

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

CHALLENGES OF STUDENTS FROM SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN

KWAHU-EAST DISTRICT, GHANA



GIDEON DAVORDZIE

2024

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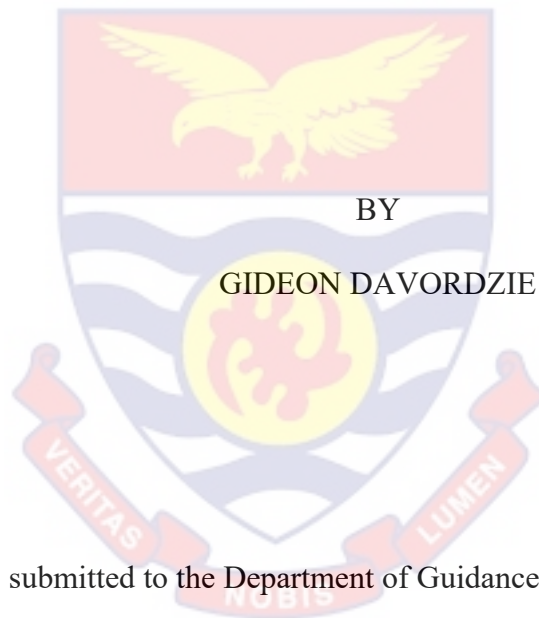
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This thesis submitted to the Department of Guidance and Counselling of the Faculty of Educational Foundations, College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Guidance and Counselling

MAY 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere

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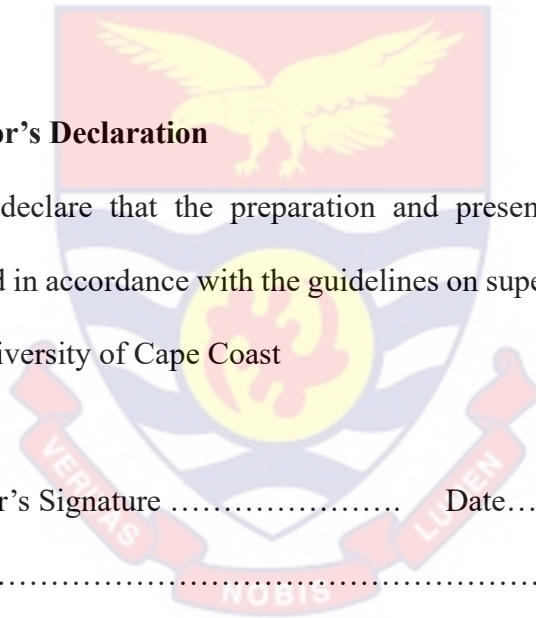
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast

Supervisor's Signature Date.....

Name



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District. The descriptive survey design, based on the quantitative approach was adopted. The study focused on 361 Form two (2) students from single-parent homes. A multi-stage sampling strategy was used in this study. Among the 361 distributed questionnaires, 357 were fully completed and returned, forming the basis for all subsequent analyses. Therefore, the analysis relied on data from 357 respondents. All measurement scales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values averaging .726. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics such as means and standard deviations and One-way MANOVA. It was found that low grades or academic failures disheartened most students and they also had restricted access to resources or learning materials. Again, most students used self-reflection and positive self-talk to combat negative ideas and boost their self-confidence. Furthermore, gender disparities accounted for some differences in the challenges of students from single parent homes but religion did not. It was concluded that students from single-parent homes within the Kwahu- East District experienced academic, emotional and social challenges. It was recommended that stakeholders, mainly Educational Directorate of Kwahu, should encourage Heads of senior high schools and teachers within the District to implement support mechanisms such as offer regular study skills workshop specifically designed for students from single parent homes to help them develop effective study habits and time management skill.

KEYWORDS

Single parenting

Academic challenge

Emotional challenge

Social challenge

Copping strategies

Social support



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



DEDICATION



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Students from single-parent homes face a unique set of challenges that can significantly impact various aspects of their lives (Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah, 2020). In Ghana, where the population of single parent households has been on the rise in recent years (Ntummy et al., 2020), it is important to understand the specific challenges that these students face in order to provide targeted support and interventions. However, there is a dearth of research on the topic, particularly in relation to its impact on student's education and emotional and psychosocial well-being (Essuman et al., 2020). Therefore, there is a need to research to better understand the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu East District of the Eastern region of Ghana. The study covered the academic, emotional and psychosocial challenges of these students from single-parent homes. The findings of the study would assist stakeholders of students of single parent in identifying effective strategies to support them.

Background to the Study

Single parenting refers to the situation where one adult assumes the primary caregiving responsibilities for a child or children without the presence of a partner or spouse (Baffour et al., 2019). Baffour et al. further indicated that single parenthood is becoming increasingly common in many countries around the world. From data released by the United States Census Bureau, in 2020, approximately 13.7 million single-parent households were headed by women, while about 2.9 million were headed by men. Single parenthood can have a significant wave on both the parent and the child in diverse respects, such that

it can be emotional, financial, and physical challenges. Single-parent families may also face challenges in providing emotional support, supervision, and discipline for their children.

Amponsah-Tawiah and Mensah (2020) disclosed that students in single-parent families may be at greater risk of negative outcomes, such as academic difficulties, behavioural problems, and emotional issues (Frimpong-Manso et al., 2021; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). However, it is important to note that not all single-parent families experience negative outcomes, and many thrive despite the challenges (Yankah et al., 2021). In other words, some researchers have shown that single parenthood can have both positive and negative effects on children (Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah, 2020; Atinga et al., 2020). On the one hand, children in single-parent households may develop independence, maturity, and resilience at a younger age due to their increased responsibilities and exposure to adult issues (Sato, 2019). On the other hand, children in single-parent households may be more likely to experience poverty and behavioural problems due to a lack of emotional and financial support (Amoateng & Heaton, 2018; Parke & Buriel, 2006).

Studies (Aryee & Ampiah, 2019; Asamoah & Boakye, 2021) have shown that students from single-parent families face numerous challenges academically, including lower academic achievement, decreased motivation, and difficulty adjusting to new environments. Further, children from single-parent families face difficulties in concentration, motivation, and self-discipline, which negatively affect their academic performance, as shown by Asamoah and Boakye (2021). These challenges can be further complicated by factors such as age and religion (Aryee & Ampiah, 2019). For instance, Aryee and Ampiah's

(2019) study at Bono-East District of Ghana found that students from single-parent families who were older and in their final years of senior high school faced more academic challenges compared to those in lower grades. Again, a study conducted by Asamoah and Boakye (2021) at Afigya Kwabre District in Ghana reported that these challenges were more prevalent among older students aged 15 years and above, as they often had to assume adult responsibilities at home.

In terms of gender, students from single-parent families who are boys are more likely to experience academic challenges than girls (Oduro & Takyi, 2020). As stated by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) (2018), boys from single-parent families may face difficulties with time management, have low self-esteem, and lack motivation in school more than girls. This may be because their academic, social and emotion experiences differ considerably from that of girls and so influencing their development and thus, makes their experiences gender specific.

Religion can play a role in how students from single-parent homes face challenges in their academic pursuits (Thompson & Lee, 2020). From Amonu, Acheampong, Agyemang, Adoku, and Adusei (2018), religious involvement can act as a protective factor for these students, as it provides them with a source of emotional and social support. More religious students may be able to cope better with the stress and uncertainty that can come with being from a single-parent home. Additionally, if a student's religion is not widely practised in their area or school, they may face discrimination or social exclusion from their peers (Wink, 2018). While religion can both positively and negatively affect the challenges faced by students from single parent homes, some studies

(Agyemang et al., 2021; Oluwatosin & Joseph, 2011) suggest that religion can serve as a shielding factor for students in single-parent families by providing a sense of community, support, and guidance. For example, a study by Bell (2018) found that religiosity was associated with better mental health outcomes for students in single-parent families. Also, the role of religion as a variable in the challenges faced by students from single parent homes is complex. It may depend on a variety of factors, such as the specific religious beliefs and practices of the family, the level of support and guidance provided by the religious community, and the students' individual experiences and beliefs (Birman & Trickett, 2018).

Moreover, an investigation conducted by Hossain and Roopnarine (2021) explored how single parenthood affects the socio-emotional development of children in Bangladesh. Their research revealed that children raised in single-parent homes exhibited diminished socio-emotional development compared to those from households with two parents. Nevertheless, the study also highlighted that support from extended family members and the community could mitigate the adverse impacts of single parenthood on children's development, as noted by Mensah and Ameyaw (2019).

Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2020) revealed that students from single-parent families are at a greater risk of facing academic challenges (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2020; Asante & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2021; Embi et al., 2021). A study by Asante and Nsowah-Nuamah (2021) found that students from single-parent families experienced more academic stress and anxiety than those from two-parent families. The study suggested that this may be due to the lack of

emotional and financial support from the absent parent, which can lead to higher levels of stress and anxiety among these students. Moreover, a study by Akosah-Twumasi et al (2020) found that students from single-parent families were more likely to have poor time management skills and poor study habits, which can lead to poor academic performance. This may be due to the lack of structure and routine in their daily lives, as well as limited parental supervision and support. These studies suggest that students from single-parent families face a variety of academic challenges, including lower academic achievement, academic stress and anxiety, poor time management skills, and poor study habits.

In Ghana, where the proportion of single-parent households has been on the rise in recent years, it is important to understand the specific challenges that these students face to provide targeted support and interventions. Furthermore, previous research (Aryee & Ampiah, 2019; Fawole & Ngwu, 2021) in Ghana has shown that students from single-parent homes are more likely to experience academic difficulties, such as lower grades and a higher likelihood of dropping out of school (Aryeetey et al., 2020).

It is essential to explore not only the difficulties these students face but also the coping strategies they adopt to manage or overcome these challenges. Students from single-parent households often encounter emotional, financial, academic, and social difficulties due to limited support, increased responsibilities, or reduced parental involvement (Perera, 2021). However, many students develop adaptive strategies to deal with these issues. Many students turn to friends and peer groups for emotional comfort, academic assistance (e.g., study groups), and social inclusion (Juvonen et al., 2019). These peer relationships often help them feel a sense of belonging and reduce feelings

of isolation. Students from single-parent families often rely on grandparents, aunts, uncles, or older siblings for emotional, financial, and sometimes academic support (Koh et al., 2017). This form of communal support helps to fill the gap left by the absent parent. Students may access help through school counsellors, teachers, or mentorship programs (Boswell et al., 2015). Teachers often play a parental role in the lives of such students, offering advice, encouragement, and guidance on academic and personal matters. Lastly, participating in sports, clubs, or creative arts helps students relieve stress, build confidence, and discover talents. These activities provide healthy outlets and boost social connections, which are vital for emotional well-being.

Single-parent households in Ghana face a range of challenges that can impact students' educational outcomes (Aryeetey et al., 2020); less is known about the specific challenges that these students from these single-parent families face in the setting of Kwahu-East District of the Eastern Region. Therefore, this research will investigate some specific challenges, such as social, academic, and emotional challenges of students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu Ridge milieu in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Also, how gender and religion could significantly differ among these challenges will be considered. Lastly, the study will also cover some coping mechanisms adopted by students to deal with their challenges.

Statement of the Problem

The situation in Africa and Ghana, in particular regarding single-parent families, is complex and multifaceted and can vary depending on various factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural beliefs, and government policies (Okeke, 2019). A report by the African Population and Health Research Center

[APHRC] in 2016 showed that single-parent families are becoming increasingly common in Africa, particularly in urban areas. This is partly due to the changing family structure resulting from urbanization, migration, and the breakdown of traditional family systems. While data on the prevalence of single-parent families in Africa is limited, there is evidence to suggest that the number of single-parent households is on the rise in many African countries, including Ghana (Ankomah & Agyemang, 2016).

In 2017, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) reported that approximately 15% of households in Ghana are led by single parents, with women assuming the primary caregiving role in most instances. These families are more susceptible to poverty, and children in such households face a heightened risk of discontinuing their education. Moreover, students from single-parent homes are prone to encountering various challenges, including decreased academic performance and emotional issues. According to GSS data from 2020, the Eastern Region of Ghana has witnessed a consistent increase in the prevalence of single-parent households, rising from 14.9% to 17.4% in 2014, with an estimated 20.4% of households now being headed by single parents (GSS, 2020).

Despite the increasing prevalence of single-parent households in the Kwahu-East District, little information exists regarding the specific challenges encountered by students from these households concerning their academic, emotional, social, and psychological welfare. While past studies have indicated that students from single parent families in Ghana face disadvantages in terms of educational achievements, as well as emotional, social, and psychological aspects, limited understanding exists regarding the distinct challenges

experienced by students from single parent households, specifically in the Kwahu-East District of the Eastern Region. Additionally, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding the strategies that could be employed to facilitate their academic success.

As a school counsellor in St. Peter's Senior High School in Kwahu-East District for the past three (3) years, I have observed that about 60% of cases referred from the Disciplinary Committee are students from single-parent homes. Further, in my deliberations with these referred students, I noticed they faced numerous challenges relating to their personal, social and academic lives. These challenges include feelings of loneliness, stigmatization and lack of funds to pay for educational materials. This makes them feel marginalised and disconnected from the school community as they prioritise addressing immediate needs over complying with school rules. These significantly impair their success in school as they seek validation beyond the school environment. This situation in St. Peter's SHS could be similar to the situation in other schools in Kwahu- East District. Hence, the a need for this study in the Kwahu–East District.

Research (Anyakoha, 2016; Khan & Akhtar, 2020; Yaw, 2016) conducted both internationally and in Ghana has extensively explored the challenges encountered by students growing up in single-parent households, shedding light on various dimensions such as academic struggles, social interactions, and emotional well-being (Anyakoha, 2016; Khan & Akhtar, 2020; Yaw, 2016). In international contexts, researches have delved into the impact of single parenthood on academic performance, psychological well-being, and educational dynamics among students (Amato, 2005; Hetherington &

Clingempeel, 1992). Within the Ghanaian context, Takyi-Amoako and Yankah (2021) explored the challenges faced by single-parent families in Ghana, emphasizing issues related to economic constraints and limited access to resources. Additionally, the investigations by Asante and Nsowah-Nuamah (2021) as well as Akosah-Twumasi et al. (2020) delved into areas such as parental absence, academic stress, and family structure as crucial factors influencing students' academic performance.

Despite these valuable insights, significant gaps such as geographical gap, literature gap and methodological gap persist within the existing literature, particularly when examining the unique context of the Eastern Region of Ghana. Firstly, the geographical gap strengthens the research problem by pointing to the absence of empirical studies focused on rural districts such as Kwahu-East. Much of the existing research on the impact of family structure on students' academic performance and well-being in Ghana tends to be concentrated in other areas other than Kwahu-East (Boateng 2021; Asante, 2019).

Again, the literature gap adds further weight to the research problem. While the topic of single-parent families has received some attention in the international academic community, there is a noticeable paucity of literature that situates the experiences of these students alongside their coping mechanisms, gender and religion. Finally, the methodological gap provides another compelling justification for the study. Prior research on single-parent families and student challenges in Ghana often relies on either anecdotal evidence or limited qualitative accounts, without the rigorous application of quantitative or mixed-methods research designs (Washburn, 2024; Tsitey, 2022).

This study sought to address these gaps by conducting a comprehensive investigation into the challenges faced by students from single-parent families within the Eastern Region, with a specific emphasis on the Kwahu-East District, allowing for more localized and targeted interventions. By focusing on the Kwahu-East District, this study uncovered challenges that are specific to the area that may not have been adequately captured by broader research. Also, this study sought to examine the role of gender and religion in the challenges experienced by these students. It was based on the stated situation in the Kwahu-East district as well as gaps identified in the literature that this study was aimed at investigating the challenges of students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu-East district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify the academic challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District.
2. investigate the social challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District.
3. determine the emotional challenges faced by students from single parent families in the Kwahu-East District.
4. explore the factors that contribute to these challenges.
5. examine the coping strategies used by students from single-parent families to overcome these challenges.

6. investigate the significant gender differences in the challenges students from single parent families face.
7. assess the significant religious difference in the challenges students from single-parent families face.

Research Questions

1. What are the academic challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District?
2. What are the social challenges faced by students from single -parent families in the Kwahu East District?
3. What are the emotional challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District?
4. What factors contribute to the challenges faced by students from the Kwahu East District of Ghana?
5. What are the coping strategies used by students from single-parent families to overcome these challenges?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

1. H_0 : There will be no significant difference in the academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on gender.
 H_A : There will be a significant difference in the academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on gender.
2. H_0 : There will be no significant difference in the academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on religion.
 H_A : There will be a significant difference in academic, social, and emotional challenges for students based on religion.

Significance of the Study

The study provided a comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District. The findings of the study may inform policymakers, government agencies, and educational institutions about the needs and concerns of students from single-parent families. This may contribute to the development of targeted policies, programmes, and interventions aimed at supporting these students and improving their educational outcomes.

This study will significantly benefit teachers by offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu-East District, Ghana. Armed with this insight, educators can adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate the specific needs of these student. The study's contribution lies in providing a roadmap for personalised support, enabling teachers to create a more inclusive and effective learning environment. As a result, teachers will be better equipped to address the socio-economic and emotional factors impacting their students, fostering improved engagement and academic success.

Students from single-parent homes will directly benefit from this study as it contributes to a more tailored and supportive educational experience. The research findings would lead to targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by these students. This proactive approach aims to enhance not only academic performance but also students over all well-being, empowering students to navigate their educational journey with increased resilience and satisfaction.

Parents play a crucial role in a student's educational journey, and this study provides them with valuable insights into the specific challenges their children may encounter. By increasing awareness, parents can actively engage with educators, creating a collaborative support system. This heightened communication can lead to more effective strategies for addressing challenges and fostering a positive and constructive relationship between parents and teachers. Ultimately, parents will be better equipped to support their children's academic, social and emotional needs.

For school authorities, the study offers a foundation for informed decision-making and policy development. By understanding the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes, school authorities can implement targeted policies that create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This proactive stance ensures that the system can adapt to the diverse needs of its students, fostering a sense of belonging and improving overall educational outcomes. The study's contribution to evidence-based policy development enhances the effectiveness of educational institutions in addressing the specific challenges identified in the Kwahu-East District.

The study would serve as a foundation for future research on students from single-parent families, both in Ghana and other similar contexts. Researchers can build upon the findings to delve deeper into specific aspects or explore related factors that may impact the academic success and well-being of these students.

Delimitations of the Study

This study focused solely on students from single-parent homes, examining the unique challenges they encounter in academic, social, and

emotional domains. This is due to the study's specific focus on understanding how single parenting influences students' challenges in academic, social, and emotional aspects. Furthermore, the number of schools included in the study was delimited to nine (9) schools within the Kwahu area. This specific number of schools was chosen to ensure a manageable sample size while still capturing a representative range of experiences as well as providing a balanced perspective on the challenges across different school settings. Lastly, the geographical area of focus was specifically delimited to the Kwahu-East district. This restriction was based on the intent to maintain a well-defined and geographically coherent study area, allowing for a concentrated examination of challenges faced by students from single-parent homes within a specific local context. This delimitation guarantees that the findings are contextually relevant and applicable to the targeted area of investigation.

Limitations of the Study

The study used the descriptive survey method and so will be inhibited by the limitations related to the use of this research instrument, such as close-ended questionnaires. This is so because, according to Sarpong and Sarpong (2020), the use of questionnaires in research studies does not provide in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation. Also, participants may have chosen not to submit honest answers to questions they felt were overly personal. To manage this situation, I discussed with respondents the need to provide honest responses to give a clear picture of the situation.

Another limitation of the study stems from challenges in gathering data from schools situated in remote areas, primarily due to geographical distances and challenges in the transportation infrastructure. Additionally, the single-track

system, coupled with varying vacation periods, made it difficult to consistently access students for data collection. The variation in vacation schedules created a disparity in the representation of students from single-parent homes across different schools. To address these constraints posed by the single-track system and varying vacation schedules, a flexible data collection timeline was adopted. I strategically coordinated with the schools to gather information during periods when students were available. This involved aligning with specific school events, extracurricular activities and alternative engagement strategies to capture data from students at different points throughout the academic calendar.

Definition of Terms

Single-parent family: A family in which one parent is the primary caregiver and has sole responsibility for the upbringing of the child or children.

Challenges: Difficulties that students from single-parent families may face in their academic, social and emotional lives.

Experiences: The unique lived experiences of students from single-parent families, including their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to their family structure.

Academic challenge: A set of difficulties that students face in their academic pursuits, including poor academic performance, lack of motivation, and poor study habits.

Social support: The availability and quality of social relationships and networks that provide emotional, informational, and practical support.

Social challenge: This refers to difficulties or obstacles faced by students in their interactions, relationships, and integration within their social environments.

Emotional challenge: This is regarded as the psychological difficulties, disturbances, and distressing experiences that students encounter in relation to their emotional well-being and mental health.

Religion: The religious affiliation or beliefs of the student, which may impact their experiences and challenges related to being from a single-parent family.

E.g. Christian or muslim

Organization of the Study

The study was organized into five main chapters. Chapter One covered the introduction of the study, the background to the study, statement of the problem. The purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitation, definition of terms and organization of the study are also presented in Chapter One. Chapter Two included the literature review highlighting the study's theoretical and conceptual framework as well as the empirical review. Chapter Three outlined the research methods that will be used for the study. This includes the research design, population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedures and data processing and analysis. Chapter Four focused on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the field. Chapter Five was a summary of the whole research process, key findings, conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the study was to investigate the challenges of students from single-parent families in the eastern region, of Ghana. This chapter provided an overview of existing literature concerning the difficulties encountered by students from single-parent households in the Eastern region of Ghana. The initial section concentrated on theoretical perspectives, incorporating the Social Learning Theory, the Family Stress Model Theory, and the Ecological Systems Theory as foundational frameworks for the research. The subsequent segment outlined the conceptual framework, emphasising the concepts relevant to the primary variables examined. Finally, the chapter addressed the empirical review, structured around the research questions and hypotheses that directed the study.

Theoretical Review

This aspect of the literature explored the key theories based on the objectives of the study. This section focused on three theories which are social learning theory, family stress model and ecological system theory.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory, introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1960, is a psychological model that elucidates how individuals acquire fresh behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions through observing and replicating the actions of others. This theory suggests that learning occurs not solely through firsthand experiences but also through witnessing the experiences of others. At the core of social learning theory lies the critical influence of cognitive mechanisms—including attention, retention, and motivation—on the development of human behavior. The

theory highlights the essential contribution of observational learning, modeling, and interpersonal exchanges to both the acquisition of knowledge and the shaping of behavioral patterns. According to Bandura, people acquire new skills and responses not solely through personal involvement but also by watching and replicating the actions, emotions, and attitudes exhibited by others (Bandura, 1977; Kim & Kim, 2010).

The social learning theory encompasses several key concepts, including reinforcement, vicarious reinforcement, and self-efficacy. Reinforcement pertains to the outcomes of behaviour whether positive or negative—that shape the likelihood of its repetition. Vicarious reinforcement occurs when individuals witness others being rewarded or punished for their actions, which influences their own behavioural choices. Self-efficacy, as described by Bandura (1977), refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to perform a specific behaviour successfully, drawing from their past experiences and observed outcomes.

Additionally, Bandura (2011) discusses how observing positive outcomes from specific actions serves as a reinforcement mechanism. Students, for instance, recognize the link between their parents' strategies and favourable results, motivating them to adopt and apply similar strategies to effectively address their challenges.

The theory highlights that learning is a result of ongoing interactions between cognitive elements, external stimuli, and behaviour. It stresses the importance of social context, modelling, and observational learning in acquiring new behaviours (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory asserts that the dynamic relationship among individual cognition, surroundings, and behaviour

is pivotal in comprehending how people learn and adapt (Bandura, 1977). It underscores the role of cognitive processes in mediating between observed behaviours and their replication, and it emphasizes the impact of reinforcement, punishment, and self-regulation in moulding learned behaviours. This theory offers valuable insights into how individuals acquire behaviours, attitudes, and skills through observation and modelling while acknowledging the interplay between behaviour, cognition, and the environment. Hence, it sheds light on how individuals gain, adjust, and apply new behaviours based on their interactions with others.

The theory proposes that learning takes place as individuals witness the outcomes of others' actions. Bandura's theory surpasses both behavioural theories, which posit that all behaviours stem from conditioning and cognitive theories. Social learning theory posits that individuals' real-life encounters and exposures, whether direct or indirect, significantly influence their behaviour.

It asserts that students' approaches to handling emotions, navigating conflicts, and engaging with others are honed through experience. Consequently, it posits that learning unfolds as individuals observe the repercussions of others' actions (Bandura, 2011; Bandura et al., 1961).

The theory's emphasis on observational learning highlights how students from single-parent homes absorb academic coping strategies by observing their single parent's behaviours (Bandura, 1986). These students might emulate time management skills, study habits, and problem-solving techniques exhibited by their parents. Moreover, the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) comes into play as students observe their single parent

successfully navigating work and parenting responsibilities, subsequently influencing their confidence in handling academic challenges. Thus, it examines how religious modelling influences students' self-efficacy, resilience, and emotional regulation, shedding light on religion's role in navigating difficulties.

The social learning theory's emphasis on imitating resilience (Bandura, 2018) is particularly relevant to understanding emotional challenges. As students witness their single parent's emotional fortitude in the face of adversity, they are likely to internalize and manifest similar resilience when dealing with emotional distress. This learned capacity to manage emotions can aid in addressing feelings of isolation, anxiety, and emotional strain (Bandura, 2011).

Modelling behaviour in relationships (Bandura, 2001) is pertinent in the realm of the social learning theory and social challenges of students. This modelling behaviour will enable students from single-parent households to observe and mirror their single-parent approaches to building relationships, seeking support, and navigating social interactions. These observed behaviours can shape their own social skills, communication patterns, and ability to establish connections, contributing to their social integration and well-being (Asante & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2021; Bandura, 2020; Essuman et al., 2020).

In essence, social learning theory is related to how students from single-parent homes observe and internalise religious coping mechanisms (observational learning), potentially influencing their responses to academic, social, and emotional challenges. It offers insights into how religious modelling and reinforcement might mediate their adaptive strategies, impacting their overall well-being by elaborating ways in which observational learning, role

modelling, and coping mechanisms interact to shape the students' responses and adaptation strategies.

Family Stress Theory (FST)

Family stress theory is a theory that explores the changes within a family dynamic that occur as a result of a stressful event. The theory was developed by sociologist Reuben Hill in 1949 and expanded upon in the 1950s by Pauline Boss, who provides a framework for understanding how families respond to stressors, particularly those that disrupt the usual routines and roles within the family unit. The family stress theory, often referred to as the ABCX Model of Family Stress, focuses on understanding the interaction between different factors that influence a family's ability to cope with stress and adapt to change (Hill, 1958). The ABCX Model consist of four main components, namely A, B, C and X. The ABCX Model is often represented using the formula "A x B x C = X".

The 'A' in the model denotes the initial stressor or crisis event that impacts the family. It could be a major life change, such as death, illness, divorce, job loss, or any other significant event that disrupts the family's equilibrium. B: designates the family's ability to cope with the initial stressor and refers to the family's resources, strengths, and surviving mechanisms. It includes the family's internal support systems, communication patterns, problem-solving skills, and resilience. C: signifies the family's description and interpretation of the stressful event as well as how the family members perceive and construe the stressor. Different family members may have varying viewpoints on the event, leading to differing levels of stress. Cultural, social,

and individual factors contribute to the family's interpretation of the stressor. X: The outcome of the equation represents the family's response to the stressor. It could range from no crisis or minimal disruption to a severe crisis that requires significant adaptation and coping. It involves external resources and support systems available to the family. These include extended family, friends, community organizations, religious institutions, and professional services. The presence and quality of external support can significantly influence a family's ability to manage strain (Boss, 2014; Thoits, 1983).

The ABCX Model emphasizes that families undergo a process of adaptation and change in response to stressors. This process involves managing the immediate crisis, adjusting to the new situation, and either achieving a new equilibrium or experiencing ongoing challenges and strain.

The family stress theory suggests that families experience stress when the combination of stressor intensity (A), lack of sufficient resources (B), and negative perceptions (C) surpasses their ability to cope effectively. The FST focuses on stressors that affect families, such as economic hardships, parenting challenges, and external demands. These stressors create tension and strain within the family environment. Thus, suggests that the interaction between stressors and family processes leads to variations in family functioning and individual well-being. Positive family processes can buffer the negative effects of stressors, while negative processes can exacerbate those effects (Boss, 2014).

The theory also highlights the fact that individual families' experiences of stress and coping vary widely based on their unique dynamics, cultural context, and available support systems. This theory underscores the notion that various stressors, such as economic strains, parenting challenges, and external

pressures, can create disturbances in a family's functioning. These disruptions can lead to heightened parental distress, altering the quality of parenting behaviours and interactions. Consequently, these shifts in family dynamics can affect the outcomes experienced by students, influencing areas such as academic performance, emotional health, and social relationships.

Specifically addressing the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes, the family stress model suggests that the absence of a second parent's financial and emotional support can create added stressors for the primary caregiver and, subsequently, for students. This stress can manifest in various ways, potentially affecting academic performance, social relationships, and emotional well-being. Similarly, the family stress theory reveals its relevance to this study by highlighting how economic constraints and unique parenting stressors characteristic of single-parent homes can trigger disturbances in family processes. These disruptions can manifest as limited communication, reduced emotional support, and altered parenting practices. Consequently, parental distress may intensify, impacting the quality of parenting even further. For students, these disruptions can translate into academic difficulties due to limited resources and support, social challenges arising from reduced opportunities, and emotional struggles arising from exposure to parental stress (Boss, 2014; Johnson et al., 2019).

By scrutinizing the link between stressors, family processes, and individual outcomes, the theory provides valuable insights into measuring the students' perception of the stressor and their coping strategies, such as problem-solving, emotion regulation, or seeking help. Applying the family stress model to this study aims to enhance how stressors within single-parent households can

initiate a chain of events that ultimately shape the challenges faced by students in their academic, social, and emotional domains. The theory offers a structure for comprehending the variations between male and female students regarding their encounters with stressful circumstances, their utilization of family resources, and their interpretation of stressors, which this research aimed to uncover. Furthermore, it could facilitate the examination of how stressors and coping mechanisms function comparably across genders. Moreover, the family stress theory could be utilised to comprehend how religious beliefs and practices function as coping mechanisms for students. The theory suggests that families often turn to their cultural and spiritual resources to make sense of and cope with stressors (Rothery, 2016).

Ecological System Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a prominent developmental psychologist, formulated the Ecological Systems Theory—later referred to as the Bioecological Model. It provides an integrative lens for examining human growth across multiple interrelated environmental layers, while investigating the ways people evolve and engage with both their social surroundings and physical settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

This theory emphasizes that human development is influenced by a dynamic interplay of multiple systems, ranging from the immediate microsystem to broader macrosystems. It provides a holistic perspective on how individuals are shaped by the various layers of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The ecological systems theory revolves around five core elements: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The

microsystem encompasses the closest settings where a person has direct involvement, including family, school, and peer groups.

The mesosystem involves the connections and interactions between different microsystems, creating a more comprehensive context for development. The exosystem comprises settings that indirectly impact an individual's life. Examples include a parent's workplace, which can influence family dynamics, or government policies that affect schools. The macrosystem includes the wider cultural beliefs, social values, and prevailing ideologies that influence a person's developmental trajectory. Finally, the chronosystem highlights the influence of temporal factors and historical events on individual growth across these environmental layers. It underscores the effects of life transitions and evolving circumstances on personal experiences and maturation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005; Rothery, 2016).

The ecological systems theory underscores the dynamic and reciprocal nature of interactions between individuals and their environments. It suggests that people are not merely influenced by their environment; instead, they actively participate in shaping and being shaped by it (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory highlights that human development is intricate and continual, marked by ongoing interactions and adjustments across diverse ecological systems. A notable feature of this theory is its focus on the reciprocal influences present within each ecological system. In other words, not only do individuals influence their environment, but the environment also influences individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cao & Birkeland, 2016).

Another important aspect of the ecological systems theory is the recognition of the nested nature of these systems. Each system is nested within

and interacts with larger systems. For instance, a student's school (microsystem) is influenced by the interactions between the school and the parents' workplaces (exosystem), and both of these are shaped by broader cultural norms and values (macrosystem). Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner introduced the concept of proximal processes, which are the dynamic interactions and transactions that occur regularly between an individual and their immediate environment. These proximal processes are seen as the primary drivers of development and learning. The theory also highlights the significance of the transition points or critical life events that can have a profound impact on an individual's development and interactions within the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rothery, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory plays a pivotal role in framing the current study, which aims to unveil the challenges confronted by students hailing from single-parent households. This theory effectively links with the study's objectives by accentuating the intricate interplay among diverse environments and their profound influence on individual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the context of this research, the ecological system theory enables an in-depth exploration of how the microsystem, encompassing immediate family and school settings, directly impacts students' encountered challenges. For instance, the theory facilitates an examination of how parent-student dynamics and academic engagement within single-parent homes shape the academic and emotional difficulties faced by students. Through this lens, the theory elucidates the extent to which positive interactions and emotional support in the microsystem can potentially mitigate these challenges.

In investigating the social challenges of students from single-parent homes, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory will be actively employed. This theory enables the analysis of social challenges through different ecological levels, offering practical insights into the students' experiences. At the microsystem level, the study will scrutinize how family dynamics within single-parent households directly influence social challenges. For instance, it will examine how limited parent-child interactions due to a single caregiver's responsibilities contribute to feelings of isolation. Moving to the mesosystem, the theory will facilitate an exploration of the interaction between family and school environments. This will enable an investigation into how a lack of parental involvement, stemming from time constraints, impacts students' social interactions and peer relationships, subsequently influencing their sense of belonging and social integration (Rothery, 2016).

Also, the exosystem level will be actively considered, focusing on how community resources and support networks play a role in shaping social challenges. For instance, the study will examine the effects of inadequate access to community programs for single-parent families on students' opportunities for positive social engagements and extracurricular activities. Again, the study will delve into the macrosystem to understand broader societal influences. By actively scrutinizing societal norms and stereotypes surrounding single-parent families, the research will unveil how these factors contribute to social stigma, potentially impacting students' self-esteem and social identity (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Parke & Buriel, 2006).

Concerning the exchanges at the mesosystem level, Bronfenbrenner's theory empowers the investigation of interactions between different

microsystems, such as family and school, and their role in shaping challenges. For example, the theory aids in exploring how effective communication and collaboration between single-parent caregivers and students directly influence students' academic performance and emotional well-being. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Furthermore, the exosystem and macrosystem levels of the theory broaden the scope of this study by highlighting external factors that contribute to students' challenges. This may encompass an analysis of how community resources, support systems, and societal attitudes toward single-parent families interplay with the identified challenges. For instance, the theory might reveal how a lack of accessible community programs for single-parent families affects students' opportunities for extracurricular activities or positive social engagement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979),

Additionally, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a robust framework for investigating the mediating role of gender and religion on challenges experienced by students from single-parent homes. This theory facilitates the exploration of how immediate family dynamics (microsystem), interactions between family and school (mesosystem), and broader societal factors (exosystem and macrosystem) influence students' challenges. For instance, it enables an analysis of how gender norms within the family or religious affiliations in the community mediate these challenges (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Smith & Baker, 2019; Wink, 2018)

Conceptual Review

This section of the literature delves into fundamental themes such as single parenthood (family arrangements), academic performance, and

psychosocial health, which form the foundation of the study. It encompasses the interpretation of academic hurdles, social obstacles, and emotional well-being.

Single Parenting

Single parenting refers to the situation where one parent is responsible for raising a child or children. A “single parent” typically describes an individual who raises children without a spouse or cohabiting partner, though the label also applies to those who are widowed, divorced, or separated. The phenomenon of single parenthood is growing worldwide; in the United States and numerous other nations, over one-third of children are now brought up in such households (Livingston, 2019). The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reports a rising prevalence of single-parent homes across various regions, with a notable increase in Africa (UNICEF, 2021). In Ghana, the number of single-parent households is steadily increasing, and women predominantly serve as the main caregivers. Within African and Ghanaian settings, single parenting denotes a scenario in which one adult bears sole responsibility for child-rearing, often resulting from divorce, death of a spouse, or labor-related migration (UNICEF, 2017). This characterization highlights the multiple drivers behind the growing occurrence of single-parent units throughout the continent. Particularly in Ghana, these families encounter comparable difficulties and intricacies, influenced by financial limitations, cultural expectations, and existing legal structures that affect both parents and their offspring (UNICEF Ghana, 2021). Similarly, the definition of single parenting has been shaped by both scholarly research and lived experiences within the local context. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2015) defined single parenthood as the situation where one parent solely takes

responsibility for raising a child or children due to various factors such as divorce, separation, widowhood or migration. This definition aligns with a broader understanding of single parenting in Africa and underscores the diverse circumstances that contribute to its prevalence in Ghana.

In Ghana, the definition of single parenting extends beyond legal and institutional framework to encompass cultural norms, community perceptions and individual experience (Boadu & Offori-Dua, 2020). While scholarly research and institutional perspectives offer valuable insights, understanding the concept of single parenting in Ghana requires consideration of its cultural context and social dynamics (Arthur, 2021).

Within Ghanaian society, the concept of single parenting is often viewed through the lens of extended family networks and communal support systems. The notion of “extended family” plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of single parenting, as single parents often receive assistance from relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. This collective approach to caregiving reflects communal values and serves as a source of strength for single-parent households (Appiah, 2005).

Furthermore, community perceptions of single parenting in Ghana influence how single parents are perceived and supported within their local contexts. While there may be instances of stigma or discrimination, particularly in more traditional or conservative communities, there are also examples of solidarity and mutual assistance among community members. This highlights the complex interplay between cultural norms, social attitudes, and individual experiences in shaping the definition and experiences of single parenting in Ghana (Aryeetey & Witter, 2014))

Single-parent families are households where one parent is raising one or more children on their own, without the support of a spouse or partner. According to Amoateng and Biddlecom (2015), single-parent families are becoming increasingly common in Ghana and other parts of the world due to various factors such as divorce, living apart, bereavement, and unmarried parenthood. Research has shown that single-parent families tend to have unique characteristics compared to two-parent families. For example, single parents are more likely to be female, have lower levels of education, and experience financial difficulties (Boadu & Offori-Dua, 2020).

Single-parent families may also face additional challenges, such as balancing work and parenting responsibilities, limited social support networks, and social stigma (Awusabo-Asare & Anafie, 2018). This is consistent with other studies that have identified women as the primary caregivers and providers for their children in single-parent families (Boadu & Offori-Dua, 2020; Koomson et al., 2021).

According to Kwame, Agyei- Okyere and Afrifa-Anane (2021), single-parent families are characterized by one parent raising one or more children without the physical or financial assistance of a partner. Women predominantly head single parent families in many parts of the world, including Ghana (Arthur, 2021; Boadu & Offori-Dua, 2020). One prominent characteristic of single parenting is the sole responsibility assumed by one parent for meeting the needs of their child or children. Single parents bear the primary burden of caregiving, financial provision and decision-making all alone. This heightened level of responsibility creates additional stress and pressure for single parents,

particularly when faced with limited resources or social support networks (Arthur, 2021).

Moreover, the experience of single parenthood frequently brings heightened economic insecurity and financial pressure. Single parents encounter difficulties concerning employment opportunities, income levels, and accessing necessary resources, all of which impact their capacity to meet their children's requirements and uphold a consistent quality of life (Koomson et al., 2021). Furthermore, single parenthood encompasses a variety of family compositions and setups that mirror the intricate dynamics of contemporary society. Such households may comprise single mothers, single fathers, grandparents raising grandchildren, or other caregivers who assume parental responsibilities (Amo-Adjei et al., 2019).

Also, the legal and policy environment in Ghana influences the characteristics of single parenting. Laws governing divorce, child custody, and social welfare programmes impact the rights and protections available to single parents and their children (Aryeetey & Witter, 2014). Additionally, Amoako, Darteh, and Aglobitse (2017) asserted that single parents in Ghana face instances of stigma and discrimination due to societal attitudes towards non-traditional family structures. They affirmed that negative stereotypes and misconceptions about single-parent households create barriers to social inclusion and support, exacerbating the difficulties faced by single parents and their children.

Single parenting has been associated with a multitude of effects on students, spanning various dimensions of their educational experience. Notably, academic challenges have emerged as a significant consequence. Research

suggests that children raised in single-parent households encounter obstacles in their academic pursuits due to the absence of a second parent's involvement and support (Amato, 2005; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The absence of a second parent's involvement and support can lead to reduced academic engagement, lower grades, and a lack of motivation to excel in their studies. The resulting dearth of academic guidance and supervision may culminate in diminished academic engagement, compromised grades, and reduced motivation to excel academically.

Financial strain constitutes another pivotal impact of single parenting, potentially exerting far-reaching ramifications on students' educational trajectories. Single-parent households often rely on a single income, which can result in limited financial resources. This limitation impacts students' access to essential educational materials, extracurricular activities, and opportunities for enrichment. This economic constraint may inadvertently deprive students of holistic educational experiences that contribute to their cognitive and personal development (Chinet al., 2020; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Also, the intricate interplay between the emotional well-being of single parents and their progeny constitutes yet another salient effect. Single parents may experience emotional stress and strain due to their caregiving responsibilities and financial pressures. This emotional burden can indirectly affect students, leading to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional distress. The emotional stress and strains borne by single parents, stemming from the exigencies of sole caregiving responsibilities and economic pressures, can precipitate emotional turmoil with potential implications for their student's mental health (Amato, 2005; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Emotional distress

within the familial milieu has been shown to engender elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and psychological discomfort among students.

Furthermore, the socio-psychological sphere is not immune to the repercussions of single parenting. Students hailing from single-parent families encounter challenges in their social interactions and peer relationships. The unique family structure may render them susceptible to feelings of stigmatization, isolation, or social exclusion, ultimately engendering ramifications for their self-esteem and peer integration (Frimpong-Manso et al., 2021; Parker et al., 2018; Sweeney, 2002).

Furthermore, the limited availability of parental time and supervision is another effect that can impact students' lives. The demands of single parenting, which often involve managing household responsibilities and work commitments, may leave little time for parents to be actively involved in their student's academic and extracurricular activities, potentially curtailing parents' involvement in their student's educational endeavours. This reduced parental presence can influence a student's ability to complete homework, engage in school-related tasks, and receive consistent guidance (Bastais et al., 2021; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Nkyi, 2015).

Causes of Single Parenthood

Single parenthood, a socio-familial phenomenon, manifests through diverse causative factors that contribute to the emergence of sole caregiving roles within households. Among these factors, divorce or separation stands as a primary impetus for single parenthood (Amato, 2010). Marital dissolution can stem from multifaceted issues within a relationship, subsequently leading to the

elevation of one parent to the role of primary caregiver, thus marking the onset of single parenthood.

Unplanned pregnancies and early parenthood also contribute to the prevalence of single parenting (Pogarsky, Thornberry, & Lizotte, 2006). The occurrence of parenthood at a young age or due to unforeseen circumstances can disrupt the establishment of a dual-parent household, thereby setting the stage for single parenthood. Moreover, the loss of a spouse or partner through death is another cause of single parenthood (Rostila, Saarela, & Kawachi, 2012). The demise of a partner thrusts the surviving parent into the role of the sole caregiver, necessitating the assumption of parental responsibilities.

In certain instances, single parenthood arises from a deliberate choice made by individuals (Hertz, 2006). Adoption, assisted reproductive technologies, and other intentional avenues may be pursued by individuals who opt to become single parents, reflecting a conscious decision to undertake caregiving roles independently (Smith & Baker, 2019).

Economic factors also play a pivotal role in shaping single parenthood (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Financial strain within partnerships, arising from factors such as unemployment and economic instability, can strain relationships and contribute to the emergence of single-parent households. Furthermore, cultural and social contexts play a role, as shifting norms and evolving gender roles contribute to the prevalence of single parenthood (Cherlin, 2009). Societal expectations regarding marriage and parenting may prompt the emergence of single-parent households (Katz-Wise et al., 2020).

Instances of domestic violence and abuse are potent drivers of single parenthood (Bowlus & Sari, 2006). The pursuit of safety and well-being,

particularly for both the parent and child, can lead individuals to opt for single parenthood as a means of escaping harmful environments. Migration and geographical mobility also introduce an additional dimension to single parenthood. The displacement of families due to migration can result in one parent shouldering caregiving responsibilities in a new locale, potentially leading to single-parent households (Leininger, 2016; Vyskocil, 2019).

Lastly, health issues can propel the transition to single parenthood. Physical or mental health challenges faced by one parent may necessitate the assumption of primary caregiving responsibilities by the healthier parent, thereby leading to single parenthood as a consequence (Oladeji et al., 2020). In sum, single parenthood arises from a myriad of interconnected and intricate factors, encompassing both personal and external dimensions. These causative factors intersect to shape the familial landscape of single parenthood.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study projects the challenges faced by students from single-parent families. The framework incorporates the variables of gender and religion, which are hypothesized to influence the nature and extent of these challenges, ultimately affecting students' academic, emotional, and social well-being. As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework portrays the linkage between single parenting, academic, emotional and social challenges with gender and religion as influencing variables.

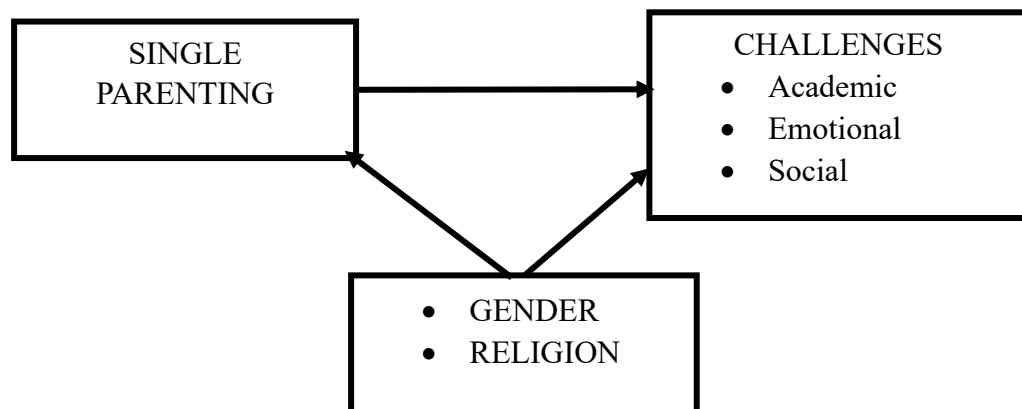


Figure 1: Relationship between Single Parenting and Students Challenges

Source: Author's own construct

The conceptual framework constructed by the author presupposes that single parenting is associated with academic, emotional and social challenges and is being influenced by gender and religion. Also, the framework proposes that single parenting has an impact on the academic, emotional and social challenges. Religion and gender are considered influencing variables in this study, as they influence the connection between single parenting and academic, emotional and social challenges. Overall, this conceptual framework suggests that the dynamic interaction between single parenting, academic, emotional and social challenges is complex and may be influenced by a range of other factors such as gender and religion.

Empirical Review

This section of the literature delved into earlier research aligned with the aims of the present study. It investigated the difficulties encountered by students raised in single-parent households, the factors influencing these difficulties, methods of coping, and the influence of gender and religion.

Challenges Faced by Students from Single-Parent Families

The challenges presented in this section are generally based on the academic, social and emotional challenges of students from single-parent families.

Academic Challenges

Students from single-parent families often encounter various academic challenges that can impact their educational attainment and overall academic

performance. Several empirical studies have explored this phenomenon, shedding light on these challenges and the potential implications for academic outcomes. In a study by Johnson et al. (2019), 600 students from single-parent families were surveyed using self-report questionnaires. The researchers found that students from single-parent households experienced higher levels of academic stress and lower self-efficacy compared to their peers from two-parent families. These challenges were associated with a reduced sense of academic motivation and engagement, ultimately affecting their academic performance (Johnson et al., 2019).

Similarly, Anderson and colleagues (2017) conducted a study involving 500 students hailing from single-parent households. They employed standardized academic assessments and evaluations by teachers to gauge the academic hurdles encountered by these students. The results uncovered that individuals from single-parent families exhibited diminished academic performance and encountered difficulties in upholding regular study routines, managing time effectively, and sustaining academic drive. Consequently, single parenthood has been identified as a contributing factor to heightened academic obstacles (Anderson et al., 2017).

In a similar vein, Fincham, Beach, Harold, and Osborne (2017) examined how parental conflict influences the correlation between single parenthood and student outcomes within the United States context. Their study comprised a sample of 226 undergraduate students from a public university in the U.S. Data collection involved self-report questionnaires gauging students' perceptions of their parental relationships, academic hurdles, and psychological well-being. Employing a longitudinal approach, the researchers tracked families over time.

Results indicated that students from single-parent households reported notably diminished academic performance and heightened psychological distress compared to those from intact families. Moreover, the study revealed that students' psychological distress acted as a mediator, linking single parenthood with adverse impacts on academic performance. This research yields valuable insights into the ramifications of single parenting on the academic achievements of university students.

Also, Khan and Akhtar (2020) in Pakistan examined the effect of single-parent families on the academic achievement of secondary school students. The researchers used a sample of 300 students from single-parent families and 300 students from two-parent families. The data was collected using standardised achievement tests and a questionnaire. The results showed that students from single-parent families had lower academic achievement compared to students from two-parent families. The study also found that the educational level of the single parent had a significant impact on the academic outcome of their children. Children of single parents who had higher education levels had better academic outcomes than those whose single parents had lower education levels (Khan & Akhtar, 2020).

Lee and Hwang (2020) investigated the correlation between being a single parent and academic success in South Korea. Utilizing an extensive survey of secondary school students, their research revealed that single-parent households were linked to lower academic performance. The study identified a significant connection between single parenthood and academic difficulties, with this association being partly influenced by family income and parental educational attainment. Similarly, Adeyemo and Ogunleye (2016) discovered in

Africa that students originating from single-parent households exhibited inferior academic performance in contrast to their counterparts from dual-parent households. However, there is a lack of research specifically examining the academic challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Eastern Region, Ghana and the potential impact of gender and religion on these challenges.

Social Challenges

The social challenges encountered by students from single-parent families have been the subject of empirical investigation. By examining the social difficulties faced by these students, this empirical review aims to shed light on their experiences and potential implications for support and intervention. Anderson et al. (2020) conducted a study with a sample of 300 students from single-parent families. Employing a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative measures, the research revealed that students from single-parent households often face challenges in building and maintaining peer relationships. Factors such as limited social support networks, stigma associated with single parenthood, and lower parental availability were identified as contributors to these difficulties.

Similarly, a study by Dabone, Sawadogo, and Zhang (2021) investigated the experiences of students living in single-parent households in Burkina Faso. The study used a qualitative approach, interviewing children and parents to gain an understanding of the challenges faced by families. The study found that single-parent households often experienced economic insecurity and limited access to resources, which affected students' well-being and development.

Smith and Johnson (2018) conducted a study with a sample of 250 students from single-parent families, utilising qualitative interviews and quantitative measures. The research identified social challenges faced by these students, including difficulties in developing social skills, establishing peer networks, and participating in social activities. However, it also found evidence of resilience and the development of close friendships as coping strategies to overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, Ofori-Dankwa and Amankwah (2020) verified that individuals from single-parent households exhibit elevated levels of absenteeism and a diminished drive to surmount their challenges. Subsequently, Akwasi et al. (2021) proposed that students hailing from single-parent environments are prone to leaving school due to a lack of defined objectives, reduced motivation, diminished self-efficacy, and external disturbances like peer influence and social media.

Thompson and Adams (2019) utilised a mixed-methods approach in their study, employing surveys and focus group discussions with a cohort of 500 students hailing from single-parent households. Their research underscored that these students expressed sentiments of social isolation, heightened peer conflict, and diminished levels of social integration. Furthermore, the study underscored the significance of school-based support structures and extracurricular engagements in alleviating these obstacles. In a similar vein, within the Ghanaian milieu, Adu and Oduro (2020) conducted research involving 400 students from single-parent families. Utilising both qualitative interviews and quantitative measures, their study shed light on the difficulties encountered by

students, particularly in establishing and sustaining peer relationships (Adu & Oduro, 2020; Thompson & Adams, 2019).

Emotional Challenges

This empirical review explores the emotional challenges encountered by students from single-parent homes. It provides insights into the emotional difficulties faced by students from single-parent homes and the potential implications for their well-being and academic performance.

A research investigation carried out in Europe by Smith and colleagues (2021) explored the emotional difficulties faced by 500 students raised in single-parent households. Employing a mixed-methods methodology incorporating surveys and detailed interviews, the study uncovered that these students often encountered increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in comparison to their counterparts from dual-parent families. Additionally, the research underscored the importance of social support systems and coping mechanisms in effectively addressing emotional hurdles.

In East Africa, Kamau and Khasakhala (2020) conducted a study investigating the emotional difficulties experienced by students from single-parent households, involving a sample of 300 participants. Utilizing quantitative measures, the research aimed to evaluate emotional wellness and resilience. The outcomes suggested that students originating from single-parent families demonstrated elevated levels of emotional strain, experiencing emotions like sadness, loneliness, insecurity, and emotional volatility. These results underscored the necessity for tailored interventions targeting the emotional health of these students. Nevertheless, the study also revealed that students with higher resilience scores exhibited improved emotional adaptation, highlighting

the significance of interventions focused on building resilience (Kamau & Khasakhala, 2020).

Nguyen et al. (2021) adopted a mixed-methods approach to explore the emotional challenges encountered by 300 students from single-parent households. Employing surveys and in-depth interviews, the study aimed to assess emotional well-being and coping mechanisms. The findings indicated that students hailing from single-parent homes displayed heightened levels of emotional strain, manifesting symptoms of depression and anxiety (Nguyen et al., 2021).

In Ghana, Mensah and Amoah (2019) explored emotional challenges among a sample of 250 students from single-parent families. The researchers employed qualitative interviews and thematic analysis to understand the emotional experiences of these students. The study identified themes such as feelings of abandonment, frustration, and low self-esteem. It emphasized the need for supportive environments, counselling services, and the involvement of extended family members to address emotional challenges effectively. A study by Koomson et al. (2021) found that students from single-parent homes reported feeling less emotionally supported by their parents than students from two-parent homes, which was associated with lower academic performance (Koomson et al., 2021; Mensah & Amoah, 2019).

Contributors to Challenges Students from Single-Parent Families Face

This empirical review provides a detailed examination of the factors that contribute to the challenges faced by students from single-parent families. The review focuses on several key factors, including family structure,

socioeconomic status, parental involvement, parental stress, mental health, and cultural and social factors.

Amato (2018) has consistently shown that family structure plays a significant role in the challenges faced by students from single-parent families. The absence of one parent can impact the availability of emotional support, financial resources, and role models. This can lead to challenges in academic performance, self-esteem, and social relationships (Amato, 2018).

Additionally, several studies (Amato, 2018; Duncan & Magnuson, 2012; Magnuson & Berger, 2009; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994) have highlighted the importance of family structure in understanding the disparities in educational outcomes between students from single-parent and two-parent families. Moreso, a study conducted by Annan, Owusu-Boateng and Gborglah (2020) examined the relationship between family structure and academic achievement among students in Ghana. The findings indicated that students from single-parent families had lower academic achievement scores compared to their peers from two-parent families. The study also identified parental involvement and socioeconomic status as significant factors that contributed to academic achievement (Annan et al., 2020).

A study by Brown and Williams (2018) examined the impact of socioeconomic status on the academic performance of students from single-parent families. The results revealed that lower income levels and limited access to resources such as educational materials, tutoring, and extracurricular activities were associated with greater academic challenges. These socioeconomic disparities can create additional barriers for these students, affecting their motivation, self-esteem, and overall educational outcomes.

Higher levels of poverty are often associated with these families; as such, the lack of financial resources and opportunities for extracurricular activities can further exacerbate the cognitive development and overall well-being of these students (Brown & Williams, 2018; Duncan & Magnuson, 2012).

Also, Agyemang et al. (2021) explored the impact of single-parent families on students in rural communities. They revealed that students from single-parent families encounter a lot more challenges than those from two-parent families, which was attributed to the economic challenges faced by single-parent families. Similarly, a study by Amo-Adjei et al. (2019) found that single-parent families in Ghana faced challenges in providing adequate resources for their students' education, which negatively impacted their academic performance (Agyemang et al., 2021; Amo-Adjei et al., 2019)

A study by Amato and Gilbreth (1999) and Hill and Tyson (2009) has shown that higher levels of parental involvement, including active communication, academic support, and positive parenting practices, are associated with better academic outcomes and psychosocial well-being for students in single-parent families. The absence of one parent may place additional burdens on the remaining parent, impacting their ability to provide adequate support and involvement. For example, Adams and Jones (2020) conducted a quantitative study with a sample of 500 students and found that students from single-parent families experienced lower levels of parental involvement compared to their peers from two-parent families. This lack of parental involvement leads to challenges in academic support, emotional guidance, and overall supervision, affecting the students' well-being and academic success (Adams & Jones, 2020).

Vieno and colleagues (2020) discovered that parental affection and assistance were pivotal in mitigating the adverse effects of single-parent households on teenagers' academic performance in Italy. Likewise, Bernardi and co-researchers (2021) observed that nurturing parental behaviours, such as overseeing children's academic tasks and maintaining communication with educators, correlated with enhanced academic results among students raised by single parents in Germany.

Regarding parental involvement, Kwiatkowski et al. (2020) examined data gathered from 1,402 secondary school students in Poland and identified two factors contributing to academic difficulties among students: diminished self-esteem and parental absence. However, further analysis revealed that parental absences significantly influence students' low self-esteem. Nyarko and Appiah (2020) characterize students' low self-esteem as a lack of confidence, leading students to doubt their abilities to succeed, thereby making them hesitant to participate in learning activities or undertake appropriate academic challenges. Conversely, parental absence is defined as the physical or emotional unavailability of one parent due to factors such as divorce, separation, or circumstances that prevent regular interaction between the parent and the student (Adu-Gyamfi & Adjei, 2020).

Johnson et al. (2019) conducted qualitative interviews with a group of single parents and their children. The results revealed that single parents commonly experienced stress, depression, and anxiety, directly affecting their capacity to offer emotional support and maintain stable environments for their children. The mental health struggles of single parents often extend into their parenting behaviours, impacting the emotional health and adaptation of their

children. Consequently, these children frequently encountered emotional issues, diminished self-esteem, and heightened academic hurdles (Johnson et al., 2019; McLoyd, 1990).

A study by Ng et al. (2021) explored the experiences of students from single-parent families in a diverse cultural context. The findings highlighted the importance of cultural norms, social support networks, and community resources in mitigating or exacerbating the challenges faced by these students. Cultural values and beliefs can influence parental expectations, community support, and the availability of resources, which ultimately impact the students' experiences and outcomes. Hence, cultural norms around family structure and gender roles contributed to stigmatization and discrimination against students from single-parent families, which negatively impacted their academic outcomes (Ng et al., 2021; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018).

Coping Strategies for Students from Single-Parent Families

This empirical review explores the coping strategies employed by students from single-parent families to overcome the challenges they face. The review focuses on several key coping strategies, such as social support seeking, problem-solving, emotional regulation, goal setting, seeking professional help, and developing a positive mindset.

A study by Taylor et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of social support seeking as a coping strategy for students from single-parent families. Seeking support from friends, extended family members, and mentors provides emotional validation, guidance, and practical assistance. Hanson et al. (2019) conducted a study on the role of social support in the relationship between single-parent stress and academic functioning among African American

adolescents. The result of their study showed that social support networks can buffer the negative effects of single parenting, promoting better psychological well-being and academic outcomes (Hanson et al., 2019).

Problem-solving is another coping strategy utilised by students from single-parent families. Jackson and Adams (2020) highlight the importance of developing problem-solving skills to overcome academic and personal challenges. By identifying the problem, brainstorming solutions, and implementing effective strategies, students can regain a sense of control and develop resilience in the face of adversity (Jackson & Adams, 2020).

In a study by Smith and Thompson (2019), a sample of 150 students from single-parent families was surveyed to understand their problem-solving coping strategies. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including interviews and self-report questionnaires. The findings revealed that students who utilised problem-solving techniques, such as identifying challenges, generating solutions, and implementing action plans, reported higher levels of academic success and lower levels of distress (Smith & Thompson, 2019)

Likewise, Omoniyi and Akintayo (2019) reported that self-motivation built the emotional resilience of students for doing simple tasks, such as problem-solving, to the accomplishment of more complex tasks, such as seeking social support and maintaining a positive attitude. For instance, Kinnear. et al. (2020) testified that self-motivated students were better able to manage stress, setbacks and disappointment. Conversely, Nketsia et al. (2021) revealed that students from single-parent families usually lack self-motivation and, as such, are more likely to have behaviour problems compared with those from two-parent families (Kinnear et al., 2020; Nketsia et al., 2018).

A study by Parker et al. (2018) indicated that students who engage in adaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as identifying and expressing emotions, practising self-care, and seeking emotional outlets, experience better psychological well-being and academic functioning. Inversely, maladaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as avoidance or suppression, can exacerbate stress and hinder academic outcomes (Parker et al., 2018).

Studies by Schneider and Schönfeld (2019) have shown that students who engage in goal-setting demonstrate higher levels of resilience, self-esteem, and academic achievement. Research by Williams and Johnson (2020) indicates that developing a positive outlook, setting realistic goals, and practising self-affirmation can increase resilience and motivation. By focusing on their strengths and adopting a growth mindset, these students can overcome challenges and thrive academically and emotionally (Williams & Johnson, 2020). Research by Brown et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of accessing mental health services and counselling to address emotional and psychological challenges. Professional support can provide students with the necessary tools and strategies to overcome obstacles and enhance their overall well-being (Brown et al., 2019).

Likewise, a study conducted by Martinez et al. (2020), where 250 students from single-parent families were surveyed to understand their engagement in seeking professional help. Using a combination of self-report questionnaires and interview methods, the findings indicated that students who sought professional help, such as counselling or therapy, demonstrated improved coping skills, increased self-awareness, and better academic outcomes.

Several research studies (Hill et al., 2018; Krause, 2008; Martinez et al., 2020; Wink, 2018) have listed coping strategies, namely seeking support, utilising available resources such as school support services or community programmes, Building social networks, developing self-motivation and time management skill is among the predominant support strategies used by a student from single-parent homes in dealing with academic and emotional challenges (Baiden et al., 2020).

Asare (2020) discovered from the literature review that time management and developing self-motivation do not serve as strategies for overcoming emotional challenges alone, but students can also use them to attain life satisfaction. Likewise, Agbenyega, Ayamga, Alhassan, and Mohammed (2021) argued that community and school support helps mitigate the challenges faced by students from single-parent families. A sizable number (46%) of student surveyed reported that community and school support helped them overcome their challenges.

Gender differences in Students' Challenges from Single Parent Families

This empirical review examines the role of gender in the challenges faced by students from single-parent families. Focusing on how gender influences coping strategies and outcomes. This analysis aims to explore how gender shapes the experiences of students growing up in single-parent households.

Mencarini, Pasqua, and Romiti (2019) conducted research investigating notable gender disparities in the challenges encountered by students from single-parent households. Their study delved into the influence of family structure on the gender gap observed in children's dedication to studying and

their non-cognitive skills. The focus was on Italy, a country undergoing a trend shared by numerous Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations: a rise in single-parent families, predominantly led by mothers, alongside an increasing disparity between boys' and girls' cognitive and non-cognitive development. Employing a difference-in-differences approach to compare outcomes between children in single-parent and two-parent families, particularly focusing on the impact on boys and girls, the researchers examined variations in time spent studying and the level of commitment to academics. Their findings suggest that residing in a single-mother household has a more adverse impact on boys, although all children, irrespective of gender, receive fewer parental inputs in such circumstances. The heightened negative effect on boys appears linked to families with lower educational attainment, lower socio-economic status, or those with mothers engaged in the workforce.

Gender is believed to influence academic challenges among students from single-parent homes. For example, Johnson et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal study with a sample of 500 students from single-parent homes and found that gender played a significant role in academic outcomes. Girls from single-parent homes displayed higher levels of academic motivation and engagement, which positively impacted their academic performance. On the other hand, boys faced challenges related to externalizing behaviours, which negatively affected their academic achievement. These findings suggest that gender-specific factors mediate how students cope with academic stressors and navigate academic challenges within the context of single-parent households (Johnson et al., 2020).

Similarly, a study by Smith and Baker (2019) focused on gender differences in academic challenges and found that girls tended to demonstrate higher levels of conscientiousness and self-discipline, leading to better academic outcomes. In contrast, boys faced difficulties in time management and task completion, contributing to their academic challenges. These gender-specific experiences shape how students from single-parent homes approach and respond to academic demands, affecting their academic outcomes (Smith & Baker, 2019).

A cross-sectional study with 600 students from single-parent families conducted by Smith and Baker (2019) revealed that gender differences shaped the peer relationships and social support networks of students. Girls tended to have stronger social support systems and higher levels of emotional expressiveness, enabling them to better cope with social challenges, while boys experienced higher levels of social isolation and difficulties in forming close friendships. These findings highlight the significance of considering gender-specific experiences in addressing social challenges within single-parent families (Smith & Baker, 2019).

Lee and Chen (2018) explored gender differences in emotional challenges with a sample size of 500 students from single-parent families. They found that girls exhibited higher emotional expressiveness and were more inclined to seek emotional support from family members and friends. This ability to express emotions and seek support contributed to better emotional management for girls. In contrast, boys tended to display a higher tendency towards emotional suppression and self-reliance, potentially leading to internalized emotional distress. The study emphasizes the importance of gender-

specific coping mechanisms in understanding and addressing emotional challenges for students in single-parent households (Lee & Chen, 2018).

Religion differences in Students' Challenges from Single Parent Families

Religion has been recognised as a significant factor in individuals' lives, providing a source of support, guidance, and coping mechanisms. This review explores studies that have investigated how religious beliefs, practices, and community involvement influence the challenges experienced by students from single-parent families and their overall well-being.

Sham and Yusof (2015) investigated religious differences and the challenges encountered by students in single-parent families. Their study aimed to examine the behaviour and level of religiosity among 30 adolescents living in government-subsidized residences, specifically within the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA). The research utilised a survey approach, employing questionnaires as the primary research tool. The findings revealed that the adolescents' religious practices frequently involved abstaining from gambling, maintaining positive thoughts about God, feeling reverence and fear towards God's power, avoiding premarital relations, and engaging in supplication. Overall, the level of religiosity was moderate and did not significantly influence the challenges faced by the adolescents. This finding suggests that the moderate religiosity observed among the respondents may contribute to the relatively low incidence of moral and disciplinary issues encountered by them in school.

Thompson and Lee (2020) conducted research examining how religion influences academic difficulties among students from single-parent households. Their study, involving 300 participants, employed self-report surveys and

interviews. Results revealed that students who exhibited greater religious engagement, including attending religious services and participating in religious rituals, tended to exhibit improved academic performance and increased levels of confidence in their academic abilities. Religion functioned as a coping strategy, offering students a sense of direction, drive, and assistance in surmounting academic obstacles (Thompson & Lee, 2020).

A study conducted by Patel et al. (2019) explored the role of religion in social challenges faced by students from single-parent families. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and focus groups, with a sample of 200 participants. The findings revealed that religious beliefs and involvement played a significant role in promoting social connectedness and resilience among these students. Religious communities provided a supportive network, fostering a sense of belonging, identity, and social support. Students who were actively involved in religious activities reported lower levels of social isolation and higher levels of social well-being (Patel et al., 2019).

Additionally, religious communities often provide a strong sense of belonging and social support, which can help students from single-parent homes feel connected and valued. Studies have found that religious involvement and participation in religious activities can contribute to the formation of social networks and support systems. This social support can mitigate the challenges of isolation and provide a sense of community for these students (Holt, Clark, & Kreuter, 2020).

In a study by Williams et al. (2021), the role of religion in the emotional well-being of students from single-parent families was examined. The researchers surveyed 250 participants and assessed their religious beliefs,

practices, and emotional well-being. The findings indicated that religious beliefs and engagement in religious practices were associated with higher levels of emotional well-being, including lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Religion provides students with a sense of comfort, hope, and emotional support, helping them cope with emotional challenges (Ellison & Lee, 2020).

Similarly, religion offers individuals a set of beliefs, values, and practices that can serve as coping mechanisms in times of difficulty. Religious teachings and rituals provide comfort, hope, and a sense of meaning, which can help students navigate the challenges they face. Studies have shown that the use of religious coping methods, such as prayer and seeking spiritual direction, may have a good impact on people's capacity to manage stress and hardship (Pargament, 2019).

Moreso, a study by Fawole and Ngwu (2021) in Nigeria found that students from single-parent families who were Muslims faced more challenges than those who were Christians. The study found that the challenges faced by Muslim students from single-parent families were related to socio-economic factors and cultural values, such as gender inequality and early marriage. Additionally, another study found that the religious background of students can impact their academic performance. The study found that students from Christian families had higher academic achievement than those from Muslim families, which was attributed to differences in parental involvement and support (Abdul-Razak & Ghazi, 2018).

Furthermore, Agyemang et al. (2021) revealed that although students from single-parent homes have positive beliefs about the value of religion, they

never use their religious beliefs as a source of resilience and coping tool to deal with their challenges apart from self-motivation. One could argue that other coping mechanisms could be responsible for this finding, although the study did not explore the reasons behind these findings. Agyemang et al. (2021) employed the mixed-method research design to gather data from a student on the use of their religiosity as a surviving tool in handling their challenges. The study's findings disclosed that 84.4% of the participants accepted using religious practices such as prayer and reading the Bible to deal with challenges they encounter emotionally. Contrary to the finding of Agyemang et al. (2021), Smith and Chen (2020) reported that the majority of students from single-parent homes have other coping strategies which they use to overcome their challenges.

Researchers (Agyemang et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2016) have indicated that religiosity served as a protective factor against depression and anxiety symptoms for students from single-parent families. They suggested that religious coping may be a way for these students to find meaning and purpose in their lives (Brown et al., 2016). Most of these students cited time and financial constraints as the main hindrance inhibiting them from participating in religious activities such as attending religious service, joining religious groups or obtaining religious materials. Nonetheless, students are free to partake in religious activities on school campuses to enhance their coping mechanisms (Agyemang et al., 2021).

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes, with a focus on

academic, social, and emotional aspects. The chapter begins by presenting key theoretical frameworks, including Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and the Family Stress Model, which offer insights into understanding the factors contributing to these challenges. The review explored the conceptual aspects related to single parenting, academic challenges, and social challenges. It defined and characterized single-parent families, highlighting their unique circumstances.

Academic challenges such as lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, and limited access to educational resources were discussed. The social and emotional challenges of students from single-parent homes were also examined. The empirical review included studies conducted in different contexts, providing empirical evidence of the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes. The review emphasized that limited parental involvement and access to resources contribute to academic difficulties. Socially and emotionally, these students may experience feelings of loneliness and lower self-esteem. Factors such as financial instability and parental stress are identified as contributors to these challenges.

The review discussed various coping strategies employed by students, including resilience, self-motivation, and problem-solving skills. It also explores the roles of age and religious affiliation, with age influencing the nature of challenges and religious beliefs serving as sources of support. Overall, the literature review established the foundation for the study, identifying gaps in existing research and providing a basis for further exploration of the roles of gender and religion in the challenges faced by students from single-parent

homes in the specific context of the Kwahu East Districts of the Eastern Region of Ghana.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The study aimed to explore the challenges of students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu-East district of the Eastern Region, Ghana. This chapter presents the procedures and research techniques employed to achieve the purpose of the study. Hence, the research design, study area, population and sampling procedures were presented in this chapter. Similarly, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data processing and analysis were further discussed.

Research Design

Descriptive survey was the method of research used in this study. A descriptive survey is a widely used research method for collecting comprehensive information about the characteristics, opinions, behaviours, and experiences of a particular population (Babbie, 2016; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). It seeks to offer a brief overview or portrayal of the phenomenon being studied, like the difficulties encountered by students from single-parent households. It is beneficial to gather facts, data regarding habits and opinions, insights into beliefs and predictions, information on behaviour and viewpoints from a diverse range of participants, and details on behaviours to gain a more comprehensive understanding using descriptive surveys, as outlined by (Green & Thorogood, 2018; Reinharz, 2017; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

One of the key strengths of employing a descriptive survey is its potential for generalisability. Through a well-designed survey with a

representative sample, this design helped obtain data that is representative of the larger group, allowing for valid conclusions to be drawn (Babbie, 2016). This was particularly relevant when studying the challenges of students from single-parent families, as their experiences vary across different contexts and regions (Amponsah-Tawiah & Mensah, 2020; Dodoo & Zongo, 2020).

Descriptive surveys can also be used to collect data on opinions and forecasts. It offers efficiency in data collection and permits the collection of data from a large number of participants within a relatively short period of time, making it a cost-effective approach compared to other data collection techniques (Babbie, 2016). This is particularly advantageous when studying a diverse population, such as students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District of the Eastern Region of Ghana. This design allowed for systematic data collection on a large scale, providing a comprehensive overview of the challenges encountered by this population (Amponsah-Mensah & Agyei-Okyere, 2020; Dodoo & Zongo, 2020). Similarly, it helped me gain insights into common challenges, assess their prevalence, and explore potential variations across different demographic groups while providing valuable and generalizable findings, contributing to our understanding of the challenges faced by this population.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations associated with descriptive surveys. One limitation is the potential lack of depth in the data collected, as surveys primarily focus on obtaining quantitative data. This can limit the understanding of individual experiences and perspectives (Babbie, 2016). Another major disadvantage of descriptive design is the lack of anonymity (Adams & Lawrence, 2018). The disadvantage of this approach is

that responders often lie because they feel pressured to provide the information that the inquirer needs to succeed. In addition, participants have the option to withhold their responses to any questions they deem too personal. Notwithstanding these limitations, this design is justified as it describes the population without any manipulation. Again, it helps researchers get a thorough understanding of the topic or circumstance under investigation, which is the difficulties experienced by students from single-parent households in the Kwahu-East District.

Study Area

The study was done in the Kwahu locality, in the Eastern Region of the Republic of Ghana, and so the sample was taken from senior high schools within the Kwahu Ridge. This study area was adopted as anecdotal evidence exists that students from single homes face several challenges and the researcher also has a first-hand exposure to these issues as both a resident and worker in the area. Specifically, the setting of the study was the Kwahu-East District which is one of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana and forms part of the thirty-three (33) Municipalities and Districts in the Eastern Region of Ghana (GSS, 2020).

Abetifi serves as the administrative hub of the district and serves as a central point connecting various districts, facilitating commercial activities among district capitals and neighboring communities. Kwahu-East spans a total land area of 824 square kilometres and encompasses three distinct physiographic regions: the Southern Volarian Plateau, the Forest Dissected Plateau, and the Savanna Plains, characterized by a series of escarpments. Notably, the Kwahu scarp rises from 220m to 640m above sea level (GSS,

2020). Kwahu boasts nine senior high schools, including St. Peter's SHS, St. Dominic SHS, St. Paul's SHS, Abetifi Presbyterian SHS, Nkwatia SHS, Mpreaso SHS, Bepong SHS, Kwahu Ridge SHS, and Abetifi Technical School.

Population

The study's population encompassed all high school students hailing from single-parent households within the Kwahu-East District of the Eastern Region. Within this district, there are nine senior high schools, collectively hosting a student body of 13,588 (both students from single parent homes and those from two-parent homes). The specific focus was on students from single-parent families attending these nine schools. The accessible population for the study, derived from school records, amounted to 6,240 Form two students from single-parent households across the nine schools. Consequently, the research centred on second-year students from single-parent homes.

The justification for focusing exclusively on Form two students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu East District stems from their unique position within the academic spectrum as they had been in the school for a quite a while and were available for the study unlike the forms 3s and 1s. Form three (3) students were preoccupied with impending exams and were hesitant to participate fully in the study. Similarly, Form one students currently adapting to the school environment may not provide a comprehensive perspective. By concentrating on Form two students, the study maintains a balance, allowing for in-depth exploration of challenges and coping strategies without the interference of imminent exams or new-school adjustments.

Sampling Procedures

Based on Krejcie and Morgan's sample table, a suitable sample size for a population of 6,240 students is determined to be 361 students. Consequently, a sample consisting of 361 students was chosen from the Kwahu-East District. Sampling involves the methodical selection of a segment of the population to serve as a representative of the whole population (Amedahe & Asamoah-Gyimah, 2015; Sarantakos, 2005).

A multi-stage sampling strategy was used in this study. With multistage sampling, a sample is drawn from a population using smaller and smaller groups at each stage (Alvi, 2016). It is often used in data collection when dealing with a large geographically spread group of people. First, all nine schools in the Kwahu-East District were considered to ensure that every school was given an equal chance. This encompassed every single school within the district in the study, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the educational landscape. I eliminated potential sampling biases and ensured the inclusion of every school, thereby enhancing the accuracy and thoroughness of the findings (Lohr, 2019). At the outset, all potential respondents were required to complete an initial questionnaire that collects basic demographic information, including family structure. This included questions asking about the presence and involvement of both parents in the student's life.

Secondly, only students from single-parent households in the Kwahu-East District were chosen using the purposive sample approach. Thirdly, the number of participants was chosen using a proportional stratified sampling procedure, taking into account the population of each school. This sampling technique involves putting the schools into groups or strata and choosing from

each stratum to form a sample. Using a proportionate stratified selection procedure, students in nine SHS were selected as respondents in the second phase. Again, this is essential because student populations at the different schools vary greatly. For example, St. Dominic's senior high school was made up of 588 students from single-parent homes, and the total number of students from single-parent homes from the nine (9) public SHS was 6,240; therefore, the number of students selected from St. Dominic's senior high school was $588 \div 6,240 \times 361 = 34$ students. Hence, 34 Form two students were selected from St. Dominic's senior high school for the study.

In the fourth phase, students from each school were selected to participate as responders using a simple random sampling (lottery method) procedure. Using this method, each person in the target group was assigned a number, which was then put in a container. A random number was then selected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). As a result, there is an equal and independent probability for every member of the target population to be included in the sample.

Table 1: Summary of Sample for the Study

School	Population (N)	Sample
St. Dominic SHS	588	34
Abetifi Presby	490	28
Kwahu Ridge SHS	588	34
Mpreaso SHS	1130	65
Bepong SHS	439	25
Nkwatia SHS	669	39
St. Pauls SHS	456	26
St. Peter's SHS	1392	82
Abetifi Technical	488	28
Total	6240	361

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Data Collection Instrument

The study made use of a questionnaire to obtain information from participants. The questionnaire was adapted from Mrinde (2014) as the statements of the questions were re-worded to ensure that it suits the context of the respondents in the chosen geographical area. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section collected data on the demographic of the respondents. The second section gathered information on students' challenges, which are broken down into academic, social, and emotional challenges. Academic challenges had 10 items, social challenges also had 10 items and emotional challenges had seven items. Thus, in total, 27 items were used to measure the challenges students from single-parent families face.

The third section collected information on factors contributing to the challenges students from single-parent homes encounter. The section had eight items that were used to measure the factors contributing to the challenges. The fourth section collected information on coping strategies students from single-parent homes use to overcome their challenges. Seven items were used to measure the coping strategies. In total, the questionnaire was made up of 42 items. The instrument were scored on a criterion mean of 3.5 with low values being 2 and high values being 5. One of advantage of this instrument is that questionnaires allow for rapid data collection, saving time and resources but it may not provide sufficient depth to explore complex issues or nuanced perspectives..

Pilot-testing of Instrument

Pilot testing of research instruments is a crucial step in the research process, aiming to assess the clarity, comprehensiveness, and applicability of

the data collection tools (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This pilot test of the research instrument was done at Nkawkaw Senior High School. The selection of Nkawkaw Senior High School for the pilot test is justified based on its proximity to the research area allowing for convenient access and logistical ease. Also, the student population at Nkawkaw Senior High School exhibits demographic characteristics similar to those of the target population for the study. This similarity enhances the relevance and representativeness of the pilot test results, contributing to the instrument's overall validity and reliability. Moreso, the school administration and educators at Nkawkaw Senior High School showed a strong interest in contributing to this academic research endeavours. Their willingness to participate in the pilot test underscores the collaborative spirit that facilitated a smooth and productive testing process.

The research instrument, comprising questions related to academic, social, and emotional challenges, as well as the role of gender and religion, was administered to the selected students. Following the completion of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to provide feedback on the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the questions. This feedback was invaluable in identifying any necessary refinements to the instrument. The pilot testing phase, which was implemented at Nkawkaw Senior High School, represented the initial step toward assessing the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Through the pilot test, valuable insights were gained regarding the clarity, comprehensiveness, and consistency of the questionnaire.

The data collection instrument was pilot-tested on 30 single-parented students at Nkawkaw Senior High School. In support of using 30 respondents for the pilot testing, Perneger et al. (2015) indicated that 30 is good enough to

serve the purpose of the pre-testing. The items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3=Agree, 4= Strongly Agree).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity and reliability are crucial aspects of research that ensure the accuracy and consistency of findings. Validity ensures the instrument measures what it intends to, while reliability ensures stable and consistent outcomes (Bernard, 2017; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). While the study acknowledges the importance of validity and reliability, the comprehensive testing and establishment of these aspects were conducted during the pilot testing.

I reviewed the instrument under the supervisor's guidance to ensure validity. The process provided the face and content validity of the instrument. To establish face validity, I ensured that the questions in the questionnaire appeared relevant, appropriate and understandable to the respondents from the target population. This was done by reviewing the questionnaire to ensure that the questions were phrased in a way that was clear and understandable to respondents. Also, the presentation, structure and form of the items within the instrument were examined to ensure that they cover topics that are easily recognisable as relevant to the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes.

To ensure content validity for the study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify common challenges faced by students from single-parent homes in similar contexts. Findings from the literature review were used to inform the selection and formulation of questionnaire items, ensuring coverage of the full spectrum of identified challenges. The data collection instrument was also validated (content and face) by two experts in

the fields of Educational Measurement and Guidance and Counselling from the Faculty of Educational Foundations at the University of Cape Coast.

The format of the questionnaire was iteratively refined based on feedback from experts to ensure it effectively focused on the information needed to achieve the objective of the research. The instrument was finally vetted and approved by my supervisor. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established using the Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate. All instruments had a Cronbach alpha of 0.7 and above which depicts high reliability.

Table 2: Reliability of Instruments

Instrument	No. of items	Original CA	New CA
Academic challenges	10	0.801	0.766
Social challenges	10	0.851	0.822
Emotional challenges	7	0.824	0.701
Factors contributing to challenges	8	0.791	0.784
Coping strategies	7	0.754	0.735

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Ethical Considerations

Before the research participants' informed permission was obtained, the questionnaires were distributed. The schools' authorities were written to for permission to be granted for the conduct of the study. The study participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed to anybody under any circumstances. Student's names were anonymised before the data analysis to ensure confidentiality. Students were assured that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point. Ethical clearance to

conduct the research was obtained from the Ethical Review Board of the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast (see Appendix D).

Data Collection Procedures

A preliminary letter issued by the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Cape Coast (refer to Appendix C), was distributed to the Principals of the different schools, requesting authorisation to conduct the study. Both school authorities and respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study before the questionnaires were administered.

The study collected data from the students from the nine senior high schools using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was delivered to the respondents by hand in a common classroom to ensure the completed questionnaire was returned. Instructions were read to them, and each respondent was allowed enough time to complete and return the questionnaire. On average, the time spent filling the questionnaire was 15 – 30 minutes. In all, 361 questionnaires were administered but 357 questionnaires were returned. Thus, the analysis was based on 357 respondents.

Data Processing and Analysis

The completed questionnaires were screened for missing responses, serially numbered, and coded using the SPSS programme (Version 25.0) since it was a quantitative data. The analysis included coding, organizing, describing, analysing, cross-tabulating, and drawing conclusions. The analysis was done in two stages. The first stage involved the use of descriptive statistics, which involved generating means, standard deviations, frequency counts, and percentages. The second stage included the use of inferential statistics to analyse the data. Research questions one to five were analysed using means and standard

deviation. The use of the mean and standard deviation provided valuable insights into the central tendency and variability of a dataset. Hypotheses one and two were analysed using one-way MANOVA. This was used to determine the differences between the independent groups on more than one continuous dependent variable.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examines the different research methods utilised. Specifically, the descriptive survey research design was deemed suitable for investigating the difficulties faced by students from single-parent households in the Kwahu-East District of the Eastern Region, Ghana. Stratified and random sampling methods were utilised to select participants from the student population in single-parent families within the Eastern Region of Ghana, specifically focusing on the Kwahu-East District.

The questionnaires were created using a four-point Likert scale, aiding in gathering pertinent data essential for addressing the research inquiries guiding the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were utilised to analyze the acquired data. Specifically, frequency tables and percentages were employed to analyse demographic variables (such as gender and religion). The investigation utilised means, standard deviations, and one-way MANOVA to analyse the gathered data comprehensively.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District. This chapter presents the results and a discussion of the results. In terms of the results, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were presented first, and this was followed by the results of the main analysis as well as the discussion of the results. Out of the 361 questionnaires administered, 357 of them were completely responded and returned. Hence, all the analysis in this chapter was based on 357 respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 3 presents the results on the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 3: Demographic Data

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	193	54.1
Male	164	45.9
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	338	94.7
Muslim	19	5.3

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The demographic characteristics of the students surveyed include gender and religious affiliation. As presented in Table 3, there were more female (54.1%) than male (45.9%) students who participated in the study. The majority (94.7%) of the students were Christians, while 5.3% were Muslims.

Preamble for analysing the research questions

To answer the research questions, means and standard deviation were used to analyse the data obtained from the students. A criterion mean of 3.5 ($([2+3+4+5]/4)$) was used for the interpretation of the results. In support of this, Pallant (2016) indicated that a mean score above 3.5 on a 2-5 Likert scale suggest a positive evaluation in research while a mean score of 3.5 below 3.5 on a Likert scale suggest otherwise.

Research Question One

What are the academic challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District?

This research question sought to identify the academic challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District. The students rated the extent to which they faced academic challenges using a scale ranging from 2-5 on the Likert scale. Hence, an obtained mean above 3.5 signified that students agreed with the specific academic challenges faced by single-parent families, whereas a mean less than 3.5 showed that students disagreed with the specific academic challenges faced by single-parent families.

Table 4: Academic Challenges

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find it challenging to understand complex academic concepts.	3.82	.874
I often struggle to complete assignments on time.	3.15	.913
I feel overwhelmed by the amount of coursework and study material.	3.68	.969
I find it difficult to stay focused and motivated while studying.	3.54	.882
I feel stressed when preparing for exams or quizzes.	3.58	.950
I often find it challenging to balance my academic workload with other responsibilities.	3.69	.948
I sometimes feel discouraged by low grades or academic setbacks.	4.11	.916
I find it hard to ask for help or clarification when I do not understand something.	3.64	1.012
I feel anxious about participating in class discussions.	3.56	1.036
I find it challenging to manage my time effectively to meet academic deadlines.	3.59	.960
Overall mean	3.63	0.94

Source: Field survey (2023)

From the analysis of data in Table 4, respondents indicated the specific academic challenges they face. Out of 10 items that were used to check respondents' academic challenges, respondents agreed to almost all of the statements. Hence, the students agreed to all but one. The majority of the students did not agree with the fact that they often struggled to complete assignments on time ($M=3.15$, $SD=.913$).

Examining the evidence in Table 4, it is clear that students grapple with numerous academic challenges. It can be concluded that they struggle to comprehend complex concepts, feel swamped by coursework, and battle to maintain focus. Stress levels peak during exam periods, complicating their ability to balance responsibilities. Low grades serve as disheartening setbacks, exacerbating the situation. Time management proves elusive, and reluctance to

seek assistance further complicates matters. Hence, it was found that unresolved academic issues negatively affects students.

Research Question Two

What are the social challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District?

This research question sought to identify the social challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District. Thus, an obtained mean above 3.5 signified that students agreed with the specific social challenges faced by single-parent families, whereas a mean less than 3.5 showed that students disagreed with the specific social challenges faced by single-parent families. Table 5 displays the Means and Standard Deviations (SD).

Table 5: Social Challenges

Statements	Mean	SD
I find it challenging to initiate and engage in conversations with new people.	3.60	1.065
I often feel anxious or nervous in social situations.	3.72	.980
I struggle to maintain and develop meaningful friendships.	3.45	1.006
I find it difficult to express myself and my opinions in group settings.	3.55	1.047
I feel overwhelmed by social expectations and pressure to fit in.	3.57	.973
I often feel left out or excluded from social activities or events.	3.59	1.023
I find it challenging to navigate and understand social cues and norms.	3.44	1.824
I feel uncomfortable speaking in public or presenting in front of others.	3.81	1.024
I struggle to assert myself and set boundaries in social interactions.	3.54	.916
I find it hard to cope with conflicts or disagreements with others.	3.77	1.022
Overall mean	3.60	1.088

Source: Field survey (2023)

From the analysis of data in Table 5, respondents indicated the specific social challenges they face. Out of 10 items that were used to check respondents' social challenges, respondents agreed to almost all of the statements. However, the students did not agree with the fact that they struggle to maintain and develop meaningful friendships ($M=3.45$, $SD=1.006$) and also disagreed that they find it challenging to navigate and understand social cues and norms. ($M=3.44$, $SD=1.824$).

Hence, most students admitted that they felt uncomfortable speaking in public or presenting in front of others. Additionally, they struggled to assert themselves and set boundaries in social interactions. Moreover, navigating conflicts or disagreements with others posed significant difficulties for them. Furthermore, feeling left out or excluded from social activities was common. Also, they felt overwhelmed by social expectations and pressure to fit in. Besides, expressing opinions in groups proved difficult since they commonly experienced feelings of anxiety or nervousness in social settings. Lastly, initiating and actively participating in conversations with unfamiliar individuals posed challenges.

Research Question Three

What are the emotional challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District?

This research question sought to identify the emotional challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District. Therefore, an obtained mean above 3.5 signified that students agreed with the specific emotional challenges faced by single-parent families, whereas a mean less than 3.5 showed that students disagreed with the specific emotional challenges faced

by single-parent families. Table 6 presents the Means and Standard Deviations (SD).

Table 6: Emotional challenges

Statements	Mean	SD
I often experience difficulty managing and regulating my emotions.	3.78	1.834
I frequently feel overwhelmed or easily stressed in various situations.	3.77	.935
I experience anxiety or worry about future events or uncertainties.	4.09	2.331
I find it challenging to cope with and recover from setbacks or failures.	3.72	1.830
I sometimes feel depressed or have difficulty finding enjoyment in activities.	3.87	3.426
I find it hard to handle criticism or negative feedback.	3.80	.979
I find it challenging to seek help or support for my emotional or psychological struggles.	3.94	.971
Overall mean	3.85	1.75

Source: Field survey (2023)

From the analysis of data in Table 6, respondents indicated the specific emotional challenges they face. Out of 7 items that were used to check respondents' emotional challenges, respondents agreed to all statements.

Therefore, all students agreed that they experienced anxiety or worry about future events or uncertainties. Additionally, they often experienced difficulty managing and regulating their emotions. Furthermore, they frequently felt overwhelmed or easily stressed in various situations. Also grappling with setbacks or failures posed considerable difficulty for them in terms of coping and recovery. Likewise, they sometimes felt depressed or had difficulty finding enjoyment in activities. Moreover, students expressed difficulty in handling

criticism or negative feedback. Finally, a notable challenge identified was the hesitance or difficulty in seeking help or support for their emotional or psychological distress.

Research Question Four

What factors contribute to the challenges faced by students from single-parent homes in the Kwahu-East District of Ghana?

This research question sought to explore the factors contributing to the challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District of Ghana. The students rated the extent to which they believed certain factors contributed to the challenges they faced using a scale of 2-5. A criterion mean of 3.5 ($(2+3+4+5)/4$) was used for the interpretation of the results. In support of this, Pallant (2016) indicated that a mean score of 3.5 on a 2-5 Likert scale suggest a positive evaluation in research. An obtained mean above 3.5 signified that students agreed with certain factors as contributors to the challenges faced from single-parent families whereas a mean less than 3.5 showed that students disagreed. The mean (or average score) for each factor shows how strongly students believe that a specific factor contributes to their challenges. This helps the researcher rank and compare the contributing factors to determine which ones are considered most significant. Table 7 displays the means and Standard Deviations (SD).

Table 7: Contributors to challenges

Statements	Mean	SD
Lack of prior knowledge or foundational understanding in the subject matter.	3.60	.908
Insufficient time management skills and poor organization of tasks.	3.62	.905
High academic workload from teachers.	3.78	1.802
Limited access to resources or learning materials.	3.82	1.007
Personal issues or external responsibilities affecting focus and attention.	3.78	.982
Difficulty in adapting to new learning methods or instructional approaches.	3.51	.911
Inadequate support or guidance from teachers or mentors.	3.53	.955
Social or cultural factors, such as feeling isolated or facing discrimination.	3.57	1.027

Source: Field survey (2023)

From the analysis of data in Table 7, respondents indicated the factors which contributed to the challenges they faced. Out of 8 items that were used to check factors which contributed to the students' challenges, respondents agreed to all the statements.

In conclusion, most students agreed that they experienced limited access to learning materials, coupled with a lack of prior knowledge in understanding their subject matter. Additionally, insufficient time management skills and poor organization of tasks were significant contributors. Moreover, the high academic workload from teachers, along with personal issues and external responsibilities, further compounded their difficulties there by affecting their focus and attention. Furthermore, adapting to new learning methods proved difficult. Also, inadequate support or guidance from teachers or mentors was

evident. Finally, students agreed to the influence of social or cultural factors, such as feeling isolation or discrimination.

Research Question Five

What are the coping strategies used by students from single-parent families to overcome these challenges?

This research question sought to explore the coping strategies used by students from single-parent families to overcome these challenges. To answer this research question means and standard deviation (SD) were used to analyse the data obtained from the students. The students rated the extent to which they used coping strategies to overcome these challenges using a scale of 2-5. A criterion mean of 3.5 ($([2+3+4+5]/4)$) was used for the interpretation of the results (Pallant, 2016). An obtained mean above 3.5 signified that students agreed with certain coping strategies to overcome these challenges, whereas a mean less than 3.5 showed that students disagreed with certain factors as coping strategies to overcome these challenges.

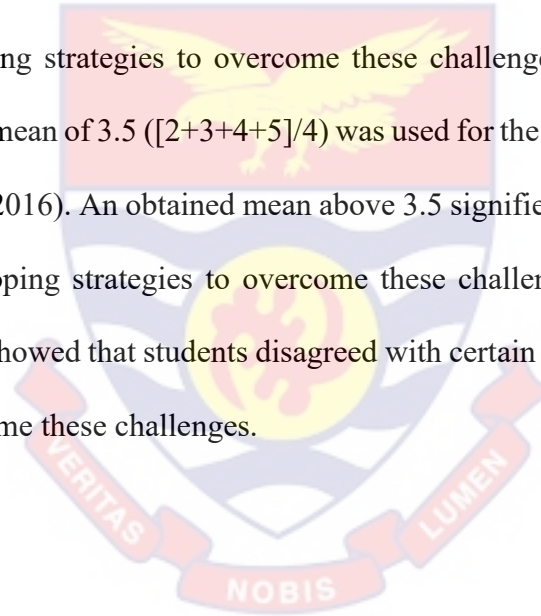


Table 8: Coping Strategies

Statements	Mean	SD
Develop a study schedule and prioritize tasks to better manage time and workload.	4.19	.795
Break down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.	4.31	2.765
Seek support from teachers, mentors, or academic resources for clarification and assistance.	4.08	.879
Engage in self-care activities such as sleeping, eating balanced meals, and engaging in hobbies.	4.09	2.296
Develop effective note-taking and studying strategies that work best for your learning style.	4.16	.822
Practice self-reflection and positive self-talk to counter negative thoughts and build self-confidence.	4.36	2.811
Seek professional help or counselling if emotional challenges significantly impact overall well-being.	4.09	.887

Source: Field survey (2023)

From the analysis of data in Table 8, respondents indicated the coping strategies used by students from single-parent families to overcome these challenges. Out of 7 items that were used to check coping strategies used by students from single-parent families to overcome these challenges, respondents agreed to all the statements.

It can be concluded that all the students agreed to practice self-reflection and positive self-talk to counter negative thoughts and build self-confidence. They emphasized the importance of developing study schedules and task prioritization to manage time and workload effectively. Additionally, they stressed the significance of breaking down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. Seeking support from teachers, mentors, or academic resources for clarification and assistance was also unanimously acknowledged. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of engaging in self-care activities

maintaining balanced meals and sufficient sleep, as well as participating in hobbies. Also, they collectively emphasized that they develop effective note-taking and studying strategies that work best for their learning style. Lastly, they expressed willingness to seek professional help or counselling if emotional challenges significantly impact their overall well-being.

Hypotheses Testing

The study tested two hypotheses. Prior to testing these hypotheses, the normality assumption, which is fundamental to all parametric assumptions, was tested using the normal Q-Q plot (appendix).

Hypothesis One

H₀: There will be no difference in academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on gender.

H_A: There will be a difference in academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on gender.

This hypothesis was tested to determine whether gender differences existed in students' challenges; academic, social, and emotional challenges. To test this hypothesis, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The categorical variable was gender whereas students' challenges had three levels: academic, social, and emotional challenges. The results are presented in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 9: Multivariate Test

Effect	Value	F	df 1	df 2	Sig.
Intercept	.017	6284.94 ^b	1	355	.000
Gender	.972	3.364 ^b	1	355	.019

Source: Field survey (2023)

Table 10: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	Academic Challenges	468939.825	1	468939.825	17025.021	.000
	Social Challenges	458830.322	1	458830.322	13606.377	.000
	Emotional Challenges	256633.897	1	256633.897	6715.585	.000
Gender	Academic Challenges	.755	1	.755	.027	.869
	Social Challenges	186.512	1	186.512	5.531	.019
	Emotional Challenges	195.241	1	195.241	5.109	.024
Error	Academic Challenges	9778.175	355	27.544		
	Social Challenges	11971.208	355	33.722		
	Emotional Challenges	13566.210	355	38.215		
Total	Academic Challenges	481931.000	357			
	Social Challenges	475550.000	357			
	Emotional Challenges	273259.000	357			

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The results in Table 10 show that overall, respondents significantly differed on challenges faced by students from single-parent families based on gender ($F(1, 355) = 3.364, p=.019$). Further, in Table 11, it was revealed that

gender differed on both social and emotional challenges with p values $<.05$. Thus, .019 and .024 respectively. With social challenges, females ($M=36.6943$; $SD=5.66833$) rated their challenges higher than males ($M=35.2439$; $SD=5.96629$). With emotional challenges, females ($M=27.6425$; $SD=7.19025$) rated their challenges higher than males ($M=26.1585$; $SD=4.72552$). However, there was no significant gender difference with regard to academic challenges with a p -value $>.05$. In conclusion, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, which means that respondents significantly differed on challenges faced by students from single-parent families based on gender.

Hypothesis Two

H₀: There will be no difference in academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on religion.

H_A: There will be a difference in academic, social, and emotional challenges of students based on religion.

This hypothesis was tested to determine whether differences in student challenges; academic, social, and emotional challenges were based on religious differences. To test this hypothesis, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. The categorical variable was religion, whereas student challenges had three levels: academic, social, and emotional challenges. The results are displayed in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 11: Multivariate test

Effect	Value	F	df 1	df 2	Sig.
Intercept	.081	1334.34 ^b	1	355	.000
Religion	.987	1.558 ^b	1	355	.199

Table 12: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	Academic Challenges	90039.879	1	90039.879	3298.637	.000
	Social Challenges	92944.794	1	92944.794	2714.101	.000
	Emotional Challenges	49803.630	1	49803.630	1288.357	.000
Religion	Academic Challenges	88.820	1	88.820	3.254	.072
	Social Challenges	.694	1	.694	.020	.887
	Emotional Challenges	38.319	1	38.319	.991	.320
Error	Academic Challenges	9690.110	355	27.296		
	Social Challenges	12157.026	355	34.245		
	Emotional Challenges	13723.132	355	38.657		
Total	Academic Challenges	481931.000	357			
	Social Challenges	475550.000	357			
	Emotional Challenges	273259.000	357			

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The results in Table 12 show that overall, there were no significant differences in the challenges students from single parents face based on religious differences ($F(1, 355) = 1.558, p = .199$). Further, in Table 13, it was revealed that there were no significant differences in the challenges students from single-parent homes face based on religious differences with a p -value $> .05$. Thus, regardless of one's religion, it does not make any difference as far as their challenges are concerned. In conclusion, the null hypothesis was

not rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, the null hypothesis was retained, indicating that there were no significant differences in the challenges students from single-parent homes face based on religious differences.

Discussion of Results

This study aimed to examine the obstacles encountered by students hailing from single-parent households within the Kwahu East District. The subsequent section delved into the findings outlined in the preceding paragraphs, organizing the discourse around the study's objectives.

Academic challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District

The results revealed that most students felt discouraged by low grades or academic setbacks. Also, they found it challenging to understand complex academic concepts. Additionally, a significant proportion of students reported feeling overwhelmed by the volume of coursework and study material. Furthermore, maintaining focus and motivation during study sessions emerged as a prevalent difficulty among the surveyed students. Again, most students experienced stress during exam or quiz preparation. They also struggled to balance their academic workload with other responsibilities. Furthermore, asking for help or clarification proved to be challenging when facing difficulties in understanding concepts. Also, a substantial portion of students reported feeling anxious when tasked with delivering presentations or engaging in class discussions. In addition, they encountered difficulties in managing their time effectively to meet academic deadlines. However, the majority of the students disagreed that they often struggle to complete assignments on time.

The finding of the present study, which uncovered that students feel discouraged by low grades or academic setbacks, aligns with the studies by Johnson et al. (2019) as well as Fincham, Beach, Harold, and Osborne (2017), who found that students from single-parent households experienced discouragement and self-doubt when they received low grades or encountered academic setbacks. This consistency across studies emphasizes the significant impact of family structure on students from single-parent families' academic challenges, particularly in the face of academic setbacks. Moreover, comparing this finding with those of Smith and Brown (2019) and William and Jones (2018), who also explored the academic challenges of students from single-parent homes, reveals both similarities and differences. Like this study, Smith and Brown (2019) observed that students from single-parent homes often encountered discouragement due to academic difficulties. However, William and Jones (2018) focused more broadly on the impact of family structures on academic motivation and achievement, highlighting the feeling of discouragement among students from single-parent families.

Again, Smith and Brown (2019) and Johnson et al. (2020) revealed that students from single-parent homes often experienced challenges in managing their time effectively to meet academic deadlines. Their findings echoed the observation in the current study, where students similarly reported difficulties in staying focused and motivated while studying. It appears the absence of a second parental figure in single-parent households may result in a lack of structured routines and accountability, making it challenging for students to effectively manage their time and prioritise tasks. Secondly, students from single-parent homes may bear additional responsibilities, such as household

chores or caring for siblings which further strain their time and energy resources, making it difficult to allocate sufficient time for academic pursuits.

Furthermore, this study identified that students from single parent households frequently feel overwhelmed by volume of coursework and study materials. This finding aligns with the findings from Khan and Akhtar (2020) and Adeyemo and Ogunleye (2016). Khan and Akhtar (2020) investigated the academic challenges of students from single parent families and revealed they often struggled with understanding complex academic concepts and felt overwhelmed by the demands of coursework and study materials. Similarly, Adeyemo and Ogunleye (2016) reported that students from single parent homes experienced difficulties in comprehending complex academic concepts and managing their academic workload effectively.

The consistency of findings between this current study and previous research, such as Khan and Akhtar (2020) could be attributed to the shared demographic characteristics of the study populations, particularly the prevalence of single-parent households. The previous studies used the population of students from single parent homes, whereas the current study also used students from single-parent home. Additionally, methodological similarities, such as the use questionnaires to collect data on students' academic experiences may account for comparability of results across studies.

However, the findings of the present study disagree with the findings outlined by Anderson et al. (2017) who discovered that students from single-parent families do not often struggle to complete assignments on time. Again, the findings of this study do not corroborate with the findings of Lee and Hawng

(2020) who reported that students from single-parent families do not often struggle to complete assignments on time.

Social challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu East District

The results revealed that most students felt uncomfortable speaking in public or presenting in front of others. Additionally, they struggled to assert themselves and set boundaries in social interaction. Also, they found it hard to cope with conflicts or disagreements with others and often felt left out or excluded from social activities or events. Furthermore, they felt overwhelmed by social expectations and found it difficult to express themselves and their opinions in group settings as they often felt anxious or nervous in social situations. Again, most students also found it challenging to initiate and engage in conversations with new people. However, majority of the students disagreed that they struggled to maintain and develop meaningful friendships and also disagreed that they found it challenging to navigate and understand social cues and norms.

The findings of this study agree with a couple of studies (Anderson et al., 2020; Thompson & Adams, 2019; Adu & Oduro, 2020) as the findings of the aforementioned studies revealed that students from single parent homes reported feelings of social isolation, increased peer conflict, and lower levels of social integration. It was similarly reported in these studies that students from single-parent households often face challenges in building and maintaining peer relationships. Factors such as limited social support networks, stigma associated with single parenthood, and lower parental availability were identified as contributors to these difficulties. Hence, the social challenges faced by students

included difficulty in forming and maintaining peer relationships. Furthermore, the results of the present study had similar findings as Smith and Johnson (2018) who also identified social challenges faced by these students as including difficulties in developing social skills, establishing peer networks, and participating in social activities.

In contrast with the findings of this study, Dabone, Sawadogo, and Zhang (2021) found that single-parent households often experienced economic insecurity rather instead of social challenges and limited access to resources, which affected students' well-being and development. Moreover, the study findings did not corroborate with findings from Ofori-Dankwa and Amankwah (2020) as well as Akwasi et al. (2021) who found that students from single parent families had higher rates of absenteeism, lacked the zeal to overcome their obstacles and were more likely to drop out of school because of the absence of clear goal, limited motivation, low self-efficacy and eternal distractions such as peer pressure and social media.

Emotional challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District

The third objective of the study was to find out the emotional challenges faced by the respondents. The findings of this study revealed that the students experienced anxiety or worry about future events or uncertainties, often experienced difficulty managing and regulating their emotions and frequently felt overwhelmed or easily stressed in various situations. Again, the students found it challenging to cope with and recover from setbacks or failures and sometimes felt depressed or had difficulty finding enjoyment in activities. Lastly, all the students also found it hard to handle criticism or negative

feedback and found it challenging to seek help or support for their emotional or psychological struggles.

The findings of the current study indicating that students from single parent home in the Kwahu- East District of Ghana experienced anxiety or worry about future events or uncertainty align with studies by Ahmed et al. (2019) and Patel et al. (2020) who reported elevated levels of anxiety among students from single parent households. This consistency in findings across different studies underscores the universal nature of the challenges faced by students from single parent homes regarding anxiety about the future. One possible cause of this finding in the Kwahu-East District of could be attributed to cultural and societal norms regarding education and unemployment opportunities. This creates a feeling of uncertainty among students from single parent homes, particularly if they perceive limited avenues for success.

Furthermore, the consistency of this finding with similar studies conducted by Kamau and Khasakhala (2020), Mensah and Amoah (2019), Nguyen et al. (2021), and Smith et al. (2021) who discovered that students from single-parent families exhibited higher levels of emotional distress, including feelings of sadness and loneliness, insecurity and emotional instability, can be attributed to common underlying factors that transcend geographical and cultural boundaries. One such factor is the absence of a second parental figure in the household, which may contribute to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty among students. Additionally, research by Smith and Jones (2018) highlighted how the lack of consistent emotional support and guidance from both parents can heighten anxiety levels among students from single parent households. Hence it appears that societal pressure and expectations regarding academic and

career success further exacerbate anxiety about the future among students from single parent homes, regardless of their geographical location.

The finding of this present study indicating that students from single parent homes found it challenging to seek help and support for their emotional struggles, aligns with studies by Johnson et al. (2020) and Lee (2018) who reported that that students often experience difficulty managing and regulating their emotion. In addition, Jackson and Brown (2019) conducted a study revealing that students from single parent homes often found it challenging to seek help or support for their emotional distress due to limited parental availability. Also, Simth (2016) emphasised the role of stigma associated with single parent households, leading students internalize their struggles and avoid seeking support. Hence, these students frequently experienced heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression from such emotional challenges. One significant root cause behind this finding is the lack of parental availability and support due to the absence of a second parental figure in the home. Single parents may have limited time and energy to devote to their students' emotional needs, thereby creating a barrier for them in seek help when in need.

Similarly, societal stigma surrounding single parenthood in the Kwahu-East District may contribute to a reluctance among student from single parent homes to seek help, fearing judgement or discrimination. This sigma may stem from cultural beliefs, societal norms and lack of understanding concerning single parenthood, leading students to perceive seeking help as a sign of weakness or failure. Research by Lee and Brown (2018) highlighted how pervasive societal attitudes towards single parenthood can create barriers for students to seek support, particularly in communities where single parenthood

is seen as bad omen and perceived negatively. Hence, students from single parent homes may internalize these negative perceptions and as a result feel reluctant to disclose their struggles or embarrassed to reach out for support, fearing judgment or rejection from others.

The finding of this current study, indicating that students from single parent home experienced feeling of depression and struggle to find enjoyment in activities, shed light on the emotional challenges faced by this demographic. This aligns with similar studies, such as research by Smith et al (2019) and Johnson (2021), which also documented higher rates of depressive symptoms among students from single parent homes. One possible explanation for this finding is the lack of consistent emotional support or stability within single parent households. With only one parental figure available to provide guidance and nurture emotional well-being, students may feel a heightened sense of loneliness and isolation contributing to feeling of depression and disinterest in activities. Also, single parents may face increased pressure to balance work, household responsibilities, leaving little time for meaningful engagement with their children or the cultivation of enjoyable activities.

However, while there is a clear consensus among studies such as Johnson (2021), Lee (2018), and Smith et al. (2019) regarding the heightened risk of depression among students from single parent homes, it is important to acknowledge variations in findings across different studies. For instance, research by Lee and Johnson (2017) emphasises the resilience and adaptive strategies demonstrated by many students from single parent home to mitigate the risk of depression. Also, the finding of the present study such as, students finding it challenging to cope with and recover from setbacks or failures was

not in line with the findings by Koomson et al. (2021) who found that students did not find it challenging to cope with and recover from setbacks or failures.

Contributors to Challenges of Students from Single Parent Families

The results of the study revealed that most students agreed on limited access to resources, lack of prior knowledge and insufficient time management skills as well as poor organization of tasks. Additionally, they experienced high academic workload from teachers and personal issues affecting their focus. Also, adapting to new learning methods or instructional approaches was challenging for them. Lastly, inadequate support or guidance from teachers along with social or cultural factors, such as feeling isolated or facing discrimination compounded their difficulties.

The findings of the this study were consistent with several studies such as Amato and Gilbreth (1999), Brown and Williams (2018), and Hill and Tyson (2009). The results of these studies together with the present study revealed that students encountered a limited access to resources or learning materials. Personal issues or external responsibilities affecting students focus and attention and also the fact that they had difficulty in adapting to new learning methods or instructional approaches can further exacerbate the cognitive development, and overall well-being of these students.

Again, the finding of the present study indicating that students from single parent homes experience limited access to learning materials corroborates that of other studies such as Agyemang et al. (2021), Annan et al. (2020), and Nyarko and Appiah (2020) who found that single-parent families in Ghana face challenges in providing adequate resources for their students' education, which negatively impacts their academic performance. Across

various geographic and demographic contexts, these students consistently encounter barriers to accessing learning materials, detrimentally affecting their academic success.

The study's finding that inadequate support from teachers or mentors contributes to students' challenges also corroborated studies by Adams and Jones (2020), Bernardi et al. (2021) and Vieno et al. (2020) who found that students from single-parent families experienced lower levels of parental involvement. This lack of parental involvement leads to challenges in academic support, emotional guidance, and overall supervision, affecting the students' well-being and academic success.

However, this finding of the study did not corroborate with some studies conducted by Amato, 2018; Duncan and Magnuson, 2012; Magnuson and Berger (2009), McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), and Adu-Gyamfi and Adjei (2020). Both studies identified parental involvement and family structure as significant factors that contributed to student challenges. Again, the study findings did not corroborate studies from Johnson et al. (2019), McLoyd (1990) and Lee (2019) who also found that the mental health challenges faced by single parents can spill over into their parenting practices, affecting the emotional well-being and adjustment of students. Lastly, the study findings did not agree with Ng et al. (2021) and Pinquart and Kauser (2018) who reported that cultural values and beliefs can influence parental expectations, community support, and the availability of resources, which ultimately impact the students' experiences and outcomes.

Coping Strategies for Students from Single Parent Families

In terms of coping strategies students from single parent families use, the results revealed that most students practiced self-reflection and positive self-talk to counter negative thoughts and build self-confidence. The students collectively agreed to developing a structured study plan, focusing on prioritising tasks for better time and workload management. They also committed to breaking down complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps. Additionally, they recognized the importance of seeking guidance from teachers or mentors when needed. Moreover, they emphasised the need for self-care, including getting enough sleep, eating well, and enjoying hobbies. They also acknowledged the importance of developing effective study strategies tailored to their own learning styles. Lastly, they agreed to seek professional help or counseling if emotional challenges significantly affected their overall well-being.

The findings of the present study such as effective note-taking and engaging in hobbies are consistent with several studies conducted by Agbenyega et al. (2021), Brown et al. (2019), Hanson et al. (2019), and Taylor et al. (2016). These studies also argued that community and school support are key and again highlighted the importance of social support as a coping strategy for students from single-parent families. Hence, seeking support from friends, extended family members, and mentors provided emotional validation, guidance, and practical assistance.

Again, the findings of the present study such as seeking professional help or counselling corroborated other studies like Hill et al. (2018), Martinez et al. (2020), Krause (2008), and Wink (2018) who found that coping strategies

like seeking support, utilising available resources such as school support service or community programmes are important for students. The findings of the present study such as using positive self-talk to counter negative thoughts was also in line with the study conducted by Baiden, et al. (2020) which found out that building social networks, developing self-motivation and time management skills are among the predominant support strategies used by students from single parent homes in dealing with academic and emotional challenges.

On the contrary, the finding of this study was not in agreement with the findings studies conducted by Schneider and Schönfeld (2019), Williams and Johnson (2020), Asare (2020), Nketsia et al. (2021), Kinnear et al. (2020), Omoniyi and Akintayo (2019) who found that students who engage in self-goal setting and self-motivation demonstrate higher levels of resilience, self-esteem, and academic achievement. Hence, they develop a positive outlook, set realistic goals, and practice self-affirmation which can increase their resilience and motivation. Again, the findings of this study were not in line with studies examined by Jackson and Adams (2020), Smith and Thompson (2019), and Parker et al. (2018) who reported that students who utilised problem-solving techniques, such as identifying challenges, generating solutions, and implementing action plans, reported higher levels of academic success and lower levels of distress.

Gender differences in Students' Challenges from Single Parent Families

The sixth objective of the study was to examine gender differences in the challenges faced by students from single parent families. The study found that overall, significantly gender showed differences in students challenges. It was revealed further that on both social and emotional challenges, there were

significant gender differences. With social and emotional challenges, females rated their challenges higher than males. However, academic challenges did not differ based on gender.

The findings of this study were consistent with studies conducted by Mencarini, Pasqua and Romiti (2019) and Lee and Chen (2018) who reported that girls exhibited higher emotional expressiveness and were more inclined to seek emotional support from family members and friends. This ability to express emotions and seek support contributed to better emotional management for girls.

However, the findings of this study were not consistent with studies examined by Johnson et al. (2020) and Smith and Baker (2019) who found in their study that girls from single parent homes displayed higher levels of academic motivation and engagement, which positively impacted their academic performance compared to their male counterparts. They further concluded that girls tended to have stronger social support systems and higher levels of emotional expressiveness, enabling them to better cope with their challenges. Also, they found that girls tended to demonstrate higher levels of conscientiousness and self-discipline, leading to better academic outcomes as compared to their male counterparts.

Taking a critical look at literature, gender differences in student challenges have mainly arisen due to the fact that traditional gender roles often dictate different expectations for boys and girls. Girls may face pressure to conform to societal expectations of being nurturing, submissive, and focused on appearance rather than academic achievement. These stereotypes can influence

how girls are perceived in academic settings and can impact their confidence and performance.

Students' Challenges from Single Parent Families based on Religious Differences

The last objective of the study was to examine religious differences in the challenges faced by students from single parents. The study found that religion did not significantly account for differences in dimensions of student challenges; academic, social and emotional challenges. Thus, regardless of one's religion, it does not make any difference as far as their challenges are concerned.

The findings of the this study were consistent with some studies investigated by Sham and Yusof (2015) and Agyemang et al. (2021) who found in their study that the level of religiosity had no significant implication on the challenges faced by adolescents. The authors also concluded that most students never used their religious beliefs as a source of resilience and coping tool to deal with their challenges apart from self-motivation.

However, the findings of this study were not consistent with studies such as Thompson and Lee (2020), Patel et al. (2019), Ellison and Lee (2020), Pargament (2019), Agyemang et al. (2021) and Brown et al. (2016). These studies indicated that students who reported higher levels of religious involvement, such as attending religious services and engaging in religious practices, demonstrated better academic performance and higher levels of academic self-efficacy. Hence, religious beliefs and involvement played a significant role in promoting social connectedness and resilience among these students. As such, students who were actively involved in religious activities

reported feelings of lower levels of social isolation and higher levels of social well-being.

Additionally, the findings of this study indicated that student challenges were not consistent with other studies conducted by Holt, Clark, and Kreuter (2020), Williams et al. (2021), Abdul-Razak and Ghazi (2018) as well as Fawole and Ngwu, (2021) who reported that religious communities often provide a strong sense of belonging and social support, which can help students from single parent homes feel connected and valued. The aforementioned studies also found that religious involvement and participation in religious activities can contribute to the formation of social networks and support systems. This social support can mitigate the challenges of isolation and provide a sense of community for these students.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District. This chapter reported the results and discussion of the study. The survey found that most students were disheartened by low grades or academic failures. On the other hand, it was shown that most students were uncomfortable speaking in public or presenting in front of others. Again, the majority of students reported feeling anxious or worried about future events or uncertainty. According to the findings of this survey, the majority of students believed that they had restricted access to resources or learning materials. Again, the study discovered that most students used self-reflection and positive self-talk to combat negative ideas and boost their self-confidence. Gender disparities were discovered to have a substantial impact on student problems. It was also shown that gender

significantly accounted for difference in both social and emotional challenges of respondents. Females evaluated social difficulties higher than males. Females evaluated emotional difficulties higher than males. However, there was no difference in academic hurdles based on gender. Finally, the study findings demonstrated that religion did not substantially account for differences in all dimensions of students' challenges, including academic, social, and emotional issues.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presented a summary of the study and the conclusions drawn from the study. Suggestions and recommendations for further studies were also presented in this chapter. The suggestions and recommendations for further studies were based on the findings of the study.

Summary

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the challenges faced by students from single-parent families in the Kwahu-East District. The study was guided by seven objectives, which were transformed into five research questions and two hypotheses. The descriptive survey design was employed in the conduct of the study. The study focused on 361 Form two (2) students from single-parent homes. This study employed a multi-stage sampling approach. Among the 361 distributed questionnaires, 357 were fully completed and returned, indicating a response rate of 98%. The internal consistency indicators for all scales were satisfactory, with α values of .70 and higher. Analysis of the collected data involved both descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations and inferential statistics, including a One-way MANOVA.

Key Findings

The study revealed the following findings:

1. Most students reported facing various academic challenges, including feeling discouraged by low grades or setbacks, finding it hard to grasp complex concepts, and feeling overwhelmed by coursework. They also

struggled with maintaining focus and motivation while studying, experienced stress during exam preparation, and found it challenging to balance academic workload with other responsibilities. However, contrary to the majority opinion, students generally did not agree that they frequently struggled to complete assignments on time.

2. The majority of students acknowledged facing various social challenges, such as feeling nervous about public speaking, finding it difficult to assert themselves or handle conflicts, and experiencing exclusion from social activities. Nonetheless, it was noteworthy that most students dissented from two assertions: the notion of facing challenges in nurturing enduring friendships and the perception of struggling with the interpretation of social cues and norms.
3. The research yielded a unanimous agreement among all respondents concerning emotional challenges. These encompassed anxiety regarding future uncertainties, struggles in emotion regulation, and frequent experiences of stress. Furthermore, students reported difficulties in overcoming setbacks, occasional feelings of depression, and reduced enjoyment in activities.
4. One of the key discoveries was that every student acknowledged certain factors contributes to their challenges. They mentioned limited access to resources, a lack of prior knowledge in subjects, and difficulties with time management and organizing tasks. Additionally, students highlighted heavy workloads from teachers, personal issues or outside responsibilities affecting their focus, and struggles in adapting to new learning methods.

5. Most students unanimously agreed on coping strategies for dealing with challenges. They emphasized self-reflection and positive self-talk to combat negative thoughts and boost self-confidence. Additionally, students endorsed developing study schedules, prioritizing tasks, and breaking down complex tasks into smaller steps for better time and workload management. Furthermore, seeking support from teachers, mentors, or academic resources, along with engaging in self-care activities like sleep, balanced meals, and hobbies, was acknowledged as beneficial in managing challenges.
6. With the gender differences, it was found that overall, gender significantly accounted for differences in the challenges students from single-parent home face. It was revealed further that gender differences were seen in both social and emotional challenges. On both challenges, females rated their challenges higher than males. There were no significant differences in academic challenges based on gender.
7. Lastly, the study found that religion did not significantly account for differences in the dimensions of students' challenges (academic, social and emotional challenges).

Conclusions

Based on the survey findings, students from single-parent homes within the Kwahu- East District illustrated that they experienced challenges across various domains. Academically, they commonly grapple with feelings of discouragement, difficulty understanding complex concepts, and managing overwhelming workloads. However, the majority of students do not perceive frequent struggles in meeting assignment deadlines. Similarly, social

challenges, including discomfort in public speaking and difficulty in conflict resolution, are widespread. Yet, most do not perceive challenges in forming meaningful connections or understanding social norms. Emotionally, students report anxiety about future uncertainties, difficulties in managing emotions, and experiences of stress. They also utilise coping strategies such as self-reflection and positive self-talk to navigate these challenges. Factors contributing to these challenges include limited resources, lack of prior knowledge, and difficulties in time management.

Furthermore, gender differences are evident, particularly in social and emotional challenges for students from single parent households, with females reporting higher levels of difficulty. However, there are no significant gender differences in academic challenges. Gender differences, especially in social and emotional domains, underscore the need for tailored support mechanisms. Conversely, religion does not emerge as a significant explanatory factor for disparities in students' challenges. The lack of significant disparities based on religion suggests a commonality in challenges across diverse religious backgrounds. Thus, regardless of one's religion it does not make any difference as far as students' challenges are concerned.

Recommendations

From the study's results and the drawn conclusion, the subsequent recommendations were formulated:

1. Given the prevalent academic discouragement and challenges faced by students from single-parent homes, stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with Ghana Education Service, through the Kwahu- East District Education Directorate, should offer regular study

skills workshops and seminars as well as introduce mindfulness and stress reduction techniques into the school curriculum to help students from single parent homes manage their emotions and improve focus while studying. This could be done by incorporating deep breathing technique, guided relaxation sessions and mindfulness exercises into the daily routine of students. By practicing these techniques students from single parent can learn to maintain a positive mindset and enhance their ability to stay motivated while completing academic task.

2. Considering the common discomfort students face in public speaking, school authorities such as Heads of SHSs as well as teachers should put school mechanisms in place to help students cope with social difficulties encountered in the school. This could be done through the implementation of extra-curricular activities as well as the creation of key social events in the school.
3. Given students' admission of experiencing worry about future events, families of SHS students, especially parents or guardians, should foster emotional support for their wards by encouraging open communication so as to help them feel appreciated and loved. This would consequently lead to better academic performance.
4. Since most students asserted that they had restricted access to resources or learning materials, the Ministry of Education, in synchronization with the Ghana Education Service and School Heads, should put in efforts to ensure that resources are being furnished in schools so as to aid students to learn effectively.

5. Since gender had a significant difference in the midst of student challenges with females admitting higher social and emotional challenges as compared to their male counterparts, female SHS students should be exposed by heads of schools to workshops and seminars to support them in their social and emotional challenges.

Implications for Guidance and Counselling

It is worth noting that the students agreed that they find it challenging to balance their academic workload with other responsibilities as well as manage their time effectively while in school. This calls for increased counselling services for the students on their academics to ensure that they pass their courses with distinction and have a better performance. Counsellors can work with students to assess their current commitments, identify priorities, and develop strategies for effective time management. This may include helping students create realistic personal timetables, set achievable goals and learn effective study techniques.

The recognition by students that they encounter challenges in asserting themselves and establishing boundaries in social interactions highlights the clarion call for social counselling to be emphasized. This calls for increased counselling services for the students in their social life to ensure that they possess better social skills. Counsellors can offer practical skill training, such as assertiveness training, to help students of single-parent homes develop the confidence and communication skills needed to navigate social interactions more effectively. This will help the students become effective in terms of social functioning.

In addition, the collective recognition among students that they grappled with emotional challenges underscores the paramount importance and imperative need for counselling sessions related to their emotional well-being. Thus, it is prudent for counsellors to walk collaboratively with students to identify and address underlying issues, such as low self-esteem or fear of rejection, so as to help them feel loved, needed and cherished. Additionally, counsellors can provide resources and tools for stress management and self-care to help students maintain a healthy balance between their academic and emotional lives. This act will consequently affect the performance of students.

Furthermore, given students' perception of lacking time management skills and poor task organization, it highlights the crucial role of counselling in guiding and directing students on overcoming these challenges they face as students. Finally, since females significantly differ as compared to their male counterparts on social and emotional challenges, it implies that counsellors in practice should highlight various counselling techniques to encourage females to build resilience, improve self-awareness and navigate their social and emotional challenges with greater confidence and emotional well-being.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. The research approach of this study can be enhanced by employing both quantitative and qualitative research approaches, thus a mixed method approach to better comprehend issues revolving around student challenges.
2. The study can potentially be repeated in other SHSs in other districts. This will help to make the findings more comprehensive and all-embracing.

3. It is also suggested that future researchers should look at different samples, such as using JHS students to get divergent opinions.



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APPENDICES



Hypotheses Testing

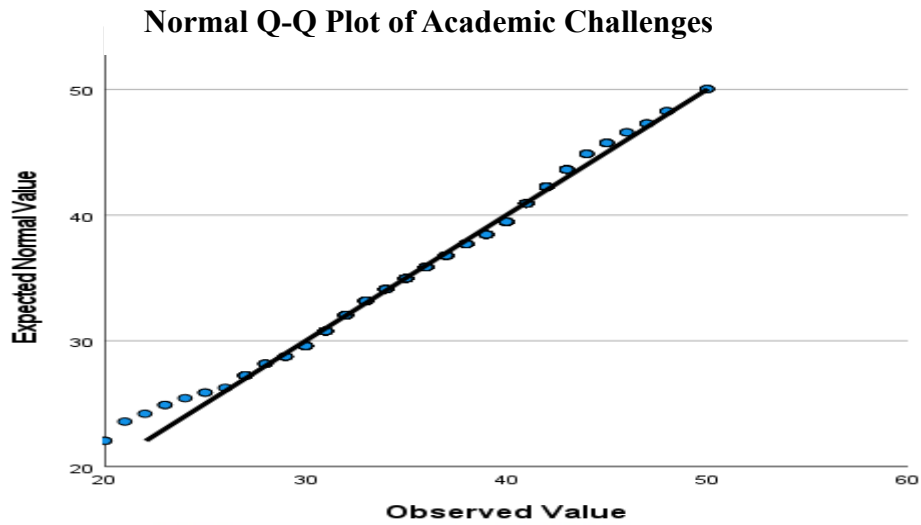


Figure 2: Normal Q-Q plot of Academic Challenges

Table 13: Test for Normality

Parameters	Academic Challenges	Social Challenges	Emotional Challenges
Mean	36.3669	36.0280	26.9608
Standard deviation	5.24108	5.84388	6.21738
5% Trimmed mean	36.4508	36.1334	26.6421
Median	37.0000	36.0000	27.0000

Source: Field survey (2023)

As presented in Table 9, the mean, median, and 5% trimmed mean of the Academic Challenges, Social Challenges and Emotional Challenges were approximately equal. This suggests that the scores of the mentioned variables followed a normal distribution. Furthermore, normal Q-Q plots were inspected for all variables. As depicted in Figure 2, the normal Q-Q plots indicated that the distribution of scores for all variables closely approximated a straight line.

APPENDIX A**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the challenges of students from single parent families in the Kwahu-East District of the Eastern Region, Ghana. Information given is solely for academic purpose. Participation is voluntary, and also the respondent is assured that no information will be revealed to any third party without their consent.

Thank you

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Please tick [] the response that best describes you.

Gender

Male []

Female []

Religious affiliation

Christian []

Muslim []

Other (please specify) -----

SECTION B: CHALLENGES

Indicate by ticking “” to show your level of agreement - Strongly agree (SA), Agree (Ag), Disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SD).

No.	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
Academic Challenges					
1	I find it challenging to understand complex academic concepts.				
2	I often struggle to complete assignments on time.				

3	I feel overwhelmed by the amount of coursework and study material.				
4	I find it difficult to stay focused and motivated while studying.				
5	I feel stressed when preparing for exams or quizzes.				
6	I often find it challenging to balance my academic workload with other responsibilities.				
7	I sometimes feel discouraged by low grades or academic setbacks.				
8	I find it hard to ask for help or clarification when I don't understand something.				
9	I feel anxious about giving presentations or participating in class discussions.				
10	I find it challenging to manage my time effectively to meet academic deadlines.				
Social Challenges					
11	I find it challenging to initiate and engage in conversations with new people.				
12	I often feel anxious or nervous in social situations.				
13	I struggle to maintain and develop meaningful friendships.				
14	I find it difficult to express myself and my opinions in group settings.				

15	I feel overwhelmed by social expectations and pressure to fit in.				
16	I often feel left out or excluded from social activities or events.				
17	I find it challenging to navigate and understand social cues and norms.				
18	I feel uncomfortable speaking in public or presenting in front of others.				
19	I struggle to assert myself and set boundaries in social interactions.				
20	I find it hard to cope with conflicts or disagreements with others.				
Emotional/Psychological Challenges					
21	I often experience difficulty managing and regulating my emotions.				
22	I frequently feel overwhelmed or easily stressed in various situations.				
23	I experience anxiety or worry about future events or uncertainties.				
24	I find it challenging to cope with and recover from setbacks or failures.				
25	I sometimes feel depressed or have difficulty finding enjoyment in activities.				
26	I find it hard to handle criticism or negative feedback.				

27	I find it challenging to seek help or support for my emotional or psychological struggles.				
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SECTION C: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE CHALLENGES

Indicate by ticking “√” to show your level of agreement - Strongly agree (SA), Agree (Ag), Disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SD).

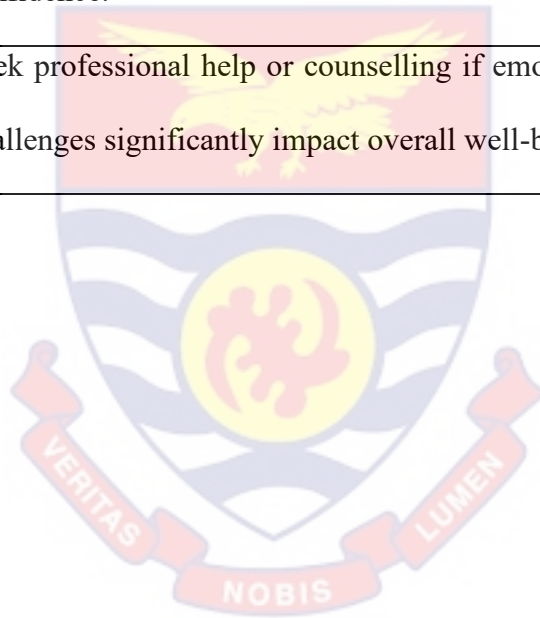
No.	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	Lack of prior knowledge or foundational understanding in the subject matter.				
2	Insufficient time management skills and poor organization of tasks.				
3	High academic workload or excessive expectations from teachers.				
4	Limited access to resources or learning materials.				
5	Personal issues or external responsibilities affecting focus and attention.				
6	Difficulty in adapting to new learning methods or instructional approaches.				
7	Inadequate support or guidance from teachers or mentors.				
8	Social or cultural factors, such as feeling isolated or facing discrimination.				

SECTION D: COPING STRATEGIES

Indicate by ticking “√” to show your level of agreement - Strongly agree (SA), Agree (Ag), Disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SD).

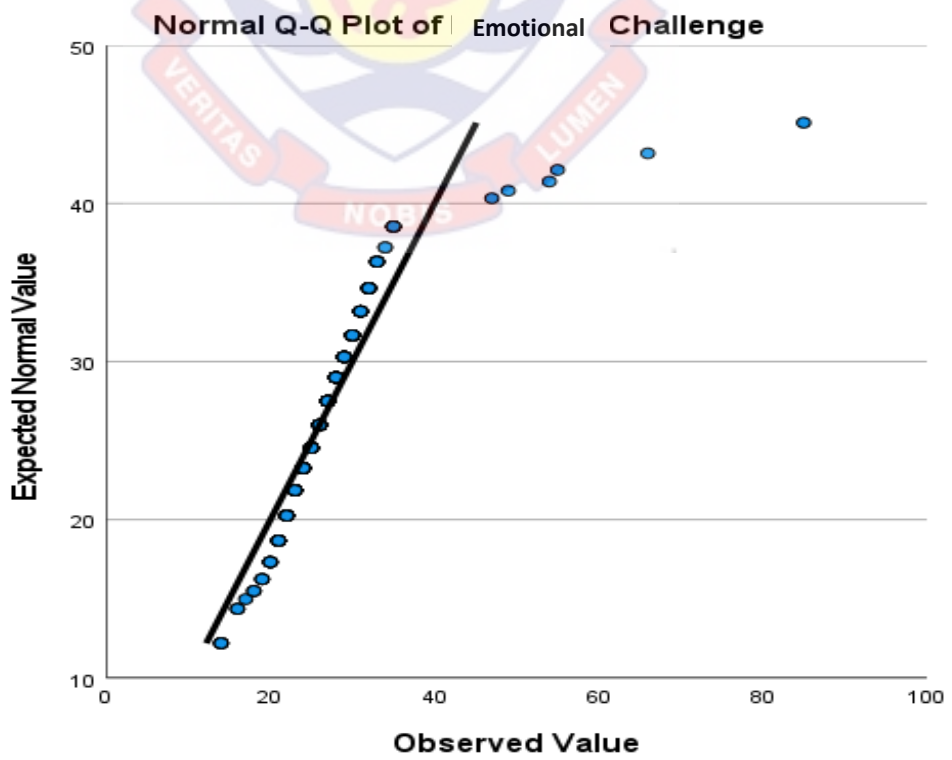
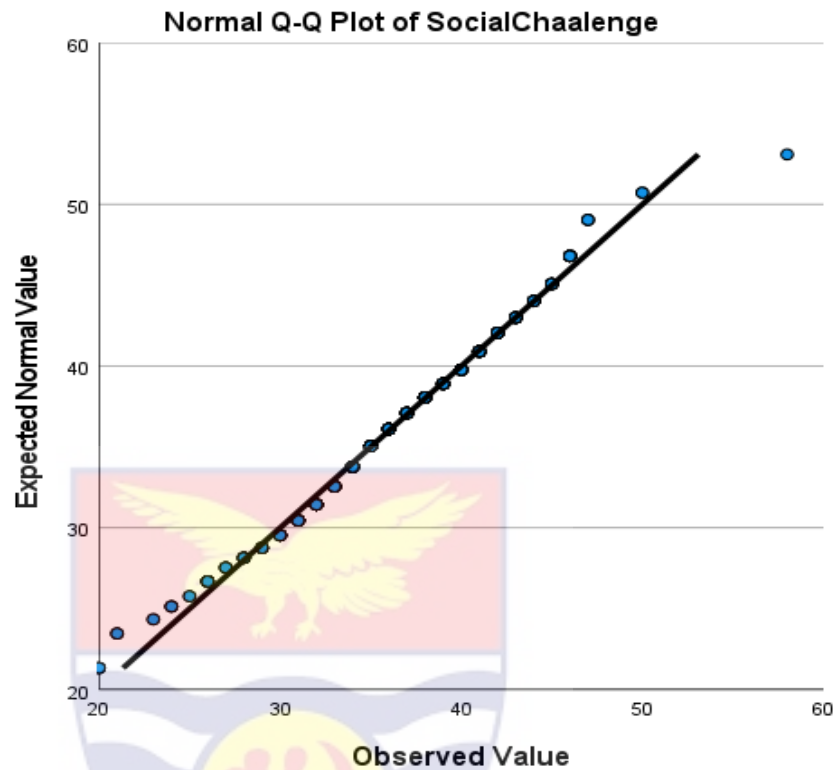
No.	Statement	SD	D	A	SA
1	Develop a study schedule and prioritize tasks to better manage time and workload.				
2	Break down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.				

3	Seek support from teachers, mentors, or academic resources for clarification and assistance.				
4	Engage in self-care activities such as sleeping, eating balanced meals, and engaging in hobbies.				
5	Develop effective note-taking and studying strategies that work best for your learning style.				
6	Practice self-reflection and positive self-talk to counter negative thoughts and build self-confidence.				
7	Seek professional help or counselling if emotional challenges significantly impact overall well-being.				



APPENDIX B

NORMALITY TESTING



APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Telephone: 0332091854
Email: dgc@ucc.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

13th November, 2023

The Chairman
Institutional Review Board
U. C. C.
Cape Coast

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We introduce to you, Gideon Davordzie a student from the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Cape Coast, who is pursuing M.Phil. in Guidance and Counselling.

As part of his academic requirements, he is expected to work on a thesis titled:

*Challenges of students from single parent families
in Kwahu - East District, Ghana*

he has successfully defended his proposal and is seeking ethical clearance to collect data for his research.

We would be most grateful if you could provide him the necessary assistance to proceed with his study.

Thank you,

Handwritten signature of Dr. Sylvia Ocansey.

DR. Sylvia Ocansey
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES
ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICER
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Date: 13th November, 2023

Our Ref: CES/ERB/UCC/EDS-23/108

Your Ref:

Dear Sir/Madam,

ETHICAL REQUIREMENTS CLEARANCE FOR RESEARCH STUDY

Chairman CES-ERB
Prof. J. O. Omotosho
jomotosho@ucc.edu.gh
0243784739

The bearer, Aideon Davurdeie
Reg. No. EF/GCP/21/0010

Vice Chairman, CES-ERB
Prof. K. Edjah
kedjah@ucc.edu.gh
0244742357

M.Phil./Ph.D student in the Department of Guidance and
Counselling in the College of Education Studies
University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. He/She wishes to
Undertake of research study on the topic:

Secretary CES-ERB
Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
forde@ucc.edu.gh
0244786680

Challenges of students from single parent
families in Kwahu-East District, Ghana

The Ethical Review Board (ERB) of the College of Education Studies
(CES) has assessed his/her proposal and confirmed that the proposal
satisfies the College's ethical requirements for the conduct of the study.

In view of the above, the researcher has been cleared and given approval
to commence his/her study. The ERB would be grateful if you would give
him/her the necessary assistance to facilitate the conduct of the said
research.

Thank You.

Yours faithfully,

Prof. Linda Dzama Forde
(Secretary, CES-ERB)