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# The Levels of Psychosocial Wellbeing among Catholic Secondary School Students Raised up by Single Parents in Catholic Diocese of Butare - Rwanda

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### ABSTRACT

The level of psychosocial well-being of adolescents after genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda needed much attention. The loss of parents and other members of the families during Genocide; children and adolescents have taken the responsibilities at early age. The objective that guided this study is to establish the levels of psychosocial well-being among catholic secondary school students raised up by single parenting in the Catholic Diocese of Butare in Rwanda. This study used psychosocial development theory and social cognitive theories. This study used concurrent, convergent research design for quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population was 314, and a sample size of 210 participants. Quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire and was analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data was collected through interviews and analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The study found that the level of psychosocial well-being among catholic secondary school students raised by single parenting was 29.2% good, and 17.9% was excellent. The socialization level was good because these students know how to create friends in school and maintain them. Students actively participated in school activities and curriculum activities in school. However, 27.8% was marginal, which expressed slight issues like depression, anxiety, and bizarre behaviour that were observed in a few students in the school.

**Key Words:** Levels; psychosocial wellbeing; Catholic Secondary School; Students, Single parents.

### INTRODUCTION

Life in single parenthood is common but can be quite stressful for the adult and the children. The single parent may feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of mentoring and caring for their children, maintaining a job, and keeping up with the bills and household chores. Typically, the family's finances and resources are drastically reduced following the parents' breakup (Meier, 2016).

In the United States of America (USA), statistics showed that nearly 24 million children live in a single-parent family. The cause of this rise in single-parent family in America is marrying later, declining marriage rates, increasing divorce rates and an uptick in babies born to single mothers. Within single-parent families, most children 14.5 million live in mother-only households. Transitioning to a single-parent household can disrupt a child's routines, education, housing arrangement and family income. It can also intensify the incidence of parental conflict and stress. These changes can be very difficult and even traumatic for some children (Casey, 2023).

A study done in India on psychosocial concerns among teenagers living with single-parent homes discovered the existence of psychosocial disorders such as stress and anxiety. Gender differences exist across all domains of well-being. Furthermore, there is a link between family structure and the well-being of teenagers living with single parents. Adolescents who live with single parents are more likely to engage in behavior difficulties and troubles, sadness and anxiety, and a reduction in scholastic performance (Lalmuanawma, 2020).

However, this is a period of developing independence by increasing duties, tasks, self-reliance, and personal affiliation with objectives and beliefs. It is a tough and dynamic time for parents since the parent-child connection requires close knowledge and revision in order to grasp the changes and their development. Psychosocial difficulties, such as behavioral and academic performance challenges, are common among teenagers themselves (Flett and Hewitt, 2012).

In the United Kingdom, research on the impact of single parents on learners' academic achievement have been conducted using two family models: the family deficit model and the risk factor protective model (Bago, 2022).

However, a study In the United States of America (USA), shows that nearly half of all children aged 15 have lived in a single-parent family, and an empirical study in Africa found that students from single-parent families are more likely to perform poorly academically than students from other types of families, despite having equal academic intellectual abilities. Academic performance in selected secondary schools in Bitereko Sub County is below the national average at both Ordinary and Advance levels (Bianchi, 2014).

In Kenya Tubei et al. (2021) stated that adolescents who have been abandoned might have difficulty expressing their emotions and feelings. They tend to keep their emotions bottled up and lack trust necessary to share their true selves. This could be the case with the adolescents from single parent families. Some adolescents are uncomfortable with being associated with single parenting (Tubei et al., 2021).

Psychosocial well-being of adolescents in secondary schools can only be achieved if the school is a friendly environment for, teaching and learning, whereby the useful and relevant learning content or reasonable workload given to students is manageable. The school should complement the single parents in instilling discipline in their children. Children from single parent's families need to collaborate with school administration to create a good rapport with teachers and other students in school. Prepared teachers that is teachers who are having teaching and learning materials which are able to deliver content, teachers who scheme their lessons every day, teachers who are well trained, are able to procure the psychosocial well-being to the students (UNESCO, MGIEP, 2020).

Students must be emotionally mature in order to participate in good interactions with their peers and instructors at school. Children from unsupportive socioeconomic family environments, i.e., children who do not have a close relationship with their biological parents, children who do not attend school, children who live solely with their fathers, children from larger households of five or more people, children who do not have a friend, and children who report feeling unsafe in their communities, have been identified as vulnerable to emotional violence in Rwanda (Nyandwi, 2023).

The psychosocial well-being of children after genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda needed much attention. Some Children and adolescents needed adequate mentors to be closer to them. The loss of parents and other members of the families during Genocide; children have taken the responsibilities at early age. Some played the role of the father and the mother at the same time in the families. This kind of life made them not having enough time to expand their social life like their age mates. The school life sometimes becomes a bit a challenge because of many responsibilities are ahead of them in the family. Some teachers in school not understand them because of their level of absenteeism, poor observation of school rules, and poor performance in school among other school activities. Therefore, there is a need to study the level of psychosocial well-being among secondary students from single parent's families in Butare Catholic Diocese in Rwanda.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Early adolescence is a demanding and exciting time in a person's life when parents and children must work together closely. This is a result of their growing independence, mobility, and occasionally difficulty remaining under control. It is necessary to comprehend adolescents in order to promote their psychological wellbeing. Teenagers are more likely to experience psychosocial issues, such as poor behaviour and academic performance. They started to become more independent and mobile, which occasionally made it challenging to control them. Being the only adult authority figure in their home, single parents are more prone to experience difficulties as their kids get older, especially throughout adolescence.

Teenagers in India who have single parents have psychological difficulties. Lalmuanawma and Elizabeth (2020) looked into the psychosocial issues and general wellbeing of teenagers living with a single parent using a mixed-methods approach. The study comprised 60 teenagers of both genders, aged 10 to 19, who lived with single parents in the Lunglei district of Mizoram. Multi-stage sampling was used in this study. The findings point to the existence of psychological conditions including stress and anxiety.

In an empirical study conducted in Mysuru, with a sample size of fifty teenagers and single parents, Jyothi (2015) asserted stress and anxiety. Addiction to drugs and alcohol, as well as other antisocial behaviour, are prevalent among children, especially boys. Another characteristic that has been identified is low self-esteem. When things in life don't go according to plan, they get agitated. These young people seem more conceited and possessive. The child is more likely to develop a dependent personality if she is a girl. They will also experience increased sensitivity to events, leading to increased stress (Jyothi, 2015). According to the study, there is an anxiety disorder that affects children's behavioural issues, including feelings of loneliness.

Whitehead and colleagues (2003) found that males raised by single parents had higher rates of mental and drug-related illnesses, as well as overall mortality (Whitehead, 2003). This highlights the critical role that families play in a child's development, but there has been a notable rise in the number of single-parent households in recent years. Growing up in a single-parent household puts kids at risk because it increases their likelihood of behavioural issues. This does not, however, mean that every child or single parent will have trouble. It does, however, suggest that preventive care needs to receive more focus. Consequently, it is critical to preserve a positive bond between a child and a single parent.

Children raised by single parents are more likely to experience a range of negative social and emotional outcomes. Experts have occasionally backed and advised against single parenting, as suggested by Mandara and Murray (2009), who claim that it has detrimental mental, emotional, and psychological consequences on kids. The practice of single parenting is swiftly gaining traction in society. Studies show that there are two single parents for every 10 adults and four single parents for every ten parents in the United States alone. Fatherless families are viewed as incomplete and are commonly seen as the main causes of delinquency, poor academic performance, dropping out of school, negative relationships with parents, decreased self-esteem, sexual promiscuity, and welfare dependence, according to Barber and Eccles' (1992) experience in the United States.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a mixed methodologies research strategy with a contemporaneous convergent research design. Concurrent convergent design involves collecting qualitative and quantitative data, analyzing and comparing or linking the two, and then interpreting them. Areas of convergence or divergence between qualitative and quantitative data should be addressed. The target population of 314 participants, which comprised 40 parents, 54 teachers and 220 students of two boarding secondary schools and two day secondary schools in Catholic Diocese of Butare in Rwanda made the target population of 314 participants. The sample size of students was gotten by using Yamane (1973) sample size determination formula with the confidence level at 95% and the margin of error at 5% (Sanda, 2012). The sample size of the parents was determined by the convenience sampling method, and purposive sampling method was used to sample teachers. In this case 10 parents and 10 teachers were sampled as the sample size of this study, then 190 students were also sampled. Therefore, the sample size of this study was 210 participants.

Quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire and was analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data was collected through interviews and analyzed using the thematic analysis method.

The interview guide was conducted to give both teachers and parents the occasion to express their feelings and experiences on the set objectives. Clear arrangements and guidelines was made to have a well-organized interviews. The researcher scheduled appointments for interviews. Interviews took between 30-50 minutes at the convenient places for the participants.

The questionnaire was distributed to the students who participated in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Level of psychosocial wellbeing among Catholic Secondary School Students raised up by Single parents

**Table1:** The Level of psychosocial wellbeing among Catholic Secondary School Students raised up by Single parents

Items`	Poor	Impair ed	Margi nal	Good	Excele nt
MENTAL STATUS: COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING:	8.1	12.5	21.9	37.5	20
How would you rate your overall mental status like having hallucinations, delusions, disorientation, bizarre behavior or speech, memory problems, serious confusion?					
MENTAL STATUS: EMOTIONAL STATE: How would you rate your overall emotional well-being like the level of depression, anxiety?	14.4	9.4	53.7	15	7.5
3. IMPULSE CONTROL:	5.6	16.3	9.4	44.3	24.4
How would you rate your overall impulse control like the ability to express yourself effectively, ability to work at things patiently, and tendency to verbally or physically lash out at others, among others?					
COPING SKILLS:	6.3	6.7	16.3	49.4	21.3
How would you rate your ability to assess problem situations, deal with “triggers,” cope with stress, solve problems, perhaps reach out to others for help in order to deal effectively with their difficulties?					
IMMEDIATE SOCIAL NETWORK	18.1	10	58.8	9.3	3.8
How would you rate the quality of the interaction over all between you and your close friends and family members with respect to closeness, intimacy, general interpersonal satisfaction, effective communications, degree of conflict, level of hostility, aggression, and abuse?					
EXTENDED SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS/NETWORK	6	2.5	6.5	51	34
How would you rate your relationship people outside their immediate family and social group with the community?					
7. RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES:	8.1	5	8.1	21.3	57.5
How would you rate your involvement in recreational activities like physical activities: walking, jogging, biking, etc., hobbies, relaxation?					
8. MATERIAL RESOURCES:	14.4	10.6	56.9	12.5	5.6

How would you rate the quality of your material resources like adequacy of food, clothing, shelter, and safety?					
USE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS:	40	19.4	28.1	8.1	4.4
How would you rate your overall functioning with regard to the use of alcohol and other drugs?					
10. HEALTH	45.6	11.3	25	12.5	5.6
How often do you visit hospitals?					
INDEPENDENT LIVING/SELF CARE:	6.3	8.1	28.1	42.5	15
How well do you manage your household, take care of your personal hygiene, eat, sleep, and otherwise care for your basic needs?					
WORK (OR ROLE) SATISFACTION	4.4	12.5	21.8	45	16.3
How would you rate your overall work (role) productivity over the past 30 days?					
<b>Cumulatively %</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>17.9</b>

The table 4.7 above shows that the overall levels of psychosocial wellbeing was 14.8% poor, 10.3% impaired, 27.8% marginal, 29.2% Good and 17.9% excellent. This showed that the psychosocial wellbeing was good and excellent among secondary school students from single parents.

However, 27.8% was marginal which means psychosocial wellbeing was slightly affected. It concurred with Lalmuanawma, (2020) that adolescents living with single parents are concern with characterised by increases in involving in conduct problems and troubles, depression and anxiety and also a decline in academic performance.

In the interview the Parent 1 noted that:

My child performs well in school. He is motivated by our condition of life here at home. He wants to improve our situation. Always his dreams were to study well in order to provide enough food in our family and build for me a modern house (Feb, 2024).

Some Single parents were aware of their responsibilities in the families. This had made psychosocial levels of their children being good and sometimes excellent. Parents create time to talk to their children in order to known their joy and their problems. Communication in the families had raised the standard of psychosocial wellbeing of the single parents' students of secondary schools.

Both data qualitative and quantitative revealed that the overall rate of mental status was good. The 27.8% marginal revealed that sometimes the level of depression, anxiety and emotional state of the students from single parents might be affected. This concurred with Jyothi, (2015) that there is an anxiety disorder that affects behavioural problems in children such as a feeling of loneliness.

In the interview guide the 7<sup>th</sup> Teacher noted that:

Some children from single parenting families were having some psychological problems in school, such as loneliness and others are aggressive (Feb, 2024).

The impulse control in general students can express themselves effectively in school. The coping skills were positively observed in this study. The level of coping with stress, solve problem among others was good and Excellent. Life in single parenthood is common as mentioned by Meier, (2016). There is an awareness about the life of single parenthood in the society and you find the children who find themselves in that state of life take it positively. However, 10.3% was impaired, which was interpreted that sometimes single parenthood life can be stressful for the adult and children (Meier, 2016).

In the interview the 2<sup>nd</sup> Teacher noted that

Students from single parenthood families are well integrated in school. They participate in school activities and take initiatives in school. They are sociable. They collaborate in school and they are positive minded. (Feb.2024).

INEE (2020) asserted that a positive psychosocial environment helps to create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Single parenthood students were able to cope with the life through their social experiences. They understand that they were not different from any students in school. Therefore, they had to cope with all situations of life.

Immediate social network of students from single parenthood families were 58.8% marginal. It was not so strong the students were emotional developed in order to engage into healthy relationship with others in school (Nyandwi 2023). This statement was also verified by the 7<sup>th</sup> Parent:

At home I create quality time to talk to my children in order to listen to their aspirations, wishes and emotions. I do correct them and reward them where they have done well. I do keep reminding them their responsibilities at home at the same time in school. (Feb.2024).

This shows that the presence of parent to the needs of the child help him/her to communicate effectively his/her emotions and feelings. The punishment system and reward system help the child not to engage in abusive language and in unnecessary conflicts.

The psychosocial wellbeing levels were also excellent through the extended social relationship network and recreational activities. The relationship of the single parenthood students with the people outside their immediate family and social group with the community was very good.

Some children from unsupportive socioeconomic family environment like children without a close relationship with biological parents, children not attending school, children without friends, among others may express some kind of not being social in school and in the society at large (Nyandwi,2023).

The 5<sup>th</sup> Parent in interview guide asserted that:

Children from single parenthood families are good in entertainment and sports. They perform very well in drama, debate and in sport activities in school. (Feb, 20240).

Recreational activities in school were the common means of dealing with stress, in order to create a time for relaxation and socialisation for all students in school. The single parenthood students participate fully in such activities. It is an occasion for them to find their space in the society.

The 14.8% of the level of psychosocial wellbeing was poor. The behaviors like the use of alcohol and other drugs, were not commonly dependent to those substances. The students from single parents families were healthy. However, Material resources was the main issue addressed by the students from the single parents' families.

In the interview guide the 6<sup>th</sup> Teacher asserted that:

One of the challenges students from single parenthood families are facing in school is poverty. Those children some of them do not have school uniform, others are difficultly access on food in their families. All these factors have made them to miss the class while they had gone to help the parents in search of basic needs (Feb, 2024).

Poverty was common factor among the children living in single parenthood life compared to the two parents family ones (Ratcliffe, 2016). The psychosocial wellbeing of these students can be particularly achieved once their basic needs were achieved. Therefore some schools have introduced a feeding programme at school in order to sustain such children who cannot afford a whole meals at home.

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## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study found that the level of psychosocial well-being among catholic secondary school students raised by single parenting was 29.2% good, and 17.9% was excellent. The socialization level was good because these students know how to create friends in school and maintain them. Students actively participated in school activities and curriculum activities in school. However, 27.8% was marginal, which expressed slight issues like depression, anxiety, and bizarre behaviour that were observed in a few students in the school.

The government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Education to extend feeding programme in all schools in Rwanda in order to help the students from the vulnerable families to benefit for it so that they improve their academic performance. The government needs also to appoint the trained counselors in various schools in the country because the counselors were not enough in the schools.

Religious leaders need to design the joint programme for youth in the country. Students in catholic schools had the special programmes to help them in social life like clubs, movements, and choir. These programmes had good results on the wellbeing of students in school. Therefore, if it would be embraced by all schools in the country could yield many fruits.

The school administration needs to help students from single parent's families to understand that they are like any other student. They should treat all student equally in the school and encourage them for performance.

Parents need to be closer to their children in order to know their problems, their joy, and their friends and know how to keep them busy during holidays. Creation of the good time for their children would help the children to grow holistically in the society.

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