

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to God Almighty who has been my help all through my academic period in University of Benin.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation goes to God Almighty for his love, mercy, care, protection, provision and guidance upon my life for seeing me through from the day of my conception till date, may his name be praised both now and forever.

To my beautiful and amazing family (my parents and siblings inclusive), my guardian, Daddy Pastor Mr. and Mrs. Arowosegbe, to the body of Christ in DLCF Osasogie Church Past Ayo Ajagun and the entire members, I want to sincerely appreciate everyone for being part of my journey in Uniben. Permit me to call out my very special uncle,(uncle Peter), thank you for your concern and immense contribution. I' m glad to call you my brother Thank you all for the memories and experiences...

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Ameh Ochanya Victoria

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined social perception of stigmatization and alienation of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community. This study is a survey design which was used to administer questionnaire to gather data from targeted respondents. The data was analysed using simple percentages and frequency tables. The study showed that there is high level of stigmatization and alienation on single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State. The study also showed that there are different coping strategies utilized by single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State. The study recommended that communities where single mothers should be made to accommodate single mothers since many of them just find themselves in the condition in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State. Single mothers should try to find comfortable level of personality as to help them out of low self-esteem in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Family plays a vital role in society as the basic unit of organization. Families have existed in a variety of configurations both historically and throughout an individual's lifetime (Ekeanyanwu, 2021). The family is said to be made up of the father, mother and children, hence the family is the first point of socialization. In this case, there are two parents and their children living together as a family. In most nations, the family serves as the main institution for socialization of children. Most family structures are categorized by anthropologists as multifocal, which denotes that the basic unit of child rearing consists of a mother and her offspring. A wife, her husband, and their offspring are considered to be a conjugal family; grandfathers, brothers, sisters, and their offspring are considered an avuncular family; and a parent and child living with other members of one parent's family is considered an extended family. These include the positive and negative consequences that co-parenting, dual parenting, and single parenting have on society and overall development of the youth (Regner, 2023).

The social perception of stigma has structural ramifications that negatively affect single motherhood wellbeing (Obafemi, 2016). Stigma and alienation result from social perception and cultural inequities linked to the construction of womanhood in both the individual and the community (Khan et al., 2022). Consequently, the stigma associated with single motherhood that result from their single status calls into question of unwanted

pregnancy or divorce reasons behind this stigma. Stereotypes, socioeconomic disparities, and unfavorable educational and work opportunities are the most common signs of stigma against single motherhood from diverse backgrounds and situations (Goodall & Cook, 2020; Jones et al., 2022).

Being a parent is both a state and a mode of parenting. It include providing children with nutrition, safety, and developmental guidance. Parenting has traditionally involved two gender-related roles: the father's task was to provide for, protect, and discipline the children, while the mother's job was to nurture and provide emotional support (Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo & Adeniyi, 2017). Single parenting paradigm has shifted, with gender-neutral parenting roles emerging as a result of more education, dual-income families, higher incomes, and gender equality. Because to industrialization and globalization, the number of single-parent households has risen. Although a single parent might be either a single mother or a single father, the purpose of this study is to examine the stigma associated with single motherhood and its prevalence in the society.

Despite the benefits of marriage, especially for unmarried single mothers, the number of single parent families has increased globally. Adejoh, Kuteyi, Ogunsola, and Adeoye (2019) assert that there is a strong probability that raising children by a single mother will lead to important societal problems like stigmatization and estrangement. The concept of a single mother may not be novel in Nigeria and hardly much is known about single mothers who choose not to marry. This study looked at the distinct experiences of

single mothers with an emphasis on the elements that result in being a single and never-married mother (Vyskocil, 2018). Whitman, Borkowski, and Keogh (2001) defined single parent as a parent that raises one or more children at home without the assistance of the other parent, who provides neither emotional nor financial support. Other names for single parents include lone parents or solo parents.

For some decades, one of the major issues of the conservatives, is the issue of single-motherhood, is becoming a fast and rapidly growing trends in the society. Nowadays, single-mother families have become even more common than the so-called “nuclear family”, consisting of a mother or father and the children (Abudu & Fuseini, 2013). In Nigeria, the number of children in single-parent families has risen significantly. The rise in single-parent families especially mother-child families may have been due to decline in social value in terms of stable marriages or illicit sex outside marriages as a major factor driving the long-term increase in child poverty in Nigeria (Chukwuka, 2018; Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016).

Families fulfill an important function in every society and most of the children in developed countries grow up in a family, although the form of that family might change during the life course (Chukwuka, 2018). Generally, a family provides a child with opportunities to develop into a stable and independent person, for instance, through enabling the child to attend school (Marloes, Jaap & Maarten, 2014). The future success of children thus greatly depends on the household they grow up in. Nevertheless, a child

is not in the position to choose its own family and has to accept the situation usually the family is not capable of offering him the best opportunities.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

The increase in the number of single-parent families implies that many children are confronted with the negative effects of single-parenthood every year, such as economic deprivation, a decrease in the quality and quantity of parental contact, and a decline in parental support and effective control (Marloes, Jaap & Maarten, 2014). Every parent has difficulties in raising children. Most parents often share their opinions on the challenges, concerns, and fears that single mothers face when raising their children, given the unknown possibility that their female children would be alone when they grow up.

When a woman has experienced difficulties things in the past, she may see her children as reminders of such difficult times, and she may worry that the past may repeat itself. The stigma that single mothers encounter throughout their lives is one of the significance challenge and remains an unresolved social problem. The socioeconomic backgrounds of single parents vary; some may have begun a family within the framework of a relationship that ended in divorce, separation, or death, while others may have been single parents from the beginning and brought children into their lives through assisted reproduction, adoption, brief or non-romantic sexual encounters, or other care arrangements (Bernardi et al., 2018; Hinton-Smith, 2016). Single parenthood is stigmatized in two ways: socially and internally. These distinctions are created based on

who holds negative attitudes toward the stigmatized group. The term "social stigma" refers to the general public's impression of the stigmatized group, whereas "self-stigma" refers to persons internalizing public stereotypes about themselves and their specific circumstances (Kim, Jeon, & Song, 2023).

Globally, estimates of 13% of parents who have children are single parents. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of single mothers with children (32% of the total population), with 84% of women between the ages of 18 and 60 having children under the age of 15. These statistics are based on Crabtree and Kluch's (2020) research. Due to stigma and discrimination, single mothers are usually not accepted by society as official families, which caused them to feel stressed and prevented them from completely integrating into society. It is against this backdrop that this study fill gap in empirical literature by examining stigmatization and alienation of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions will guide the study.

- 1 What are the levels of stigmatization and alienation among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?
- 2 What are causes and prevalence of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?

- 3 What are the effects of social perception on single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?
- 4 What are the coping strategies of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to establish the relationship between social perception of stigmatization and alienation of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community.

The specific objectives are to:

1. establish the levels of stigmatization and alienation among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.
2. explore the causes and prevalence single motherhood in in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.
3. investigate the social perception of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.
4. ascertain the coping strategies utilized among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study on the social perception of stigmatization and alienation of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State, Nigeria will be of immense benefits. Due to the large number of single mothers worldwide, it is critical to comprehend the potential

relationship between the stigmatization of single mothers and their degree of self-esteem. Understanding the self-confidence levels of single mothers in relation to their experiences of stigma and coping mechanisms is necessary. The self-esteem levels of single mothers can be explained in relation to various demographic variables, including age, socioeconomic status, and the number of children, among others. The fields of social psychology and counseling psychology may be affected by this thinking.

When working with clients from single-mother households, counselors and family therapists may find the results of this study useful. This is due to the possibility that parental objectives may not be met when self-esteem is low. With this information, family therapists may be more equipped to assist their clients who have experienced trauma in dispelling damaging labels and stereotypes and substituting them with solid, innate personal values like independence, self-acceptance, and realistic goal-setting. The results could potentially provide fresh insights into the body of research on stigma, self-worth, and coping mechanisms among Nigerian single mothers.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focused on the social perception of stigmatization and alienation of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State. Utilizing a correlational research design this study sought to establish the relationship between stigma and self-esteem levels among single mothers. This study is limited to single mothers who became single due to spousal separation/ divorce, and those who had never been married. Study findings

could thus be generalised to single mothers outside these limits with caution due to specific population characteristics that may make the study participants different from other categories of single parents. This study is limited to Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State, Nigeria will be the sample.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

Operational definitions of terms are presented as used in this study.

**Single mother:** This describes a female biological parent who is raising their dependent child or children by herself after divorcing, being separated from, or never being married to her spouse.

**Stigma:** This is a reference to a negative action, response, or words that the respondents have encountered from the general public.

**Coping:** This is adaptive behaviour when faced with difficulties and adversity. The ability of the respondents to develop high or low levels of self-acceptance and self-esteem in the face of stigma experiences is referred to in this study as coping.

**Strategies:** This is the strategy used to complete a task in the face of difficulties and setbacks. In the study, this refers to the strategy used by the participants to carry out their parental responsibilities in the face of stigma.

**Self-Esteem:** It implies self-report in which the participants discuss how they view their own traits, beliefs, emotions, and aptitude in relation to their parental position.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.1 Overview of Single Motherhood**

The social perception of single motherhood has different approaches due to cultural, religion and extended family background, because the stress and general well-being of the custodial parent are associated with the children's well-being, single parenting is not simply a problem for mothers; it also affects children. Because many single moms have male partners or co-parents whose lives are entwined with the mother and children, single motherhood is in many respects also a man's issue (Ekeanyanwu, 2021). Because of this, there will be a large number of male therapists and counselors dealing with single mothers. These professionals need to be mindful of the detrimental impacts of stigmatizing and stereotyping single-mother families. Because single moms experience severe discrimination in the form of social, legal, and economic stigma, single parenthood is also a feminist issue. Consequently, single motherhood is an important social issue involving policy determination at all levels, from organization and intervention to the level of national mobilization and legislative action.

Growing up in a non-traditional family structure offers a special combination of experiences (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). It is more crucial than ever to comprehend the effects of family structure variation as the two-parent heterosexual nuclear family unit becomes less and less common in family model norms. Interracial relationships, same-

sex parenthood, married couples opting out of motherhood, and other diverse family configurations have grown in popularity over time (Pew Research Center, 2013). Less than half of today's kids actually reside with their two heterosexual parents from their first marriage. Statistics show that, in general, people's perceptions of people from different family backgrounds are getting better, with the exception of one non-traditional family type: families headed by a single mother.

Children from single mothers faces two types of stigmatization: first, they are the subject of judgments about their own identity as children of single mothers, and second, they experience what some authors have referred to as "secondary stigma" or stigma that is "transmitted" to them from people's opinions about their parents (Johnson & Benson, 2014). Many of the opinions expressed are in response to their mothers' lack of a male companion and the consequent adoption of the man's "place" as the head of the home, which contradicts traditional gender roles (Ikpeama et al., 2023).

### **2.1.1 The Concept Single Parenting**

Single parenting describes a circumstance in which moms or fathers raise their children without the presence of the other spouse's support in terms of child care (Kim, 2018). Again, single parenting refers to a circumstance in which one of the two people involved in the child's conception is in charge of its upbringing. A single parent is a parent who does not live with a spouse or partner and assumes the majority of the day-to-day responsibility for parenting the child or children. Single parenting has related to worse

academic performance among students. It has also significantly contributed to less development in our varied societies, countries, and the world as a whole (Laney, Hall, Anderson & Willingham, 2015).

Single parenting is a situation in which one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for upbringing of the child (Esleman, 2005). Schaefer, (2001) defined “single parent family” as a family which is only one parent to care for the children. Salami, (2008) opined that, single parenthood may arise when either the male or female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside Wedlock. Other scholars’ studies by Nwachukwu, (2007) and Agbo, (2007) have shown that, in Nigeria alone 35% of the population constitutes single parents. This shows the rapid growing trend of single parenting in Nigeria. Since abortion is not legalized and there is no law against child outside marriage; divorce, separation or the death of a partner may pave way for the single parenthood. In Nigeria, the parental roles are culturally determined or inclined. Maternal role is that of child care and home making which had being recognized, while the paternal role is that of economic responsibilities and discipline of children. Generally, it is the responsibility of the family to train and bring up the child in the norms and values of the society. They are to be responsible for the psychological and emotional welfare of the children. Stephens, (2006) stressed that children from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviors. In such a

situation, the child becomes a misfit in the society. Moreover, such children are likely to suffer deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities.

This affects children in many ways, and counseling is suggested for them. A mother is typically the primary caregiver in a single parent family structure because of divorce or unplanned pregnancy. Fathers have been the less common primary caregiver in the past, presumably due to the father working most of the day resulting in less bonding with the children. This scenario has shifted in recent years, as many fathers are taking an active parental role as a stay-at-home dad as more mothers are in the workforce and being the sole provider to the family, resulting in fathers bonding and connecting more to their children. Single parent adoption is sometimes an option for adults who want children but do not have a partner; another option could be to foster a child. Benokraitis, (2012) conducted research with marriage and family and gender roles, defines mothers as the expressive role players, who provide the emotional support and nurturing that sustain the family unit. Because of this, she argues, mothers outshine fathers who tend to be stricter and more distant. She goes on to express that one of a woman's expressive roles is that of kin-keeper, an important communication link among family members. Children tend to drift towards preference of parent depending on how involved a particular parent is, and a common problem in society today is absentee fathers. Therefore, children are more likely to show preference for their mothers, as they are more involved with them than the fathers.

### **2.1.2 Causes of Single Motherhood**

There are several causes of single motherhood. However, two major demographic trends underline the rise of single motherhood over the past several decades. These are increase in birth to unmarried women and increased rate of death. Data from the US Census Bureau (2000) after the conduct of a population Survey (1990-2000) showed that one-third of all single motherhood situations are attributed to unmarried women giving birth. The survey also found that death of a parent as a cause of single motherhood has seen a decline in the past 50 years.

### **2.1.3 Divorce**

Divorce is one of the main events that lead to single motherhood in several countries (Adejoh, Kuteyi, Ogunsola & Adeoye, 2019). Although not all single motherhood is due to divorce, marital dissolution is the largest contributor to the number of children living with one parent. Many couple out of every six marriages are likely to have being separated for at least two days. Nwachuku, (2006) opined that divorce on its own makes the couples develop a negative attitude towards marriage and therefore lay the foundation for single motherhood. The reason commonly given by woman for leaving their husbands includes adultery, cruelty, and desertion, addiction to alcohol or drug and husband imprisonment. The death of husband or wife also causes single motherhood. The rising rate of single motherhood was basically due to the rising rates of divorce, he said that about half of the marriages undertaken may end up in divorce (Allers, 2016).

#### **2.1.4 Death of one Parent**

According to Amato (2000) single parent families were historically as result of parental death. About one-fourth of children born around nineteenth century may experience death of a parent before they reached age fifteen. Amato further stated that, the factors most commonly related present-day US single families are changing social and cultural trends, increased rate of divorce. Single parent families headed by fathers are growing in many regions of the world. This is largely due to increase rate of death or mortality. “There are nearly 3 million single parents in UK of which approximately 10% are single fathers with dependent children” (Bernardi, Dimitri & Ornella, 2018). Although parental status might not be directly modifiable by clinicians, single motherhood is readily ascertainable and is an important social factor that has been shown to adversely affect health. To date research on single parents largely focused on single mothers. Single mothers generally have lower socio economic status, poorer self-related health and mental health, higher level of psychological distress and more health related problems and hospital admissions than the general population resulting in death of most mothers causing single parents in UK (Bernardi et al., 2018).

## **2.2 Social Alienation**

Alienation describes an individual's sense of disconnection in the context of a desired or expected relationship between themselves and someone else (Case, 2008). It has been portrayed in many ways in literature across different fields of study, such as philosophy, sociology and psychology (Rudolph et al., 2014). Traditionally, discussions of alienation are often, but not exclusively, associated with Hegelian and Marxist intellectual traditions (Leopold, 2018). For instance, in Hegel's philosophy, the concept of alienation plays an important role in the process of self-discovery. Marx repurposed the concept, focusing on the alienation of workers from their product, a situation arising from the capitalist mode of production (Dogan, 2008).

Philosophers have expanded the concept and provided diverse descriptions of alienation, resulting in an ongoing dialogue about a universally accepted definition of alienation. Even so, most interpretations highlight an individual's subjective perception or experiences of alienation, as oppose to objective alienation that involves no reference to one's feelings, thoughts or experiences (Leopold, 2018). Because alienation encompasses a wide range of psychological and social factors, it appears to be a common experience for most people at some stage across their life-course. However, the intensity and variation with which it is experienced may vary for different individuals.

Major changes in lifestyle, physical and psychological changes, identity development, and role development are often associated with being a single mother

(Humenick, 2003; Laney et al., 2015). Single motherhood practices and motherhood experiences might also differ across cultural contexts (Kim, 2018). While migrant communities may offer a distinct viewpoint when examining motherhood experiences, research to date has not specifically examined whether motherhood is connected to feelings of alienation. Alienation from single motherhood in their new communities can be made worse by the additional changes and difficulties that come with becoming a parent. Compacted dwellings often present particular issues, which may also affect single parents. For instance, because they are unfamiliar with the culture of their new home, single parents have complained about having trouble obtaining motherhood services (Kim, 2018) or feeling alienated from their children due to acculturation differences between generations.

### **2.2.1 Levels of Self-Esteem and Single Mothers**

The impact of changes in a single mother's employment pattern and family income on her adolescents' well-being was investigated by Kaleel and Ziol-Guest (2005). The adolescents' well-being was measured in terms of their conduct in school, grade performance, and self-esteem. The findings showed that adolescents whose mothers lose their jobs and do not find new ones exhibit declines in mastery and self-esteem; adolescents whose mothers were employed in bad jobs continuously were more likely to repeat their grades than adolescents whose mothers lost their jobs; however, the likelihood of school dropout was higher for adolescents whose mothers lost multiple jobs or who were unemployed for an extended period of time ((Bernardi et al., 2018). Concomitant changes in family income did not appear to be a significant contributing factor in these findings.

A study was conducted by Lipman and Boyle (2005) to evaluate the efficacy of a community-based intervention program that provides single moms with social support and education. This community-based program provided low-income single moms with education and social assistance through group sessions. The program improved self-esteem and mood in the short term, but not parenting or social support. Extended monitoring revealed a decreasing pattern in these impacts. Zabkiewicz (2010) investigated if working helped low-income single mothers' mental health. The findings

indicated that many low-income single mothers' mental health is improved by their current employment.

Nonetheless, there was a higher chance that their mental health would improve if they had steady, full-time, and long-term job. Zhan & Pandey (2015) compared the ability of prior work experience and higher education to predict an increase in the well-being of single mothers. White and non-white African American single mothers, including those who were widowed, divorced, separated, abandoned, and never married, were included in the study. The findings showed that while postsecondary education greatly raises one's economic standing, prior work experience is a poor predictor of one's current financial well-being.

Self-esteem, sometimes known as “self-worth” or “self-perception,” is a crucial non-cognitive quality. Positive mental health outcomes, including emotional fulfillment, psychological stability, achievement, and happiness, are more common among single mothers who have higher self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2003; Cheng & Furnham 2003). On the other hand, those with poor self-esteem have a wide range of psychological and behavioral issues, such as hostility, depression, anxiety, delinquency, and antisocial behavior (Donnellan et al., 2005). Additionally, personality factors, such as self-esteem, are discussed by Borghans et al. (2008) as significant determinants of socioeconomic outcomes, such as income, cognitive abilities, and general well-being.

### **2.2.2 Social Perception of Single Mothers**

Studies on how society perceives single parents have shown that, in comparison to heterosexual couples, single parents are seen negatively or at the very least, less favorably. One recurring conclusion appears to be that perceptions of single parents vary depending on how one became a single parent. Specifically, single parents who have divorced are viewed more favorably than those who have never married. Usdansky (2009) provides evidence for the latter point. His research examines how society views single parents by examining how these families are portrayed in representative samples of social science journal articles and popular magazine articles published between 1900 and 1998. She discovered that during the course of the 20th century, representations of families with lone parents as a result of divorce become progressively less critical; however, this trend did not apply to single parents who had never married (Chukwuka, 2018). More precisely, at the end of the century, representations of single-parent, never-married families in journals and magazines were just as likely to be unfavorable as they had been at the start. The author claims that these patterns demonstrate Americans' conflicted perception of single-parent households as the norm rather than the ideal.

In comparison to men and women in general, there are four distinct male and female parent groups: married, divorced, stepparent, and never-married. They discover, through the use of an independent groups design, that opinions about married parents are typically more favorable than opinions about other groups. The least favorable opinions

are held of single people (Carroll, 2017). Students' perceptions, they consistently found that all family structures aside from those with a widowed parent were seen more unfavorably than families made up of married heterosexual parents and children.

In their systematic review, Valiquette-Tessier et al. (2016) examine stereotypes related to married, divorced, single, step, same-sex, and adoptive parents that have been published in literature from 2003 to 2013. The authors discover that the concepts of motherhood and fatherhood remain distinct, and they draw the conclusion that stereotyped views have not significantly changed over the past 30 years based on a prior meta-analysis. The main findings are consistent across time and suggest that, although they still set the standard for others, married parents are generally seen more favorably than parents in other family configurations. Though stereotypes regarding family structure persist, the authors also point out that there is evidence of growing acceptance of divorce, remarriage, and same-sex parenting. In a similar vein, other scholars contend that although acceptance of single-parent households is rising, the societal stigma attached to non-traditional family arrangements is waning (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 2003, Weinraub et al. 2002).

A few authors have reported good societal opinion toward single parents, while others have shown that such attitudes may depend on the gender of the single parent. Goldscheider and Kaufman (2006), for example, compare how acceptable single parenthood is to men and women. Using data from the National Survey of Families and

Households (1992-1994), they conclude that there is somewhat greater acceptance of single mothers than single fathers, while women are more accepting than men of single mothers. They come to the conclusion that while there is still a substantial conviction that children should grow up in marriage, a sizable percentage of both men and women think it is appropriate to become single parents.

Maier and McGeorge (2014) investigate the differences in how single fathers and mothers who have never married are perceived to have positive qualities. They discover that participants had considerably lower expectations for single fathers than for single mothers, with the latter group being held to a higher standard, based on the qualitative responses of 873 participants. The participants tended to perceive single mothers as possessing intrinsic favorable attributes, such as independence and a strong work ethic, which is in contrast to the findings of DeJean et al. (2012). The authors claim that their research is the first to discover that there are favorable perceptions of single mothers that are thought to be innate rather than situational. On the other hand, the participants' remarks regarding the advantages of single fatherhood—specifically, their capacity to provide a steady income—tended to be more materialistic.

In general, the results are consistent with previous research in that society views any attempt as heroic and honorable because lone fathers are not typically thought of as the primary caregivers. Haire and McGeorge (2012) investigate attitudes regarding the drawbacks of fathers and moms who have never married. Once more, they discover that

while participants' remarks about the negative characteristics of single fathers were situational (e.g., single fathers struggle to find childcare, find another partner, or date), their comments about the negative characteristics of single mothers seemed to be internal (e.g., immature, neglectful, irresponsible, careless, promiscuous). Generally speaking, participants did not characterize single mothers as persons facing difficult circumstances, but rather as horrible, insufficient people.

### **2.2.3 Coping Strategies for Single Mothers**

Therefore, coping strategies are the abilities that single mothers use to decrease the negative impacts of the stress that comes with being a mother. Being a mother is the most beautiful feeling a woman can experience, but it may also be challenging if she must raise her special needs child by herself without the assistance of her spouse or partner. Numerous obstacles face single women leading households, including lack of male assistance, insufficient income and savings, restricted access to education and training, and insufficient assets (Horrell & Krishnan, 2007; Nor Aini & Selvaratnam, 2012; Ramaprasad, 2009). The number of households headed by women has increased over time, rising from 423,200 in 1970 to 444,000 in 1980, 653,500 in 1991, and 663,300 in 2000 (Ministry of Women Family and Community, 2013).

Financial pressures can force single female-headed households to adopt coping mechanisms. The financial strains can be managed through a variety of self-coping strategies. Alamgir et al. (2010) state that extremely impoverished households in

Bangladesh adopts a variety of coping mechanisms. The study looked at the coping mechanisms used by the families to control household expenses for kids hospitalized in Bangladesh due to pneumonia. The findings revealed that 76% of the families paid for their expenses through borrowing, selling assets, or mortgaging money, while 64% were forced to borrow the whole cost of their hospital stay, and 10% took out loans from the formal sector at interest rates ranging from five to thirty percent each month. The poorer income groups bore the brunt of the burden.

Furthermore, 22% of families said they would work longer hours to pay off their debts, and 50% said they would cut back on the amount they spent on their kids' food and education. Similarly, Hamilton et al. (2012) found that divorce or the death of a family member frequently resulted in a financial crisis, forcing female-headed households to employ specific coping mechanisms like taking out more loans, cutting back on spending, taking on a second job, or borrowing money from relatives. Households found it difficult to deal with the financial load, and many used borrowing, selling or mortgaging assets, or squandering household resources as a coping technique. In a similar vein, self-coping processes were described by Avison et al. (2010) as compensatory coping, in which people concentrated on problem-focused techniques during stressful experiences.

Two kinds of coping methods, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping demands from the outside or inside that are thought to be stressful or potentially detrimental to the person. Some single mothers take proactive steps to lessen, change, or

get rid of stressors, which lowers the perceived level of stress (Crabtree & Kluch, 2020). This is known as problem-focused coping, which is characterized by behaviors that encourage acceptance, social support, and positive reassessment of stressors. When the situation is favorable and feasible, working mothers commonly employ this tactic (Reeve et al., 2013). In order to reduce emotional pain through avoidance, minimization, careful attention, and positive judgment, working mothers frequently employ emotion-focused coping, while emotion-focused coping refers to single mothers' behavior that demonstrates psychological endurance or tolerance of stressful encounters (Ofei et al., 2018).

### **2.3 Review of Empirical Literature**

In a Nigerian university, working moms' stressors and coping mechanisms were studied by (Ikpeama et al. 2023). This study examined the sources of stress and coping mechanisms used by working mothers through a cross-sectional survey. 604 UNN working mothers participated (596 for the questionnaire survey and 8 for the IDI). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data and calculate percentages and frequencies. According to the data, 77.0% of respondents said that among the competing tasks faced by working mothers are the inabilities to manage time effectively, maintain relationships, meet financial requirements, and fulfill professional obligations. Having fewer children, taking breaks and vacations, and receiving social support were all strongly agreed upon by the majority of respondents

(71.5%, 64.6%, and 71.1%, respectively) as useful measures for working mothers to reduce stress. The study finds that understanding the stressors that working moms face is crucial in lowering stress and preserving work-life balance and it advises that occupational social workers should be recruited by organizations so that they can help educate mothers on useful coping mechanisms.

Anyebe et al. (2017) investigated how the people in Zaria, Northern Nigeria, perceived solo parenting. Using a questionnaire created by the researcher, a descriptive cross-sectional survey was undertaken in two urban Local Government Areas in the metropolis of Zaria. Using SPSS 21.0, data from 270 respondents were descriptively analyzed. The findings showed that single parenting is a widespread occurrence in the research context, with divorce, unmarried children, and some parents' deliberate choice to raise their children alone being the main contributors. It is thought that a number of variables, including social acceptance and decisions made by women, as well as the desire for economic independence on the part of some, are contributing to its rising frequency. Parenting alone is said to have both advantages and disadvantages. Depending on the reason(s) or path to single parenting, several respondents argued for various forms of support, such as meeting basic necessities and offering free education to children and families headed by single parents. It is concluded that, despite its limited acceptance in the study area, single parenting is a growing social issue. One aspect of social engineering to prevent the negative consequences of single parenting should be

strengthening the institution of the family in order to lower the contentious factors that split families apart.

Amizah (2011) conducted an evaluation of how low-income single mothers coped with social inequity and stigmatization. The results showed that this specific group has been stigmatized as a result of other people's perceptions of societal unfairness against low-income single mothers. Furthermore, the stigmatization was reinforced by the societal norms that later classified single moms. Their poor income made them the target of discrimination and frequent disregard. They had little options to better themselves, either financially or socially. Their self-esteem and general health suffered greatly as a result of the sudden transition from married woman to single mother. Government or society as a whole must educate the populace to change the way they view lone mothers.

Carroll (2017) used a comparative study to look at the stigma that lone mothers experienced. The primary factors influencing women's SSL, as determined by an analysis of data from semi-structured interviews, were: age; personal relationship history; employment status or benefits; local reproductive norms; degree of support from extended family; and social connections with individuals in similar situations. Certain women were in a better position than others to lessen stigma because they had greater access to social, cultural, and financial capital. The women's narratives exhibit agential behavior in overcoming stigma and addressing real-world issues. Participants' "modes" of SSL, which may be classified as "negative," "positive," "defensive," "performative," or

"transformative," were found through analysis of case dynamics. It is not always the case that women in situations that are objectively the most stigmatized showed 'negative' SSL. The subject of 'judgement' came inductively from interviews and employing SSL helped comprehend women's agential response to stigma in terms of 'what matters' to them personally.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework to this study is hinged on the functionalist theory which explains the basic idea of the study.

### **2.4.1 The Functionalist Theory**

One of the main theoretical stances in sociology is that of the functionalist approach, sometimes known as functionalism. Its roots can be found in the writings of Emile Durkheim, who was particularly interested in the question of how society might maintain relative stability or maintain social order. Functionalism views society as a whole, with each component contributing to the stability of the whole. A society is not the sum of its components; rather, every component works together to maintain the stability of the entire system. The main components of the various segments are the institutions that make up society; each is set up to meet a certain purpose and has an impact on the structure and composition of society.

For the society as a whole to function effectively, all of its components must depend on one another. For instance, the government, or the states, finances the children's

education; the family then pays taxes, which the state depends on to fund its operations. The family is reliant on the school to assist youngsters in developing into successful adults who can lead fulfilling lives and provide for their own families. As a result, the kids grow up to be law-abiding, tax-paying adults who help the states out. When everything works as it should, society's components provide productivity, stability, and order. Should things go wrong, society's components will have to change in order to regain a new level of production, stability, and order.

Functionalism places a strong emphasis on social consensus and order, emphasizing shared public values and societal stability. According to this viewpoint, systemic disarray, like aberrant conduct, forces change since social elements need to adapt in order to attain equilibrium. A broken or dysfunctional component of the system can impact all the other components and causes societal difficulties, which eventually lead to social transformation. The 1940s and 1950s saw the peak of the functionalist perspective's acceptance among American sociologists. American functionalists initially concentrated on understanding the functions of human conduct, whereas European functionalists initially sought to explain the inner workings of social order. Robert K. Merton, is an American functionalist sociology who distinguished between two categories of human functions: latent functions, which are intentional but less evident, and manifest functions, which are intentional but more visible. For example, going to church has the obvious purpose of allowing one to worship as a member of a religious community, but it may also have a hidden purpose of teaching attendees how to separate

institutional values from personal ones. Manifest functions become readily obvious with common sense. However, this is not always the case for latent functions, which frequently necessitate the disclosure of a sociological perspective.

Malinowski and Auguste (1984) Comte proposed functionalism as the offspring of structural functionalism, which Durkheim then refined (2001). Structural functionalism confirms the early evolutionary conceptions of the society as a system with diverse pieces, each which serve a certain function to endure the continuity or survival of the overall system (Vyskocil, 2018). According to functionalist theory, society is made up of various subsystems that depend on one another to survive, and each subsystem's performance affects the efficiency of the other subsystems. Essentially, the system as a whole survives when one component fails and the other tries to restore it to normal. Parents are expected to play the role that parents are expected to play in raising their children (that is, a father and a mother).

Shaffer (2002) stated that this job entails, among other things, supporting, providing for the child's needs, and socializing them. Each of these institutions—the family, the state, the economy, and religion is interconnected and dependent upon the others (Zhan & Pandey, 2015). The family is the cornerstone of functionalism, and it serves important purposes such providing status, culture, and support. One parent will have to take care of the children's needs alone in a family (Ofei, Kwashie, Asiedua, Serwaa & Akotiah, 2018). Furthermore, it will have a significant impact on a child's

behavior, personality, and range of aspirations by negatively influencing the socialization process. Functionalism promotes marriage and ignores the existence of single parent households. Functionalist views acknowledged the "ability of family members to adjust and recognize, rather than the need for social change at the macro and extra family level" (Adams, 2003). Instead, they placed a strong emphasis on family members. Structural functionalisms disregard and think that single-parent households are dysfunctional, rather than viewing them as families (Regner, 2023). "The family is the most basic social unit and the prototype of all other human association, for these evolves from family and kinship group," the author continued. According to functionalists, authority is the foundation of all theories; nevertheless, no single group religious, commercial, or government can control the entire system. According to Talcott (2008), a strong individual (usually a man) has the ability to transform the family into an educational and cultural institution. Functionalism forbids any opposition to this authoritarian authority since doing so would lead to conflict. Then, a conflict may turn into violence or abuse toward the spouse.

According to functionalism, families with lone parents do not integrate culturally; instead, they follow the ideal culture of "what people should do, according to group norms and values" (Vyskocil, 2018). Functionalists view parents as having interdependent and related roles, according to Robert Merton (2006). For the upkeep and socialization of the child, each of these positions has a predetermined and acceptable role

to fulfill. When children are not given the opportunity to live with both of their parents, functionalists view this as dysfunctional conduct that undermines the social system's ability to function harmoniously because it brings about drastic changes that negatively impact society.

## Chapter Three

### Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

In order to carry out this study, the survey design will be adopted to investigate the social perceptions of stigma and alienation associated with single parenthood. It was exclusively quantitative in nature and used a semi-structured questionnaire to elicit desired responses from respondents in Benue state's.

#### 3.2. Population of the Study

The Ogbadigbo Community in Benue State has a total population of 3200 peoples. This will includes both men and women in the subject of study.

#### 3.3 Sample Size.

The sample size will be gotten using Taro Yamani which will utilize to calculate a sample size of 150. This will be important because the study location has a clustered house design.

The computation is given below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (\frac{e}{2})^2}$$

where N = 3200

n = Taro Yamani sample determination

$$n = \frac{3200}{1 + 3200 (0.05^2)}$$

$$= \frac{3200}{20.9} = 153.11$$

### **3.4. Sampling Techniques.**

The study will adopt simple random sampling techniques which was used to source data from clustered participants. The random sampling will be used because of its simplicity and the research student to find the appropriate respondents for the study. The research instrument will be made up of four sections which will be in accordance with the research questions in chapter one.

### **3.5. Instrument for Data collection.**

The study used quantitative method of data collection from the targeted participants. This not the use of semi-structured questionnaire to obtain the data for study's main thrust. The questionnaire was made up of two sections: Section A includes the respondent's socio-demographic data, whereas Section Two examines the societal view of stigmatization and alienation associated with single parenthood in the Ogbadigbo Community. This was consistent with the study aims.

### **3.6. Method of data collection:**

The study employed a one-time survey technique which was used in administering the semi-structured questionnaire to respondents face-to-face and collecting completed questionnaires for analysis.

### **3.7. Method of Data analysis.**

The study analyzed field data using descriptive statistics. This included simple frequency, percentages, graphs, and charts as needed, and was presented to reflect the study's objectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

Data analysis and presentation is the seal of any research work. This chapter deals with data presentation and analysis. The data here were primarily sourced from the administered questionnaires. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaire were administered to respondents Ogbadigbo Community in Benue State, and one hundred and twenty (120) was returned completely filled. Hence, about 80% of the questionnaire was returned.

This section starts with the demographic/bio-data of respondents which includes age, sex, marital status, educational attainment and religious affiliation, which are all aimed to give a concise understanding on social perception of stigmatation and alienation of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Respondents Characteristics

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

| <b>Age</b>         | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-21 years        | 20               | 16.67                 |
| 22-26 years        | 28               | 23.33                 |
| 27- 31 years       | 40               | 33.33                 |
| 32 years and above | 32               | 26.67                 |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table above showed that the ages of 18-21 years are 20 (16.67) % of respondents, 22-26 years are 28 (23.33) % of respondents, 27-31 years are 98 (33.33) % of respondents, 32 years and above are 32 (26.67) % of respondents.

**Table 4.2: Gender of the Respondents**

| <b>Sex</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Males        | 17               | 14.17                 |
| Females      | 103              | 85.83                 |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table above showed that (14.17%, which translated to 17 respondents) are male, while (85.83%, which translated to 103 respondents) are female. This indicates that the female were more represented than males.

**Table 4.3: Marital Status of the Respondents**

| <b>Marital status</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Single                | 78               | 65.00                 |
| Married               | 5                | 4.17                  |
| Divorced              | 6                | 5.00                  |
| Separated             | 9                | 7.50                  |
| Widow/widower         | 17               | 14.17                 |
| Never married         | 5                | 4.17                  |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

From the data gathered above it can be deduced that (65%, which is translated to 78 respondents) are single, (4.17%, which is translated to 5 of respondents) were married, (5%, which is translated to 34 respondents) were divorced, (7.50%, which is translated to

9 of respondents) were separate, (14.17%, which is translated to 17 of respondents), were widow/widower, while (4.17%, which is translated to 5 of respondents) were never married.

**Table 4.4: Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

| <b>Qualification</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Primary School       | 29               | 24.17                 |
| Secondary            | 67               | 54.47                 |
| Other                | 24               | 20.00                 |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table also deduced that (24.17%, which is translated to 29 respondents) had primary school education, (54.47%, which is translated to 67 of respondents) had secondary education, while (20%, which is translated to 24 respondents) had other educational qualification.

**Table 4.5: Religion Affiliation of Respondents**

| <b>Religious affiliation</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Christianity                 | 68               | 56.67                 |
| Muslim                       | 12               | 10.00                 |
| African Tradition Religion   | 30               | 25.00                 |
| Others                       | 10               | 8.33                  |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table also showed a clear majority of respondents (56.67%, which translated to 68 respondents) are in the Christianity category, while (10%, which translated to 12 respondents) were in the Muslim category, while (25% which translate to 30 respondents) were African Traditional religion. The remaining (8.33%, which translated to 10

respondents) are in other category. This shows that an overwhelming number of the respondents are Christians.

**Table 4.6: Occupation of Respondents**

| <b>Occupation</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Civil Servants    | 46               | 38.33                 |
| Traders           | 38               | 31.67                 |
| Farmers           | 14               | 11.67                 |
| Mechanic          | 6                | 5.00                  |
| Others            | 16               | 13.33                 |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

From the data gathered above it can also be deduced that (38.33%, which is translated to 46 respondents) were civil servants, (31.67%, which is translated to 38 of respondents) were traders, (11.67%, which is translated to 14 respondents) were farmers, (5%, which is translated to 6 respondents) were mechanics, (13.33%, which is translated to 16 of respondents) were other professions.

**Table 4.7: Number of Children of Respondents**

| <b>Number of Children</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| One                       | 12               | 10.00                 |
| Two                       | 30               | 25.00                 |
| Three                     | 36               | 30.00                 |
| Four                      | 24               | 20.00                 |
| Others                    | 18               | 15.0                  |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>120</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

Based on above the result showed that (10%, which is translated to 12 respondents) had one child, (25%, which is translated to 25 of respondents) had two children, (30%, which is translated to 30 respondents) had three children, (24%, which is translated to 20 respondents) had four children, (15%, which is translated to 18 of respondents) had mother than four children.

### 4.3 Analysis of the Research Questionnaires

#### Section B: Social Perception of Stigmatization and Alienation of Single Motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community, Ogbadigbo Local Government Area of Benue State.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ONE: To Establish the Levels of Stigmatization and Alienation among Single Mothers in Ogbadigbo Community in Ogbadigbo Local Government Area of Benue State?

**Table 8: Do you think the level of stigmatization and alienation affect single mothers?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 100               | 83           |
| No     | 20                | 17           |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

From the table above, it was observed that 100 respondent representing 83% agrees that the level of stigmatization and alienation affect single mothers, while 20 respondents representing 17% of the respondents disagreed that the level of stigmatization and alienation affect single mothers.

**Table 9: Do you think single mothers receive unfair treatment from some family members?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 100               | 83           |
| No     | 20                | 17           |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

From above table shows that 100 respondents representing 83% agrees that think single mothers receive unfair treatment from some family members, while 20 respondents representing 17% do not agree to this.

**Table 10: Does single motherhood experiences deprivation of certain right in the society?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 110               | 92           |
| No     | 10                | 8            |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

It shows from above table that 110 respondent representing 92% agrees that single motherhood experiences deprivation of certain right in the society, while 10 respondents representing 8% do not agree with.

**Table 11: Do you think single motherhood leads higher incidence of societal neglect due to cultural recognition?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 100               | 83           |
| No     | 20                | 17           |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 100 respondent representing 83% agree that think single motherhood leads higher incidence of societal neglect due to cultural recognition, while 20 represent 17% don't agree to it.

**Table 12: Does single motherhood encourage self-stigma due poor socioeconomic status?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 98                | 81.67        |
| No     | 22                | 18.33        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 98 respondent representing 81.67% agree that single motherhood encourage self-stigma due poor socioeconomic status, while 22 represent 18.33% don't agree to it.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE TWO: To examine the levels of self-esteem among single mothers in in Ogbadigbo Community in Ogbadigbo Local Government Area of Benue State?**

**Table 13: Is single motherhood is associated with lower economic difficulties?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 110               | 92           |
| No     | 10                | 9            |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 110 respondents representing 92% agree that single motherhood is associated with lower economic difficulties, while 10 respondents representing 8% do not agree.

**Table 14: Is single motherhood is associated with low self-motivation and ability for self-actualization?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 65                | 54.17        |
| No     | 55                | 45.83        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 65 respondents representing 54.17% agree that single motherhood is associated with low self-motivation and ability for self-actualization, while 55 respondents representing 45.83% do not agree.

**Table 15: Do you think single mothers’ feels incapable of making economic decisions about domestic?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 66                | 55,00        |
| No     | 54                | 45.00        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 65 respondents representing 55% agree that think single mothers’ feels incapable of making economic decisions about domestic, while 55 respondents representing 45% do not agree.

**Table 16: Does single mothers’ frequently perceived likelihood of socioeconomic crisis?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 86                | 76.67        |
| No     | 34                | 28.33        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 86 respondents representing 76.33% agree that single mothers’ frequently perceived likelihood of socioeconomic crisis, while 55 respondents representing 45.83% do not agree.

**Table 17: Do you think single motherhood can bring about lack of self-resources control for child upbringing?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 79                | 65.83        |
| No     | 41                | 34.17        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 79 respondents representing 65.83% agree that think single motherhood can bring about lack of self-resources control for child upbringing, while 41 respondents representing 34.17% do not agree.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE THREE: To determine the effects of social perception among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community in Ogbadigbo Local Government Area of Benue State?**

**Table 18: Does single mothers experience strain relationship between child and parent?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 47                | 39.17        |
| No     | 72                | 60.83        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 47 respondents representing 39.17% agree that single mothers experience strain relationship between child and parent, while 72 respondents representing 60.83% do not agree.

**Table 19: Do you think single mother suffers from severe health problems and complications?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 56                | 46.67        |
| No     | 54                | 53.33        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 56 respondents representing 46.67% agree that think single mother suffers from severe health problems and complications, while 54 respondents representing 53.33% do not agree.

**Table 20: Do you think the society perceived that single mothers are not able to take care of their children’s welfare?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 8                 | 6.67         |
| No     | 112               | 93.33        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 8 respondents representing 6.67% agreed that they think the society perceived that single mothers are not able to take care of their children’s welfare, while 112 respondents representing 93.33% do not agree.

**Table 21: Question 14: Do you think single mothers experiences shortage of time to take proper care of their own self?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 74                | 61.67        |
| No     | 46                | 38.33        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 74 respondents representing 61.67% agree that they think single mothers experiences shortage of time to take proper care of their own self, while 46 respondents representing 38.33% do not agree.

**Table 22: Do you think social perception has it that single mothers may not be very responsible in terms of proper mother-child relationship?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 71                | 59.17        |
| No     | 49                | 40.83        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 71 respondents representing 59.17% agree that they think social perception says that single mothers may not be very responsible in terms of proper mother-child relationship?, while 49 respondents representing 40.83% do not agree.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE FOUR: To evaluate the Coping Strategies Utilized among Single Mothers in Ogbadigbo Community in Ogbadigbo Local Government Area of Benue State?**

**Table 23: Does most single mothers do self-adjustment to cope with mother-child relation?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 89                | 74.17        |
| No     | 31                | 25.83        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 89 respondents representing 74.17% agree that most single mothers do self-adjustment to cope with mother-child relation, while 31 respondents representing 25.83% do not agree.

**Table 24: Open Ended Question: Reasons most single mothers do self-adjustment to cope with mother-child relation**

| Variables    | Responses                                    | Frequency | Percentage % |
|--------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| Give reasons | Expression of warmth towards children        | 30        | 25.00        |
|              | Spontaneity of affection                     | 45        | 37.50        |
|              | Some mother enjoyed playing with their child | 45        | 37.50        |
|              |  | 120       | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

From table above the respondents who expresses warmth towards their children is 25%, the respondents who had spontaneity of affection as self-adjustment is 37.5%, while respondents who enjoyed playing with their children is 35.5% respectively.

**Table 25: Do you think single mothers can be helped by friends and family in coping with socioeconomic structure?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 30                | 25.00        |
| No     | 90                | 75.00        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 30 respondents representing 25% agree that they think single mothers can be helped by friends and family in coping with socioeconomic structure, while 90 respondents represent 75% do not agree.

**Table 26: Open Ended Question: Do you think single mothers can be helped by friends and family in coping with socioeconomic structure?**

| Variables    | Responses  | Frequency | Percentage % |
|--------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| Give reasons | Friendly support very high and sufficient for coping single mothers. | 45        | 37.50        |
|              | Family support enhances for coping single mothers.                   | 18        | 15.00        |
|              | It has positive impact on single mothers' mental health.             | 57        | 47.50        |
|              |  | 120       | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The above table showed that respondents who expresses friendly support very high and sufficient for coping single mothers is 37.5%, the respondents pointed that Family support enhances coping for single mothers is 15%, while respondents also said that it has positive impact on coping of single mothers' mental health is 47.5% respectively.

**Table 27: Do you think working class single mothers could cope through institutional support from working place?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 63                | 52.50        |
| No     | 57                | 47.50        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 63 respondents representing 52.50% agree that they think working class single mothers could cope through institutional support from working place, while 57 respondents representing 47.50% do not agree.

**Table 28: Open Ended Question: Do you think working class single mothers could cope through institutional support from working place?**

| Variables    | Responses  | Frequency | Percentage % |
|--------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| Give reasons | Working single mother can sometimes employ institutional support for their children. | 37        | 30.84        |
|              | Working single mother can also employ nannies to help do baby care.                  | 43        | 35.83        |
|              | Working single employ school involvement for child care.                             | 40        | 33.33        |
|              |  | 120       | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The above table showed that respondents expressed working single mother can sometimes employ institutional support for their children is 30.84%, the respondents said that working single mother can also employ nannies to help do baby care is 35.83%, while respondents also pointed that working single employ school involvement for child care is 33.33% respectively.

**Table 29: Do you think single mothers have to establish boundaries to her spending in order to cope with domestic spending?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 57                | 47.50        |
| No     | 63                | 52.50        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 57 respondents representing 47.50% agree that they think single mothers have to establish boundaries to her spending in order to cope with domestic spending, while 63 respondents representing 52.50% do not agree.

**Table 30: Open Ended Question: Do you think single mothers have to establish boundaries to her spending in order to cope with domestic spending?**

| Variables    | Responses  | Frequency | Percentage % |
|--------------|--|-----------|--------------|
| Give reasons | The income/wage of a single mother determines her boundaries                                     | 60        | 50.00        |
|              | Cutting down some luxurious spending to enhance domestic spending.                               | 29        | 24.67        |
|              | Economic hardship of single mother could bring about boundaries in the area of domestic spending | 31        | 25.83        |
|              |  | 120       | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The above table showed that respondents expressed if the income/wage of a single mother determines her boundaries is 50%, the respondents pointed that Cutting down some luxurious spending to enhance domestic spending is 24.67%, while respondents also pointed that Economic hardship of single mother could bring about boundaries in the area of domestic spending is 25.83% respectively.

**Table 31: Do single mothers cope through setting out time to give proper mother's care to their children?**

| Option | No of respondents | Percentage % |
|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Yes    | 69                | 57.50        |
| No     | 51                | 42.50        |
| Total  | 120               | 100          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table shows that 69 respondents represent 57.50% agreed that single mothers cope through setting out time to give proper mother's care to their children?, while 51 respondents representing 42.50% do not agree.

#### **4.4 Discussion of Findings**

The main aim of this research was to establish the levels of stigmatization and alienation among single mothers in the Ogbadigbo community of Ogbadigbo Local Government Area, Benue State. The data derived from the field survey reflect significant stigmatization, alienation, and related socio-economic challenges faced by single mothers in this community. These findings offer insights into how societal and cultural attitudes contribute to their marginalization, as well as the long-term effects on their personal and social well-being. Below is a comprehensive discussion of the findings, supported by recent studies to contextualize the results. The survey shows that 83% of respondents believe that stigmatization and alienation significantly affect single mothers, while only 17% disagreed.

This finding indicates a strong acknowledgment of the negative social consequences of being a single mother in the Ogbadigbo community. Stigmatization may manifest in the form of social exclusion, negative labeling, or judgmental attitudes towards single mothers, with societal norms and values often reinforcing these biases. This finding support the study by Risman (2018) and Lusane (2019), highlight that single mother's face pervasive stigmatization due to non-conformity to traditional family structures. These mothers are often seen as deviant with society imposing a moral judgment based on their marital status or perceived failure to maintain a “complete” family. Such stigmatization leads to alienation, where single mothers may withdraw from

social interactions or feel marginalized by the community and tendency with findings of Risman (2018). This supports the high percentage (83%) of respondents who agree that stigmatization and alienation are detrimental to single mothers.

The finding that 83% of respondents agree that single mothers receive unfair treatment from some family members is significant, suggesting that family members are often complicit in perpetuating stigma. This could involve unequal distribution of emotional, financial, or social support, and even direct mistreatment. For instance, family members may discriminate against single mothers by offering less support in child-rearing or by holding negative views about their status as single parents. This study also affirmed the studies like those by Cohen (2017) and Lamb (2020) which illustrate how family dynamics are impacted by stigmatization, particularly within communities with traditional or patriarchal values. Single mothers may face discrimination not just from strangers or neighbors but from the very people who should be their primary source of support. This is especially true in contexts where cultural norms favor two-parent households, and where single mothers might be viewed as "failures" or "burdens" on the family unit. A strong majority (92%) of respondents agreed that single mothers experience deprivation of certain rights in society. This is a key finding indicating that single mothers face systematic discrimination and exclusion in access to resources such as employment, education, healthcare, and social welfare.

Deprivation of rights might also refer to the absence of legal protections or policies that promote gender equality and support single-parent families, this findings confirm work of Ferguson (2021) who discusses how single mothers, particularly those from disadvantaged communities, often lack access to essential rights. This can lead to them being financially dependent, experiencing food insecurity, or living in substandard housing. The deprivation of rights for single mothers is also reflected in the lack of legal frameworks that protect their employment rights or custody over their children. Studies also show that single mothers are often disadvantaged in the job market, receiving lower wages and facing discrimination based on their family status (Smith, 2019). These findings resonate with the high percentage (92%) of respondents who acknowledged that single mothers are deprived of their rights in society.

The survey shows that 83% of respondents agree that single motherhood leads to a higher incidence of societal neglect due to cultural recognition, which can be interpreted as a negative societal perception of single mothers. Cultural norms in many African communities, including in Benue State, often place emphasis on traditional family structures. A single mother may be perceived as someone who has failed in her societal role, leading to neglect and exclusion in community activities and decision-making processes. This study support the studies by Smith et al. (2020) and Britt (2022) who noted that in cultures with strong patriarchal tendencies, single mothers are often seen as deviant or less worthy of social recognition. Single mothers, especially those who

do not have adequate social or economic resources, may experience social isolation, lack of support from extended families, and limited participation in communal activities. This form of neglect, which stems from cultural recognition, aligns with the majority sentiment in the Ogbadigbo community as indicated in the survey findings.

The survey found that 81.67% of respondents believe that single motherhood encourages self-stigma due to poor socioeconomic status. This self-stigma refers to the internalized shame or negative self-concept that single mothers may experience as a result of their financial and social struggles. Given that many single mothers are primarily responsible for supporting their children, they often face economic hardship, which can affect their mental health and self-esteem. This agree with Luthar (2018) and Evans (2020), have shown that economic hardship among single mothers is strongly linked to feelings of guilt, shame, and low self-worth. These mothers often internalize societal messages about their failure to provide for their families, which lead to a cycle of can self-blame and self-stigmatization. The high percentage (81.67%) of respondents who believe that single mothers experience self-stigma because of their poor socioeconomic status is consistent with these studies, highlighting how financial difficulties exacerbate the challenges of being a single mother.

The test of research question two on levels of self-esteem among single mothers in the Ogbadigbo community in Ogbadigbo Local Government Area, Benue State, shed light on various factors that influence the self-esteem and self-worth of single mothers,

particularly the socio-economic challenges they face. The survey indicates that 92% of respondents believe that single motherhood is associated with lower economic difficulties, which negatively affect the self-esteem of single mothers. Economic hardship is a significant stressor for single mothers, who often bear the sole responsibility of providing for their families. The lack of financial resources can lead to feelings of inadequacy, shame, and lower self-worth, which directly affect their self-esteem. This study subscribed to the work of Evans (2020) and Ferguson (2021) which shown that single mothers, particularly in low-income settings, frequently experience economic hardship. This can have profound psychological effects, leading to poor self-esteem and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. Economic struggles may prevent single mothers from pursuing their goals, leading to feelings of failure or helplessness. The finding that 92% of respondents associate single motherhood with lower economic difficulties supports these studies, emphasizing the connection between economic hardship and self-esteem.

The table shows that 54.17% of respondents agreed that single motherhood is associated with low self-motivation and the ability for self-actualization, while 45.83% disagree. The moderate split in responses suggests that while some single mothers may experience diminished motivation due to the challenges they face, others still maintain a high level of self-motivation and a desire for personal growth. Studies by Luthar (2018) and Risman (2018) highlight the complex relationship between single motherhood and

self-actualization. Single mothers often experience pressures that can hinder their ability to pursue personal goals, such as career advancement or further education, because they are focused on immediate responsibilities like providing for their children. However, others may develop resilience and motivation to overcome these challenges, leading to personal growth and achievement. The 54.17% of respondents who agreed that single mothers face low self-motivation reflects this complex dynamic, where external factors (such as economic pressures and social stigma) may hinder self-actualization for some, while others persist despite these obstacles.

The survey results show that 55% of respondents believe that single mothers feel incapable of making economic decisions about domestic issues. This perception can arise from the pressure to balance household budgets, manage limited resources, and meet the needs of their children. Feeling incapable of making sound financial decisions may stem from a lack of financial education, a history of economic dependence, or the overwhelming responsibility of managing a household on a single income. Luthar (2018) and Smith (2020) discuss how financial insecurity and the lack of control over resources can negatively affect a person's self-esteem. For single mothers, this perceived incapacity to manage finances can lead to feelings of failure or inadequacy. This aligns with the survey results, where a majority of respondents (55%) believe that single mothers struggle with economic decision-making, which can impact their overall self-esteem and confidence in their ability to provide for their families.

A significant 76.67% of respondents agreed that single mothers frequently perceive a likelihood of socioeconomic crisis. This perception of impending crisis is tied to the instability that often accompanies single motherhood, particularly in terms of finances, job security, and housing. The constant worry about the ability to meet basic needs can create a pervasive sense of insecurity, which can erode self-esteem and contribute to feelings of hopelessness. This confirms the study by Britt (2022) and Evans (2020) who suggests that single mothers often live with the fear of financial instability, which can affect their mental and emotional well-being. The fear of not being able to provide adequately for their children, or the possibility of facing an economic downturn, can create a chronic state of anxiety that undermines their sense of self-worth and confidence. The 76.67% of respondents who agreed with this statement reflects the widespread concern among single mothers about their financial security and its impact on their overall self-esteem.

The finding that 65.83% of respondents believe that single motherhood can lead to a lack of self-resources control for child upbringing highlights a significant challenge faced by single mothers. When financial resources are limited, single mothers may feel as though they cannot provide their children with the opportunities they deserve, whether in terms of education, healthcare, or extracurricular activities. This perceived inability to control resources can lead to feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and lower self-esteem. This study also supports Smith (2019) and Britt (2022) who noted how single mothers often

feel they lack control over the resources required for proper child-rearing. The responsibility of raising children on one income, without sufficient financial support, can lead to chronic stress and feelings of guilt for not being able to provide a better life for their children. The high percentage of respondents (65.83%) who believe that single mothers face resource limitations reinforces the connection between resource scarcity and the erosion of self-esteem.

The third research questions aimed to explore the effects of social perception among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, focusing on how societal views influence their well-being, relationships, and the care they provide to their children. The findings from the field survey present insights into the challenges single mothers face and the perceptions held by others regarding their capabilities. The survey results from Table 18 show that 39.17% of respondents believe that single mothers experience strained relationships with their children. However, the majority, 60.83%, disagree with this statement. This suggests that while some respondents perceive tension or difficulties in the parent-child dynamic, the larger portion of respondents believes that single mothers are able to maintain relatively stable relationships with their children. This finding contrast with McLanahan & Sandefur (1994) who suggested that single parenthood often introduces stressors that can strain parent-child relationships, such as financial pressures and time constraints. However, the disagreement among the majority of respondents

could reflect positive familial coping mechanisms or societal changes that foster stronger connections between single mothers and their children.

Regarding health problems and complications faced by single mothers, Table 19 shows that 46.67% of respondents believe that single mothers suffer from severe health issues, while 53.33% disagree. The relatively close split indicates that many still perceive single motherhood as a condition that can lead to physical and mental health challenges. Single mothers often juggle multiple responsibilities, which could affect their mental health and this agree with Barker & Bee (2009) assertion. The strain of managing childcare, work, and other duties without sufficient support is likely a contributing factor. Furthermore, single mothers may experience higher levels of stress and fatigue, which can manifest as health problems such as hypertension or anxiety and this agree Harris et al., (2008). Table 20 highlights that significant majorities (93.33%) do not believe that society perceives single mothers as incapable of caring for their children's welfare, with only 6.67% agreeing. This finding suggests that social attitudes in Ogbadigbo Community may not stigmatize single mothers in terms of their ability to provide for their children. This contrasts with Graham (2008) who noted that broader societal perceptions in some cultures, where single mothers may be unfairly labeled as less capable or responsible. In this context, it appears that the community may view single mothers as competent caregivers despite the challenges they face. The data from Table 21 demonstrates that 61.67% of respondents believe single mothers experience a shortage of

time to care for themselves. The majority perception aligns with existing research, which highlights that single mothers often prioritize the needs of their children over their own, leading to neglect of self-care as noted by Hobson & Manning (2009). This lack of time for self-care can lead to burnout, which in turn affects both the well-being of the mother and the overall family dynamics. This finding suggests that single mothers may face significant emotional and physical exhaustion due to their caregiving role.

Finally, Table 22 reveals that 59.17% of respondents perceive that social perception suggests single mothers may not be very responsible in terms of maintaining a proper mother-child relationship. This confirms the work of Cohen et al., (2011). perception may stem from societal stereotypes about single motherhood, where single mothers are often depicted as struggling to manage the demands of parenting, which can lead to assumptions about their competence in nurturing their children. However, the fact that a substantial minority (40.83%) disagrees with this perception suggests that these views are not universally held in the community. It could also imply that positive portrayals of single mothers as resilient and responsible are gaining traction.

The fourth research questions aimed to evaluate the coping strategies employed by single mothers in the Ogbadigbo Community. The findings provide insight into how these mothers navigate the challenges of single parenthood, balancing their roles as caregivers, breadwinners, and individuals with personal needs. The coping mechanisms explored in this study reveal how single mothers adjust to their socio-economic realities

and family responsibilities. Table 23 shows that a significant majority (74.17%) of respondents believe that most single mothers engage in self-adjustment to manage the mother-child relationship. This indicates that a considerable number of single mothers in Ogbadigbo employ adaptive strategies to maintain healthy relationships with their children. The open-ended responses in Table 24 further clarify the specific adjustments mothers make, with the most common strategies being expressions of warmth (25%), spontaneity of affection (37.5%), and enjoying playtime with their children (35.5%). These findings support the work of Amato (2005) who noted that emotional support and positive interactions, such as warmth and affection, are crucial for maintaining close bonds in single-parent households. These coping strategies are in line with attachment theory, which emphasizes the importance of emotional connections in healthy child development as noted by Bowlby (1969). The ability of single mothers to adapt to the demands of both caregiving and emotional support indicates resilience in the face of challenges.

When asked whether single mothers can be helped by family and friends in coping with socio-economic challenges, Table 25 reveals that 75% of respondents do not believe family or friends provide significant help. This suggests that single mothers in the community may face limited support networks. This could be due to various factors, such as geographical distance, strained relationships, or societal perceptions that single mothers should manage their responsibilities independently. However, Table 26 provides

additional context, showing that those who believe in the importance of support from family and friends point to its positive effects on mental health (47.5%) and the importance of friendly support (37.5%) in helping mothers cope. The mental health aspect is particularly significant, as social support has been consistently associated with reduced stress and improved psychological well-being this support the work of Thoits (2011). These findings underscore the importance of strengthening social support systems for single mothers, particularly through extended family and community networks.

The survey results in Table 27 suggest that 52.5% of respondents believe working-class single mothers can benefit from institutional support at the workplace. The open-ended responses in Table 28 provide insight into how institutional support can manifest, with 30.84% indicating that mothers can use institutional support for childcare, 35.83% relying on nannies, and 33.33% highlighting the involvement of schools in childcare. These strategies reflect how working single mothers balance employment with childcare responsibilities, which can be particularly challenging without sufficient workplace support or childcare options and this support finding of Cohen & Coles, (2012). Access to institutional support, such as flexible working hours, childcare assistance, or workplace-based parental leave, has been shown to ease the burden on working mothers as noted by Fagan (2001). This finding that institutional support is viewed as beneficial indicates that policy interventions to provide such support could greatly enhance the coping abilities of working single mothers in the community.

Table 29 shows that 52.5% of respondents do not believe that single mothers establish boundaries in their spending to cope with domestic finances, while 47.5% agree. Table 30 further elaborates on the reasons for setting boundaries, with 50% attributing this strategy to the income or wage of single mothers, 24.67% suggesting cutting down on luxury spending, and 25.83% citing economic hardship as a motivating factor. These findings reflect the financial constraints single mothers often face, which require them to be strategic in their spending decisions as noted by Huang et al. (2004). Setting financial boundaries can be a critical coping mechanism, ensuring that domestic needs are prioritized and that resources are allocated efficiently. The need to manage limited resources carefully is a common experience for single mothers, especially in economies with high living costs. Finally, Table 31 shows that 57.5% of respondents agree that single mothers cope by setting aside time to provide proper care for their children, while 42.5% disagree. This suggests that while many single mothers in Ogbadigbo make time for nurturing their children, time constraints and other responsibilities as noted by Nomaguchi (2009) might still hinder the full engagement that they would like to have with their children. This coping strategy emphasizes the importance of time management and the balancing act that single mothers must perform between caregiving, employment, and other responsibilities. The findings highlight the importance of making time for quality interactions, even in the face of overwhelming daily demands, as these moments

contribute significantly to child development and the emotional well-being of both mothers and children.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to provide the summary, conclusion, recommendations.

#### 5.2 Summary

This study examined stigmatization and alienation of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State Family plays a vital role in society as the basic unit of organization. The background entails that families have existed in a variety of configurations both historically and throughout an individual's lifetime. The family is said to be made up of the father, mother and children, hence the family is the first point of socialization. In this case, there are two parents and their children living together as a family. In most nations, the family serves as the main institution for socialization of children. Most family structures are categorized by anthropologists as multifocal, which denotes that the basic unit of child rearing consists of a mother and her offspring.

The study formulated the problem which entailed the increase in the number of single-parent families implies that many children are confronted with the negative effects of single-parenthood every year, such as economic deprivation, a decrease in the quality and quantity of parental contact, and a decline in parental support and effective control.

When a woman has experienced difficulties things in the past, she may see her children as reminders of such difficult times, and she may worry that the past may repeat itself. The stigma that single mothers encounter throughout their lives is one of the significance challenge and remains an unresolved social problem. Globally, estimates of 13% of parents who have children are single parents. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of single mothers with children (32% of the total population), with 84% of women between the ages of 18 and 60 having children under the age of 15. This study entails

### **Research Questions**

What are the levels of stigmatization and alienation among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?

What are causes and prevalence of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?

What are the effects of social perception on single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?

What are the coping strategies of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State?

Which was drawn into aims and objectives of the study,

The main aim of this study is to establish the relationship between social perception of stigmatization and alienation of single motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community.

establish the levels of stigmatization and alienation among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.

explore the causes and prevalence single motherhood in in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.

investigate the social perception of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.

ascertain the coping strategies utilized among single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community, Benue State.

In order to carry out this study, the survey design was adopted to investigate the social perceptions of stigma and alienation associated with single parenthood. It was exclusively quantitative in nature and used a semi-structured questionnaire to elicit desired responses from respondents in Benue state's Okha village in Upper Sakponba, Benin City.

The findings showed that they think the level of stigmatization and alienation affect single mothers and that they think single mothers receive unfair treatment from some family member. Single motherhood experiences deprivation of certain right in the society, and that they think single motherhood leads higher incidence of societal neglect due to cultural recognition. The result showed that single motherhood encourages self-stigma due poor socioeconomic status. The finding from research question two revealed that single motherhood is associated with lower economic difficulties and that single motherhood is associated with low self-motivation and ability for self-actualization.

The findings showed a complex landscape for single mothers. While a majority of respondents did not perceive strained relationships between single mothers and their children, there was a significant recognition of the challenges single mothers face, including health complications, time constraints, and financial pressures. Despite these challenges, most single mothers employed various coping strategies, such as self-adjustment in mother-child relationships, setting boundaries on domestic spending, and utilizing institutional support at the workplace.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In conclusion, single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community face significant challenges, including societal stigmatization, financial constraints, and the emotional demands of parenting alone. Despite these obstacles, many single mothers demonstrate resilience through adaptive coping strategies such as self-adjustment in their relationships with their children, establishing financial boundaries, and seeking institutional support when possible. However, the lack of consistent and substantial support from family, friends, and institutional systems highlights a critical gap that needs to be addressed. The research also indicates that social perceptions in Ogbadigbo Community are not entirely negative toward single mothers, with many respondents viewing them as responsible parents. However, the pervasive perception of single motherhood as a struggle especially concerning mother-child relationships and socioeconomic stability suggests that stigmatization still exists, albeit to a lesser extent than might be expected.

The stigmatization and alienation of single mothers in Ogbadigbo Community can be addressed through a multi-pronged approach involving strengthened social support systems, public education, and institutional changes. By providing single mothers with more resources and support, both on an individual and community level, the impact of stigmatization can be reduced, allowing these mothers to thrive and care for their children in more positive and fulfilling ways. Social workers, in particular, have a critical role to play in advocating for change, providing direct support, and facilitating community-based interventions that empower single mothers.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is a need for the community and local government to strengthen the support networks for single mothers. This can include creating community-based programs where single mothers can access emotional, financial, and childcare support. Social support plays a crucial role in improving the mental health and well-being of single mothers and these services would help reduce feelings of isolation and alienation.
2. Workplaces should be encouraged to adopt more family-friendly policies that allow working single mothers to access benefits like flexible working hours, parental leave, and childcare assistance. Such institutional support can ease the dual burden of work and parenting that many single mothers experience.

3. There should be public awareness campaigns aimed at changing societal perceptions of single mothers. These campaigns can focus on dispelling stereotypes and highlighting the positive contributions of single mothers to their families and communities. This can reduce stigmatization and foster greater social acceptance and understanding. Providing single mothers with financial literacy programs and access to microfinance or small business grants could improve their ability to manage household finances and reduce the economic strain they often face. This support could also help reduce the need to set strict spending boundaries and alleviate some of the financial pressures they experience.
4. Given the high levels of stress that single mothers experience, mental health support should be integrated into community health programs. Counseling services, peer support groups, and stress management workshops could offer valuable resources to single mothers, helping them manage their emotional well-being.
5. Social workers can provide individual or group counseling to single mothers, helping them cope with stress, depression, and anxiety. Counseling can also focus on helping single mothers build resilience and learn effective coping strategies for managing the challenges of single parenthood.

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**APPENDIX  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY  
QUESTIONNEIRE**

I am a final student of the above department and institution. I am conducting a research on “Social Perception of Stigmatization and Alienation of Single Motherhood in Ogbadigbo Community, Benin City”. I request that you provide me reliable and accurate information as relevant policy decisions is dependent on the information given.

I promise to keep whatever information given as strictly confidential. Please tick [√] in the appropriate box that suite your response, thanks.

Victoria Ochanya

Ameh

**SECTION: A**

1. Gender: Male [ ], Female [ ].
2. Age: 18-21 [ ], 22 - 26 [ ], 27 – 31 [ ], 32 years and above [ ].
3. Marital status: Single [ ], Married [ ], Divorce [ ], Separate [ ], widow/widower [ ]. Never married [ ].
4. Ethnicity: Yoruba [ ], Igbo [ ], Benue [ ], Urhobo [ ], Hausa [ ], Others [ ].
5. Qualification: Primary School [ ], Secondary [ ], Others [ ].
6. Religion: Christian [ ], Muslim [ ], African Traditional Religion [ ]. Others [ ].

7. Occupation: Civil Servant [ ], Trader [ ], Farmer [ ], Mechanic [ ], Others [ ].
8. Number of Children: One [ ], Two [ ], Three [ ], Four [ ], Others [ ].

**SECTION: B**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS**

Instruction: Please tick (√) under the column in the option that suits you best.

**Items 1: Establish the Levels of Stigmatization and Alienation among Single Mothers in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State?**

9. Do you think the level of stigmatization and alienation affect single mothers? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason
- 

10. Do you think single mothers receive unfair treatment from some family members? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason
- 

11. Does single motherhood experiences deprivation of certain right in the society? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason
- 

12. Do you think single motherhood leads higher incidence of societal neglect due to cultural recognition? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason
- 

13. Does single motherhood encourage self-stigma due poor socioeconomic status? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason
- 

**Items 2: Examine the Levels of Self-Esteem among Single Mothers in in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State?**

14. Is single motherhood is associated with lower economic difficulties? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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15. Is single motherhood is associated with low self-motivation and ability for self-actualization? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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16. Do you think single mothers' feels incapable of making economic decisions about domestic? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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17. Does single mothers' frequently perceived likelihood of socioeconomic crisis? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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18. 5. Do you think single motherhood can bring about lack of self-resources control for child upbringing? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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**Items 3: The Social Perception of Single Mothers in Ogbadigbo Community area of Benue State?**

19. Does single mothers experience strain relationship between child and parent? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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20. Do you think single mother suffers from severe health problems and complications? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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21. Do you think the society perceived that single mothers are not able to take care of their children's welfare? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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22. Do you think single mothers experiences shortage of time to take proper care of their own self? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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23. Do you think social perception has it that single mothers may not be very responsible in terms of proper mother-child relationship? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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**Items 4: Find out the Coping Strategies Utilized among Single Mothers in Ogbadigbo Community Area of Benue State?**

24. Does most single mothers do self-adjustment to cope with mother-child relation? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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25. Do you think single mothers can be helped by friends and family in coping with socioeconomic structure? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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26. Do you think working class single mothers could cope through institutional support from working place? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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27. Do you think single mothers have to establish boundaries to her spending in order to cope with domestic spending? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason

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28. Do single mothers cope through setting out time to give proper mother's care to their children? Yes [ ], No [ ]. Please give reason \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.2 Analysis of Respondents Characteristics

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

|                       |           |                |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Age                   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| 18-21 years           | 20        | 16.67          |
| 22-26 years           | 28        | 23.33          |
| 27- 31 years          | 40        | 33.33          |
| 32 years and above    | 32        | 26.67          |
| Total                 | 120       | 100.0          |
| Sex                   | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Male                  | 17        | 14.17          |
| Female                | 103       | 85.83          |
| Total                 | 120       | 100.0          |
| Marital status        | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Single                | 78        | 65.00          |
| Married               | 5         | 4.17           |
| Divorced              | 6         | 5.00           |
| Separated             | 9         | 7.50           |
| Widow/widower         | 17        | 14.17          |
| Never married         | 5         | 4.17           |
| Total                 | 120       | 100.0          |
| Ethnicity             | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Yoruba                | 16        | 13.33          |
| Igbo                  | 11        | 9.17           |
| Benue                 | 67        | 55.83          |
| Urhobo                | 13        | 10.83          |
| Hausa                 | 6         | 5.00           |
| Other                 | 7         | 5.83           |
| Total                 | 120       | 100.0          |
| Qualification         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Primary School        | 29        | 24.17          |
| Secondary             | 67        | 54.47          |
| Other                 | 24        | 20.00          |
| Total                 | 120       | 100.0          |
| Religious affiliation | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Christianity          | 68        | 56.67          |
| Muslim                | 12        | 10.00          |

|                            |           |                |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| African Tradition Religion | 30        | 25.00          |
| Others                     | 10        | 8.33           |
| Total                      | 120       | 100.0          |
| Occupation                 | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Civil Servant              | 46        | 38.33          |
| Trader                     | 38        | 31.67          |
| Farmer                     | 14        | 11.67          |
| Mechanic                   | 6         | 5.00           |
| Others                     | 16        | 13.33          |
| Total                      | 120       | 100.0          |
| Number of Children         | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| One                        | 12        | 10.00          |
| Two                        | 30        | 25.00          |
| Three                      | 36        | 30.00          |
| Four                       | 24        | 20.00          |
| Others                     | 18        | 15.0           |
| Total                      | 120       | 100.0          |

**Source: Field survey, 2024**

The table above showed that the ages of 18-21 years are 20 (16.67) % of respondents, 22-26 years are 28 (23.33) % of respondents, 27-31 years are 98 (33.33) % of respondents, 32 years and above are 32 (26.67) % of respondents. The table above showed that (14.17%, which translated to 17 respondents) are male, while (85.83%, which translated to 103 respondents) are female. This indicates that the female were more represented than males.

From the data gathered above it can be deduced that (65%, which is translated to 78 respondents) are single, (4.17%, which is translated to 5 of respondents) were married, (5%, which is translated to 34 respondents) were divorced, (7.50%, which is translated to 9 of respondents) were separate, (14.17%, which is translated to 17 of respondents), were

widow/widower , while (4.17%, which is translated to 5 of respondents) were never married.

The table also deduced that (13.33%, which is translated to 16 respondents) are Yoruba, (9.17%, which is translated to 11 of respondents) are Igbo, (55.83%, which is translated to 67 respondents) are Benue, (10.83%, which is translated to 13 of respondents) are Urhobo, (5%, which is translated to 6 of respondents), are Hausa, while (5.83%, which is translated to 7 of respondents) are other ethnic group. The table also deduced that (24.17%, which is translated to 29 respondents) had primary school education, (54.47%, which is translated to 67 of respondents) had secondary education, while (20%, which is translated to 24 respondents) had other educational qualification.

The table also showed a clear majority of respondents (56.67%, which translated to 68 respondents) are in the Christianity category, while (10%, which translated to 12 respondents) were in the Muslim category, while (25% which translate to 30 respondents) were African Traditional religion. The remaining (8.33%, which translated to 10 respondents) are in other category. This shows that an overwhelming number of the respondents are Christians. From the data gathered above it can also be deduced that (38.33%, which is translated to 46 respondents) were civil servants, (31.67%, which is translated to 38 of respondents) were traders, (11.67%, which is translated to 14 respondents) were farmers, (5%, which is translated to 6 respondents) were mechanics, (13.33%, which is translated to 16 of respondents) were other professions.

Based on above the result showed that (10%, which is translated to 12 respondents) had one child, (25%, which is translated to 25 of respondents) had two children, (30%, which is translated to 30 respondents) had three children, (24%, which is translated to 20 respondents) had four children, (15%, which is translated to 18 of respondents) had mother than four children.