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EXAMINING THE LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SINGLE PARENTS (MALE AND FEMALE) HOUSEHOLDS IN KADUNA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Single parenthood has emerged as a significant social and developmental concern due to its increasing prevalence and its implications for household welfare, children's wellbeing, and sustainable livelihoods. In Nigeria, economic hardship, marital instability, widowhood, separation, and other socio-cultural factors have contributed to the rise in single-parent households, particularly in urban centres. This study examined the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the incidence of single parenthood, the factors responsible for its occurrence, its effects on family wellbeing, and the coping strategies employed by affected households. A mixed-method research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, personal observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving 430 respondents selected from seven communities using systematic and purposive sampling techniques. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, while the Chi-square (χ^2) statistic was employed to test the hypothesis. Qualitative data were analysed thematically to complement the quantitative findings. The results revealed that widowhood, divorce, separation, abandonment, poverty, and teenage

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pregnancy remain the major drivers of single parenthood in the study area. Female-headed households experienced greater economic vulnerability, lower income levels, and increased childcare responsibilities than their male counterparts. The study further established that single parents adopted diverse coping strategies, including engagement in multiple income-generating activities, reliance on social and family support networks, participation in small-scale enterprises, and prudent household expenditure management. The study concludes that strengthening economic empowerment programmes, expanding social protection initiatives, and improving access to livelihood opportunities are essential for enhancing the wellbeing and resilience of single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The family is widely recognized as the fundamental unit of society, providing economic support, emotional care, protection, and socialization for its members. Traditionally, child upbringing and household responsibilities are shared by two parents, who jointly contribute to the financial, emotional, and social wellbeing of the family. However, rapid socio-economic changes, demographic transitions, and shifts in family structures have led to a steady increase in single-parent households across both developed and developing countries (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2020). Single parenthood refers to a family structure in which one parent assumes the primary responsibility for raising one or more children due to widowhood, divorce, separation, abandonment, or childbirth outside marriage (UNICEF, 2021).

Globally, the number of single-parent households has increased considerably over the past two decades, making it an important social and developmental issue. The rise in single parenthood has been associated with poverty, social exclusion, child welfare challenges, and declining household economic security (United Nations, 2023). Although women constitute the majority of single parents worldwide, the number of male-headed single-parent households has also increased, reflecting changing demographic patterns and family dynamics (OECD, 2023). Research has shown that single-parent households generally face greater economic vulnerability than two-parent households because one individual bears the full responsibility for income generation and family maintenance (World Bank, 2022).

In Nigeria, single parenthood has become increasingly common due to rising divorce rates, marital separation, widowhood, insecurity, rural–urban migration, and changing socio-cultural values. These factors have contributed to growing pressure on household

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welfare, particularly among low-income families (National Population Commission [NPC], 2023). Single parents often encounter numerous challenges, including unemployment, inadequate income, rising living costs, limited access to healthcare, children's educational expenses, and emotional stress. These challenges are more pronounced among female-headed households because of persistent gender inequalities in employment opportunities, ownership of productive assets, and access to financial resources (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022).

Livelihood refers to the capabilities, assets, resources, and activities that individuals and households utilize to secure the necessities of life and improve their standard of living (Chambers & Conway, 1992). A sustainable livelihood depends on adequate access to employment opportunities, education, productive resources, and social support systems (Ellis, 2000). For single-parent households, livelihood coping strategies are essential for adapting to economic hardship and maintaining household welfare. Such strategies include income diversification, self-employment, engagement in multiple occupations, participation in cooperative societies, reliance on family support, and prudent household expenditure (Oladipo & Yusuf, 2022).

Kaduna North Local Government Area is one of the rapidly urbanising areas of Kaduna State, characterized by increasing population growth, commercial activities, and socio-cultural diversity. Despite these opportunities, many households continue to experience poverty, unemployment, inflation, and other socio-economic challenges that adversely affect their livelihoods (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). These conditions have intensified the burden on single-parent households, making it necessary to examine the livelihood coping strategies adopted by both male and female single parents. Understanding these coping mechanisms is essential for designing policies and interventions aimed at improving household resilience, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable livelihoods (African Development Bank, 2023).

Although previous studies have examined poverty, household welfare, and female-headed households in Nigeria, limited empirical evidence exists on the comparative livelihood coping strategies adopted by both male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the incidence of single parenthood, its causes, effects on household wellbeing, and the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households. The findings will contribute to existing knowledge and provide useful evidence for policymakers, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and development partners in developing effective programmes to improve the welfare and resilience of vulnerable households (World Bank, 2024; United Nations, 2023).

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Statement of the Problem

The increasing prevalence of single-parent households has become a major socio-economic concern due to its effects on household welfare and sustainable livelihoods. In Kaduna North Local Government Area, factors such as widowhood, divorce, separation, abandonment, and teenage pregnancy have increased the number of single-parent households. These households often face challenges including low income, unemployment, and heavy caregiving responsibilities, leading them to adopt various livelihood coping strategies.

Despite the growing incidence of single parenthood, limited empirical studies have compared the coping strategies of both male and female single-parent households in the study area. This knowledge gap necessitated this study to examine the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area. The findings are expected to provide useful information for policymakers and development agencies in designing effective programmes to improve the welfare of single-parent households.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the incidence of single parenthood in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State;
2. Examine the factors responsible for single parenthood among households in the study area;
3. assess the effects of single parenthood on household and family wellbeing; and
4. Examine the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the incidence of single parenthood in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State?
2. What factors are responsible for the increasing incidence of single parenthood in the study area?
3. What are the effects of single parenthood on household and family wellbeing?

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4. What livelihood coping strategies are adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

H_1: There is a statistically significant difference in the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The geographical scope covered selected communities within the Local Government Area, namely Abakpa, Badarawa, Doka, Hayin Banki, Kabala Doki, Kabala Costain, Kawo, Malali, Ungwan Dosa, Ungwan Gwari, Ungwar Kanawa, Ungwar Rimi, Ungwar Sarki, and Ungwar Shanu.

The study focused specifically on male and female single-parent households. It examined the incidence of single parenthood, the factors responsible for its occurrence, its effects on household and family wellbeing, and the livelihood coping strategies adopted by affected households. The research relied on information obtained from respondents during the period of field data collection through questionnaires, interviews, observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Justification of the Study

Single parenthood has increasingly become an important social and developmental issue in Nigeria because of its implications for poverty, child welfare, household resilience, and sustainable livelihoods. Despite the growing number of single-parent households, empirical evidence on the livelihood coping strategies adopted by both male and female single parents remains limited, particularly within Kaduna North Local Government Area. Most previous studies have concentrated on female-headed households with relatively little attention paid to the experiences and coping mechanisms of male single parents. This imbalance has limited a comprehensive understanding of how gender influences household survival strategies.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to policy formulation and programme development aimed at improving the welfare of vulnerable households. Government ministries, social welfare agencies, non-governmental organisations,

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community-based organisations, and development partners will benefit from the evidence generated in designing interventions that promote economic empowerment, social protection, vocational training, and livelihood support for single-parent families.
The study will also contribute to academic scholarship by expanding the existing literature on family structure, household welfare, and livelihood strategies in Nigeria. Furthermore, it will serve as a valuable reference for researchers, students, policymakers, and practitioners interested in family studies, social geography, development studies, sociology, and related disciplines.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The Local Government Area lies between latitude 10°30′N and 11°00′N and longitude 7°23′E and 7°30′E, covering an estimated land area of approximately 72 km², with Doka serving as its administrative headquarters. It shares boundaries with Igabi Local Government Area to the north, River Kaduna to the east, and Tudun Wada to the west. The area is characterized by gently undulating terrain with elevations ranging between 550 and 600 metres above sea level. Its geology consists predominantly of Basement Complex rocks comprising gneiss, quartzite, and schist, while the soils are mainly ferruginous tropical soils suitable for agriculture and urban development. Kaduna North experiences a tropical continental climate characterized by distinct wet and dry seasons, receiving an average annual rainfall of approximately 1,530 mm, with temperatures ranging from about 15.9°C to 35°C.
The vegetation belongs to the Northern Guinea Savannah ecological zone, although rapid urbanization and infrastructural development have significantly altered the natural vegetation. Kaduna North is ethnically diverse, with major ethnic groups including Hausa, Fulani, Gwari, Bajju, Igbo, Yoruba, Igala, Idoma, and Ebira. The inhabitants engage primarily in civil service, commerce, transportation, agriculture, artisan work, and various small-scale businesses, supported by relatively developed educational, healthcare, and transportation infrastructure. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-economic characteristics play a significant role in shaping the livelihood opportunities and coping capacities of households. Variables such as age, sex, educational attainment, occupation, income, marital status, household size, and number of children influence the ability of single parents to generate income, provide adequate care for their children, and respond effectively to socio-economic challenges. This section presents and discusses the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and explains their implications for livelihood coping strategies among male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age and Sex

Age Group (Years)	Male (No.)	Male (%)	Female (No.)	Female (%)	Total (No.)	Total (%)
Less than 15	–	–	4	1.5	4	1.0
15–19	6	4.1	16	5.8	22	5.2
20–24	7	4.8	16	5.8	23	5.5
25–29	31	21.2	54	19.7	85	20.2
30–34	38	26.0	55	20.1	93	22.1
35–39	25	17.1	37	13.5	62	14.8
40–44	20	13.7	52	19.0	72	17.1
45–49	19	13.0	40	14.6	59	14.0
Total	**146**	**100**	**274**	**100**	**420**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Discussion

Table 1 show that the majority of respondents were within the economically productive age brackets of **25–44 years**, accounting for over two-thirds of the sampled population. Specifically, respondents aged **30–34 years constituted the largest proportion (22.1%)**, followed by those aged **25–29 years (20.2%)** and **40–44 years (17.1%)**. Respondents aged less than 15 years accounted for only **1.0%**, making them the least represented age category.

The findings indicate that most single parents remain within active working ages where employment, entrepreneurship, and other livelihood activities are expected to support household welfare. However, being economically active does not necessarily translate into improved living conditions, as many respondents still face significant financial constraints due to the absence of a second income earner.

The results further reveal that female respondents (**274**) substantially outnumbered male respondents (**146**), indicating that female-headed households constitute the majority of single-parent families in Kaduna North Local Government Area. This pattern reflects prevailing demographic realities in Nigeria, where women frequently assume primary caregiving responsibilities following widowhood, divorce, or marital separation.

The dominance of female-headed households suggests that women bear a disproportionate share of household responsibilities, including childcare, education, healthcare, and income generation. Consequently, female single parents may experience greater livelihood vulnerability than their male counterparts because they often have fewer economic opportunities and limited access to productive resources.

These findings corroborate recent studies which reported that female-headed households remain more susceptible to economic hardship due to gender disparities in

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employment, income, and ownership of productive assets (Adewuyi & Adebayo, 2021; UNDP, 2022). They also align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 5 (Gender Equality), which emphasize reducing poverty among vulnerable households and promoting equal economic opportunities for women.

Religious Affiliation of Respondents

(Former Figure 2 should be redesigned into a bar chart or summary table in line with the reviewer's recommendation.)

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Religion	Percentage (%)
Islam	56.7
Christianity	28.3
Traditional Religion	15.0

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

The findings indicate that **Islam was the dominant religion (56.7%)** among respondents, followed by **Christianity (28.3%)**, while **Traditional Religion accounted for 15.0%** of the respondents.

The predominance of Muslims reflects the demographic composition of Kaduna North Local Government Area, where Islam constitutes the major religion. Religious affiliation may influence household livelihood through community support systems, charitable giving, and participation in faith-based welfare programmes that provide financial and emotional assistance to vulnerable households.

The study also observed differences in religious composition between male and female respondents. Male respondents recorded a relatively higher proportion of Muslims, whereas female respondents had relatively higher proportions of Christians. These variations reflect the diverse socio-cultural composition of the study area rather than differences in livelihood behaviour.

Religious institutions have increasingly become important sources of livelihood support for single-parent households by providing food assistance, educational support, counselling services, and financial aid. Consequently, partnerships between government agencies and faith-based organisations could strengthen social protection programmes targeting vulnerable families.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Educational Level	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
No Formal Education	4.8	5.9	5.5
Qur'anic Education	10.3	6.9	8.1
Primary Education	8.9	11.7	10.7
Secondary Education	25.3	29.9	28.3
Tertiary Education	50.7	45.6	47.4

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

Table 3 indicates that nearly **half of the respondents (47.4%) possessed tertiary education**, while **28.3% completed secondary education**. Only **5.5% had no formal education**, suggesting that educational attainment among respondents was relatively high.

The relatively high educational attainment is expected to improve employability and income-generating opportunities. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that education alone does not guarantee economic security for single-parent households. Despite possessing tertiary qualifications, many respondents continued to experience financial hardship arising from unemployment, underemployment, rising living costs, and increasing family responsibilities.

Gender comparisons reveal only slight differences in educational attainment between male and female respondents, indicating gradual improvement in access to education for women. However, translating educational achievement into stable employment remains a significant challenge.

These findings support recent evidence that educational attainment enhances household resilience by improving employment prospects and income opportunities but is often constrained by broader macroeconomic conditions such as inflation, unemployment, and limited labour market opportunities (NBS, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Education therefore remains a necessary but insufficient condition for sustainable livelihood among single-parent households.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Percentage (%)
Civil Service	27.4
Business/Trading	27.4
Unskilled Labour	15.5
Farming	10.5
Students	6.2

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Occupation	Percentage (%)
Unemployed	9.8
Others	3.2

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

The occupational distribution of respondents indicates that civil service and business activities constituted the major sources of livelihood, with each accounting for **27.4**% of respondents. Unskilled labour represented **15.5**%, while farming accounted for **10.5**%. Smaller proportions were recorded for students (**6.2**%) and unemployed respondents (**9.8**%).

Gender analysis revealed notable occupational differences. Female single parents were more concentrated in civil service and small-scale business activities, whereas male respondents were more engaged in physically demanding occupations such as construction work, carpentry, transportation, and other forms of unskilled labour. These differences reflect prevailing gender roles and labour market structures within the study area.

The findings further suggest that many respondents depend on informal sector activities for survival. Although self-employment and petty trading provide immediate sources of income, these occupations often generate unstable earnings that may not adequately meet household needs, particularly in periods of economic uncertainty and inflation.

Recent labour market reports indicate that many Nigerian households increasingly rely on informal employment because of limited formal job opportunities. Consequently, single-parent households remain particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in income, thereby increasing their dependence on multiple livelihood strategies and social support networks (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023; World Bank, 2022).

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Less than ₦5,000	4.8	5.8	5.5
₦5,000–₦10,000	9.6	13.9	12.4
₦11,000–₦15,000	19.9	18.6	19.0
₦16,000–₦20,000	13.7	13.9	13.8
₦26,000–₦30,000	12.3	18.6	16.4
₦30,000 and above	39.7	29.2	32.9

Source: Field Survey (2012).

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Discussion

Table 5 shows variations in respondents' monthly income. Approximately one-third (**32.9**%) earned **₦30,000 and above**, while **19.0**% earned between **₦11,000 and ₦15,000** monthly. However, over half of the respondents earned below levels considered adequate for meeting household demands, indicating widespread economic vulnerability among single-parent households.

Gender differences were also evident. Male respondents recorded higher proportions within the highest income category (**39.7**%) compared with female respondents (**29.2**%). Conversely, female respondents constituted a higher proportion within the lower income categories. These findings suggest that female-headed households generally experience greater financial constraints than male-headed households.

The income disparity may be attributed to differences in employment opportunities, occupational segregation, access to productive resources, and prevailing gender inequalities within the labour market. Lower income reduces the ability of households to provide adequate nutrition, healthcare, housing, and education for children, thereby increasing household vulnerability.

These findings agree with recent studies indicating that female-headed households in Nigeria remain disproportionately affected by poverty because women generally have less access to formal employment, credit facilities, and productive assets than men (UNDP, 2022; World Bank, 2022).

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Percentage (%)
Widowed	40.7
Divorced	26.2
Separated	20.0
Never Married	13.1

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

Table 6 reveals that widowhood was the leading circumstance resulting in single parenthood, accounting for **40.7**% of respondents. Divorce represented **26.2**%, followed by separation (**20.0**%) and respondents who had never married (**13.1**%).

The predominance of widowhood highlights the social and economic consequences of losing a spouse, particularly where the deceased was the principal income earner. Divorce and separation also contributed substantially to the growth of single-parent households, reflecting changing family structures and increasing marital instability.

The findings suggest that the causes of single parenthood are multifaceted, involving demographic, economic, and socio-cultural factors. Consequently, interventions designed

to improve household welfare should address both preventive and supportive dimensions, including family counselling, social protection, and economic empowerment programmes.

Table 7: Respondents' Perception of the Incidence of Single Parenthood

Response	Percentage (%)
Increasing	62.9
Not Increasing	18.3
Undecided	18.8

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

Table 7 indicates that **62.9%** of respondents believed that single parenthood is increasing within Kaduna North Local Government Area. Only **18.3%** perceived no increase, while **18.8%** were uncertain.

Information obtained through interviews and Focus Group Discussions identified widowhood, poverty, teenage pregnancy, marital conflicts, abandonment, insecurity, and family instability as major contributors to the increasing incidence of single parenthood. Community leaders interviewed during the study also emphasized that economic hardship and social conflicts have intensified family instability within the study area.

The findings suggest that single parenthood has evolved beyond an individual family issue into a broader socio-economic concern affecting community welfare and sustainable development. Rising inflation, unemployment, insecurity, and changing family values

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents by Number of Children

Number of Children	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
None	9.6	9.5	9.5
1–2	43.2	36.1	38.6
3–4	26.0	29.2	28.1
5–6	11.6	16.1	14.5
7–8	4.8	6.2	5.7
9 and above	4.8	2.9	3.6
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

Table 8 presents the distribution of respondents according to the number of children. The findings indicate that the largest proportion of respondents (**38.6%**) had between **one and**

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two children, while **28.1%** had between **three and four children**. Respondents with **five to six children** constituted **14.5%**, whereas only **3.6%** reported having **nine or more children**.

The relatively small family sizes observed among most respondents may reflect changing reproductive behaviour, increasing living costs, urbanization, and the economic realities confronting single-parent households. Raising children as a single parent requires substantial financial and emotional resources; consequently, households with fewer children may find it relatively easier to provide for their basic needs.

The findings further reveal slight gender differences. Male respondents recorded a higher proportion of households with one or two children, whereas female respondents constituted a larger proportion among households with three to six children. This suggests that many female single parents shoulder greater caregiving responsibilities, which may increase household expenditure and reduce opportunities for income generation.

Household size and the number of dependent children significantly influence livelihood sustainability because larger families require increased expenditure on food, healthcare, housing, and education. Consequently, family size remains an important determinant of household vulnerability and poverty among single-parent families.

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents by Household Size

Household Size	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
1–2 Persons	27.4	27.4	27.4
3–4 Persons	27.4	36.1	33.1
5–6 Persons	15.8	20.1	18.6
7–8 Persons	19.2	15.3	16.5
9 Persons and Above	10.3	9.9	10.0

Source: Field Survey (2012).

Discussion

Table 9 shows that the majority of respondents lived in relatively small households. The highest proportions were recorded among households comprising **one to four persons**, while only **10.0%** had household sizes of **nine persons or more**.

Household size has important implications for household welfare because it determines the level of financial responsibility placed on the household head. Larger households require greater expenditure on feeding, accommodation, healthcare, education, and other essential needs. Consequently, single parents with larger household sizes are more likely to experience economic stress and reduced livelihood resilience.

The findings further indicate that female-headed households generally maintained relatively smaller household sizes than their male counterparts. This may reflect cultural

practices, household arrangements following marital dissolution, and the tendency for some children to reside with relatives after divorce or separation.

These findings underscore the importance of considering household composition when designing interventions for vulnerable families. Social protection programmes should pay particular attention to household dependency ratios rather than focusing solely on household income.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

H_1: There is a statistically significant difference in the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

Table 10: Summary of Chi-square (χ^2) Analysis

Variable	χ^2 Calculated (Insert Computed Value)	df (df)	p-value (p-value)	Decision
Livelihood Coping Strategies by Gender				Accept or Reject H_0

Note: The uploaded manuscript states that the **Chi-square test** was used but **does not provide the computed χ^2 value, degrees of freedom, or p-value**. Therefore, these statistical values cannot be generated or inserted without the original SPSS output or raw dataset.

Interpretation

The Chi-square test was employed to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists in the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households. The decision to accept or reject the null hypothesis should be based on the calculated Chi-square value and the corresponding probability value obtained from the statistical analysis.

If the probability value (p-value) is less than the chosen significance level of **0.05**, the null hypothesis should be rejected, indicating that gender significantly influences the livelihood coping strategies adopted by single-parent households. Conversely, if the p-value exceeds **0.05**, the null hypothesis should be accepted, implying that no statistically significant difference exists between male and female respondents regarding their coping strategies.

Since the uploaded manuscript does not contain the actual Chi-square output, no statistical conclusion can legitimately be drawn.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide important insights into the socioeconomic characteristics and livelihood coping strategies of male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area.

The study established that female-headed households constituted the majority of single-parent families, indicating that women remain more vulnerable to single parenthood resulting from widowhood, divorce, separation, and abandonment. This finding supports the broader demographic pattern observed in Nigeria, where women generally assume primary caregiving responsibilities following marital dissolution. It also reinforces recent evidence indicating that female-headed households face greater economic vulnerability because of gender disparities in employment opportunities, access to productive assets, and financial resources.

The findings further demonstrated that household size and the number of dependent children significantly influenced the livelihood conditions of single-parent households. Respondents with larger household sizes experienced greater financial pressure because they were required to provide food, clothing, education, healthcare, and other essential services for more dependants using limited financial resources. Consequently, many households adopted various coping strategies, including reducing household expenditure, engaging in multiple income-generating activities, relying on assistance from relatives, and seeking support from religious and community organisations. These findings suggest that household composition is an important determinant of livelihood sustainability among single-parent families.

The study also established that the livelihood coping strategies adopted by respondents reflected the realities of increasing economic hardship in Nigeria. Most respondents diversified their sources of income by combining formal employment with small-scale trading, farming, artisan work, transportation services, and other informal sector activities. Others relied on family members, friends, cooperative societies, religious institutions, and community-based support networks to supplement household income. While these strategies contributed to household survival, they were generally insufficient to completely address the economic and social challenges confronting single-parent households.

The findings agree with recent studies which reported that livelihood diversification has become one of the principal survival mechanisms among vulnerable households in developing countries. Households that combine multiple income sources generally demonstrate greater resilience to economic shocks than those relying on a single source of income. Nevertheless, livelihood diversification alone cannot eliminate poverty where employment opportunities remain limited and inflation continues to erode household purchasing power.

Overall, the findings indicate that livelihood outcomes among single-parent households are influenced by a combination of demographic, economic, educational, and institutional factors. Addressing these challenges therefore requires integrated interventions that simultaneously promote employment creation, social protection, access to credit, skills acquisition, educational support for children, and gender-inclusive economic policies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the livelihood coping strategies adopted by male and female single-parent households in Kaduna North Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that widowhood, divorce, separation, abandonment, poverty, and teenage pregnancy are the major causes of single parenthood, with female-headed households experiencing greater socioeconomic challenges. Respondents adopted coping strategies such as income diversification, petty trading, farming, civil service employment, and reliance on family and community support. However, these strategies were insufficient to adequately address poverty and economic hardship. The study concludes that strengthening economic empowerment, social protection, and employment opportunities is essential for improving the livelihoods and wellbeing of single-parent households.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strengthen Economic Empowerment Programmes: Government at all levels, in collaboration with development partners and non-governmental organisations, should establish targeted economic empowerment programmes for single-parent households. Such programmes should include vocational training, entrepreneurship development, access to microcredit, business grants, and financial literacy initiatives to enhance household income generation.

2. Expand Employment Opportunities: Policies aimed at promoting decent employment should be strengthened to improve the economic conditions of single-parent households. Both public and private sector institutions should implement inclusive employment policies that provide equal opportunities for vulnerable groups, particularly women.

3. Improve Social Protection Systems: Government should expand existing social protection programmes to include cash transfers, health insurance, childcare support, food assistance, and housing support specifically targeted at economically disadvantaged single-parent households.

4. Enhance Access to Education: Scholarship schemes, educational grants, and free learning materials should be provided for children from single-parent households to

reduce school dropout rates and improve educational attainment. Such interventions will contribute to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

5. Promote Skills Acquisition and Livelihood Diversification: Single parents should be encouraged to participate in vocational and technical training programmes that improve employability and facilitate income diversification. Skills in agriculture, digital entrepreneurship, tailoring, catering, information technology, and other vocational trades should receive particular attention.

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