

# Challenges of single motherhood and its effects on their children in Kahawa area, Nairobi: Implications for counselling, 2014

Kamunde, Annread

## **Abstract:**

Single mothers, in contemporary times, are exposed to several conflicting, distracting, difficult and stressful situations. In the past, children generally tended to rely on the advice, wisdom and judgment of their elders. In modern times, owing to their exposure to other cultural milieu through mass media, books, travel and to some extent through personal contacts with others, they are often tempted to emulate other modes and patterns of behavior. Single parenthood is gaining prominence in contemporary society. Such influence sometimes creates distressing problems of adjustments for their children. They appear to be increasingly groping for a meaning in life consonant with their ideas and expectations as they resort to drug abuse, crime, and espousal of the hippie culture among others. The single mothers who are beset with such problems are not able to function efficiently in any sphere of activity. They have problems with sources of income, childcare, employment status and situation and welfare support. It is thus obvious that the single mothers, as an important section of the community, require counseling assistance. The main objective of this study, therefore, was to investigate the challenges of single mothers and the effects on their children. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A sample of 353 single mothers residing in Kahawa, Kasarani division, Nairobi, was surveyed. The instruments administered for collecting data from the field included questionnaires and key informant interviews. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. Cross tabulation was done to establish the relationship between variables. Other information from the focused interviews was analysed manually using qualitative methods. The research findings were presented in the form of contingency tables (bivariate frequency and percentage distribution) while other findings in qualitative form were presented as text. The findings of the study indicate that majority of the respondents were separated from their spouses. The findings also reveal that the single mothers experience a myriad of problems, most of which were financial in nature. The findings further reveal that the respondents were not decisive on what, in their opinion, their neighbors thought of them. The most prevalent positive child outcome attributable to single mothers was established to be their children attending school, completing their education and ultimately securing a job. The negative child outcome talked about by most of the respondents related to their children being affected psychologically. It is, however, imperative to note that majority of the respondents noted that they sought for help from the church. A few of them stated that they had been helped by nongovernmental organizations while none stated that they had been helped by community-based organizations. Recommendations made fell on three main areas: prevention, current support and future initiatives.