
**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SINGLE MOTHERHOOD IN
DRIVING STREET HAWKING IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE,
NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The family continues to play a very significant role in child upbringing globally. However, there is a growing worry over the decay of this vital agent of child socialization. Most pressing of this concern is the way single mother households are fast spreading especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular. This study examined the problem of single motherhood and street hawking in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria. The main objective was to provide empirical evidence concerning how single motherhood leads to street hawking in Port Harcourt. The study made use of a sample of 160 single mothers drawn using snowball sampling technique. Data were gathered from the respondents through a self-designed questionnaire. Adopting the Marxist conflict theory as its theoretical framework and the simple percentage method for the data analysis, the study revealed that having children outside wedlock coupled with high incidences of divorce are major causes of single motherhood in Port Harcourt city. Also, the study revealed that lack of money to support children and absence of a father figure in the household are major factors that contribute to single mothers sending their children into the streets of Port Harcourt to hawk. Given this finding, the study recommended, among others, that implementing comprehensive sex education programmes and strengthening social safety nets are vital interventions to address the root causes of single motherhood, empower individuals to make informed reproductive health decisions, and alleviate economic hardships faced by single-parent households in Port Harcourt city.

Keywords: *Single motherhood, Street Hawking, Single Parenthood, Port Harcourt.*

1. Introduction

Single motherhood is a subject of significant scholarly interest, with research focusing on the impact of single parenthood on family structure and child development. Akinwumi (2012) noted that the academic focus on the family has been dominated by two themes: universality and the decline of the family institution. While the universality of the family is sacrosanct, the family is witnessing a serious decline in structure and values, with families becoming shrunken and unstable, and the modern family increasingly unable to provide for the well-being of its members. This decline is attributed to factors such as the prevalence of single parenthood, which is associated with negative outcomes for children, such as increased vulnerability to engaging in street hawking and other forms of child labor (World Bank, 2020).

The phenomenon of single motherhood covers different range of circumstances and challenges that serves as entry point. According to Biblarz and Raftery (2020) there are different categories of single mothers. To them, some women become single mothers without being married and giving birth outside of marriage. Others find themselves raising children alone due to divorce, the death of a spouse, or being willfully abandoned by their partner. There are teen single mothers who are believed to face the added challenge of navigating parenthood at a very young age. Lu (2011) notes that the experiences of single mothers can also vary based on their location, with those in urban areas potentially having different access to resources and support systems compared to their rural counterparts. Employment status is another crucial factor, as unemployed single mothers without financial independence may rely on alternative sources of income to support their families. Additionally, the level of education attained by a single mother can influence her opportunities and ability to provide for her children. These various categories and circumstances highlight the diverse nature of single motherhood, with each situation presenting its own unique set of challenges and obstacles to overcome.

Drawing from above, it is clear that several socio-psychological problems are known to be associated with single motherhood if not properly managed. Nigeria and Rivers State in particular has not been spared as individuals raised by single mothers have been associated to a lot of social vices. A child who does not have a father-figure to counsel and watch over him or her could be easily misled into anti-social behaviours such as wrong vices like drug abuse, smoking, stealing, prostitution and so on. Studies show that single motherhood is more an outcome of divorce and out-of-wedlock sexual behaviour in society. According to Akinola (2019), the statistics of divorce cases in Nigeria has continued to rise in recent times.

Akinola contends that out of a total number of women in Nigeria, about 33% of them are single mothers (i.e., those people separated, divorced and widowed). This figure does not take account of parents who got children out of wedlock. However, Gboyega (2023) in a bid to make up for this information gap, contends that single mothers out of wedlock constitute over 17% of families in Nigeria.

High rates of divorce, separation, birth to unmarried couples, death of spouses, conflict, abandonment, poverty, and economic hardship are contributing factors to single parenthood (Nsasak, Opara & Nsasak, 2019). The negative outcomes of single parenthood are more felt in countries like Nigeria and other third world nations where social security systems are either weak or completely unavailable, unlike Europe and America where such systems are much stronger. This creates further constraints in the parenting abilities of single mothers who have to fend for their children. However, single mothers often face particular challenges and difficulties compared to single fathers. This is because the weaker social support systems in places like Nigeria mean single mothers have to fend for their children with fewer resources and less institutional backing than their counterparts in developed nations. This exacerbates the parenting obstacles they already face." Ultimately, children from such homes end up being victims of child labor activities such as street hawking with severe negative consequences for them, their parent, and society at large (Adeyemo, Adeyemo & Oyebisi, 2021).

The prevalence of street hawking among children in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, is a significant concern, with research showing that over 65% of children who hawk in cities are from single-parent households (UNICEF, 2011). Poverty and economic hardship have been identified as contributory factors giving rise to the practice of under-age street trading, which appears to be on the increase in Rivers State (Today FM, 2021). Street hawking among children is a form of child abuse that is often overlooked, with children facing harsh conditions in their fight for survival and being perceived as a public nuisance as they engage in begging, dodging traffic, and being admitted into street crime networks that make the environment unsafe for others (Nsasak et al., 2019). The vulnerability of single mothers, especially in urban areas, has been identified as a contributing factor to the prevalence of street hawking, as it is often seen as a socio-economic necessity for these families. Understanding the impact of single motherhood on the well-being of children and the prevalence of street hawking requires a comprehensive examination of the underlying factors and their interconnected nature.

Single mothers in Port Harcourt often grapple with poverty, lack of access to social support systems, and the cultural stigma associated with single parenthood. The absence of a supportive partner and limited employment opportunities can make

it extremely challenging for single mothers to provide for their families, leading to potential reliance on child labor or other desperate measures. Additionally, the breakdown of traditional family structures and gender norms in urban areas like Port Harcourt can leave single mothers isolated and struggling to navigate their new roles. According to Ortese (2018), the family represents the first social contact point for children. As a result, when both parents are present, it implies that the child would derive most care. However, when one of the parents is absent in a child's life, a gap is created as the child would lose the support that would have emanated from that parent. In the same vein, Adeyemo et al. (2021) opined that single motherhood is a product of divorce, separation of various kinds, having children out of wedlock or death the husband which leaves the roles in the hands of the wife or mother.

Overall, it is clear that many children are currently living under single parents with single mother households dominating this type of family structure (UNICEF, 2011). As a result, it is also generally agreed that children under such a family structure might not receive the necessary attention they required because the single parent might be overwhelmed by many responsibilities (World Bank, 2020). In his study, Afemsia (2020) notes that came to the conclusion that single mother households are increasing in Port Harcourt with significant socio-economic challenges. His study showed that single mothers constitute well over 30% of families in the state. Therefore, comparing the dynamics of the latter to a single parent family situation that was created by divorce of the parents, presents interesting fields of research, and of particular interest is the relationship or impact of the enumerated single parent scenarios to the natural developmental adjustment process of the growing adolescent. Again, considering the established high level of single motherhood in Port Harcourt, this study therefore contributes to the literature on street hawking by providing empirical insight into the problem of single motherhood and street hawking in Port Harcourt city Local Government Area of Rivers State. Essentially, it will provide answer to the following questions:

- i What are the causes of single motherhood in Port Harcourt city?
- ii How does single motherhood lead to street hawking in Port Harcourt city?
- iii What are the challenges associated with street hawking in Port Harcourt city?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Perspectives on Single Parenthood

As part of the socialization role of the family, parents are responsible for the educational and career development of their children. However, divorce and separation of various kinds or death of one spouse in addition to out of wedlock child

births, may leave the roles in the hands of a single parent. This is why Fakunle (2012) in his book clearly stated that Single parenthood may arise when either the male or female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock.

In Nigeria, the increasing number of single parents is beginning to constitute a huge source of concern, especially because of the worrisome nature of its effects on child upbringing. This notwithstanding, this family structure is now a fast growing one not only in Nigeria both also in most African countries where this was almost hitherto unknown (Nwachukwu, 2018). Although there are no available statistics of single-parent families in Nigeria, practical experience and newspaper reports show that there is an increase of single parents in the country.

While the statistics are hazy at the moment, the challenges associated with single parenthood especially for children have been well articulated. For instance, according to Ortese, (2018), a child from homes where the father and the mother are present will be well taken care of and socialised in the best way possible. This is due to the fact that the process of socialization depends on both parents playing complimentary roles in bringing up the child. Such a child is likely to achieve self-actualization later in life. Concurring with this view, Amato (2020) suggested that children raised by single parents, particularly single mothers, are more likely to experience economic and parental deprivation, which can adversely affect their cognitive development, academic achievement, and overall well-being. This notion is also echoed by Biblarz and Raftery (2020), who highlight the potential disadvantages faced by children raised in single-parent families, including lower academic performance, increased behavioral problems, and higher rates of psychological distress. On the other hand, children from single-parent homes are likely to suffer deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities. Agbo (2017) is of the view that adolescents' from-broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviour and poor academic records. The problem of deprivation of a second parent is bad enough but when the remaining parent cannot cope with the resultant problems a tragic situation arises. In such a situation, the child becomes a misfit in the society.

In every direction one observes the situation of single parenting and its relationship with children; it seems obvious that the resultant changes in the family structure may leave permanent footprints in their young ones as they grow. This is probably because single mothers are financially constrained, socially ostracized and more affected by poverty than married mothers (Agbo, 2017). There is pressure on single parents to provide for themselves and their offspring with their little income, most times without any support from relatives or the government. As a result, their children are more malnourished, less likely to complete school, more likely to turn to

crime and drugs. Corroborating this view, Broussard (2018) highlight that single mothers frequently grapple with economic insecurity, lower educational attainment, and limited access to resources, all of which contribute to higher poverty rates. Moreover, Cain and Combs-Orme (2019) asserted that single mothers commonly face social isolation and lack of support systems, exacerbating their difficulties in balancing work and parenting responsibilities.

Research has indicated that a single parent family is more vulnerable to economic poverty than two parent families (Ortese, 2018). This notion is widely supported by previous studies. For instance, Lerman (2002) asserted that single-parent households, especially those headed by single mothers, are disproportionately affected by poverty and economic hardship. Similarly, Blank (2007) highlighted the strong correlation between single parenthood and poverty, with single mothers facing significantly higher poverty rates than their married counterparts. For example, the cost of living for an adult is high in Nigeria before adding the cost of rearing children with regard to their schooling, feeding, housing and clothing. Most of the single parents in Nigeria are unemployed and the fact that there is no child grant or general social security provision for children in Nigeria exacerbates the situation of single parent families. Further worsening the situation is that a high proportion of single parents in Nigeria are not formally educated, thus their probability of getting gainful employment is greatly reduced. Single parenthood also leads to the deterioration of normative family values or system. Research has shown that it is a likely predictor of marital instability (Agbo, 2017) and premarital child bearing. Thus, there is a very high tendency that a single mother will give birth to children who are likely to be parents at adolescence.

Some scholars have argued and believed that there are some exceptions with regard to the widely held view that children of single mothers are in jeopardy (Maduewesi & Emenogu, 2017). The main argument is that single mothers are more likely to have positive aspirations for the welfare of their children, making sacrifices to ensure that their children have the best in life (Lu, 2011; Nwachukwu, 2018). However, this association may be complex to explain because the study did not specifically assess overall welfare outcome (e.g. school enrolment and access to health care). Similarly, a few scholars have argued that single mothers tend to support positive outcomes of their children. This is based on their economic or financial ability to offer the best for their children (Fakunle, 2012; Mannis, 2019).

Single parenthood is not an experience found only among adults, as it can be found among the youths as in cases where female adolescents who indulge in illicit sex or are victims of abuse could end up with pregnancy and subsequent childbirth (Yinus, 2012). In such cases, when the partner is unidentifiable or as it sometimes happens when the partner in the act is another adolescent or an irresponsible adult

who declines ownership of the newly born child, the adolescent mother is left to cater for the child as a single parent. Likewise, an adolescent male could through illicit sexual indulgence be responsible for impregnating and fathering a child from a partner who is unwilling to start a family, and thus end up as single (father) parent of the child. Furthermore, it would be unfair not to mention again that sudden or resultant death of one parent in a previously two-parent- family can create a single parent family situation. In such scenarios, it is of interest to learn the emerging factors that militate against healthy adolescent developmental adjustments and the challenging and sometimes extraordinary opportunities it also presents to the adolescent as he struggles to survive despite the obvious odds.

2.2 Perspectives on Street Hawking

Street trading and child labour have become a global phenomenon and a global concern. The United Nations International Children Educational fund (UNICEF, 2011) has estimated that there are 100 to 200 million child labourers across both industrialized and developing countries. Estimates for Africa shows that 20% of children between the ages of 10 and 14 are involved in child labour and street trading. As such, children have come to comprise 17% of Africa's total labour force (Fagade, 2018). Corroborating Fagade's (2018) assertion, a report by the African Union (2018) highlighted that children comprise a significant portion of the labor force in many African countries, with estimates ranging from 15% to 32% in some nations. Furthermore, a 2021 report by UNICEF notes that around 86.6 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa are engaged in child labor, accounting for nearly one-quarter of the total child population in the region. The report further states that child labor is most prevalent in agriculture, with 59% of child laborers working in this sector. Nigeria alone is estimated to have between 12 and 15 million child labourers (International Labour Organisation, 2017). The dramatic increase in child labour and street trading in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors including the rapid population growth of high rates of unemployment, inflation, low wages and deplorable working conditions as children attempt to help support their families (Ortese, 2018). According to Fagade (2018), the proliferation of industries can also be linked to an increase in street trading and child labour.

Street trading and child labour have the potential to corrupt young minds in two ways (Adeyemo et al., 2021). First, a child that misses school frequently fails to benefit comprehensively from the education system. This can mean poor performance in examinations and open the door to examination malpractice for those seeking a certificate at all cost. This in turn can lead to incompetent and unlearned graduates with consequences for the nation as a whole, including

increased national illiteracy. Second, street trading and child labour may also lead to behavioural patterns inimical to healthy citizenship. They may indulge in negative activities or criminal acts, such as prostitution, armed, robbery, and pick pocketing, and face imprisonment.

Scholars like Makinde (2012) have identified structural inequalities suggesting that entrenched socioeconomic disparities and lack of access to quality education and social services disproportionately compel families to resort to child labor as a coping mechanism. This is corroborated by Clark and Yesufu (2019) who see poverty and inequality as the major causes of street trading and child labour. Fagade (2018) sees the causes to be an adverse economic environment, underemployment, massive retrenchment, unemployment and a poor quality of life. The less privileged children, including children without families and/or without homes, are the most vulnerable to these social ills. The economic constraints also force people to look for wealth at all cost to the detriment of their children. According to Makinde (2012) there is a link between parents with marginal incomes and the imperative to push children into work so as to supplement family income. This view is supported by Binder and Sorgin (2018) who holds that children of poor families have to help generate family incomes and compensate for economic discrepancies in society, particularly as the gap between the have and have not has grown in recent years. In such situations, poverty breeds poverty. A poor family has a high probability of staying poor since low family incomes carry with them high risks of illness, limitations on mobility, and limited access to education. Thus, the legacy of poverty is passed from parents to children (UNICEF, 2011). Families who cannot afford the high cost of house rent are forced to live in urban slums which further expose them to numerous health and environmental hazards, unemployment and poor education. The need to continually provide for the family in the midst of unfriendly conditions has led women, men, youths and children to engage in street hawking activities.

Street hawking irrespective of who (age and sex) engages in it, is associated with major hazards (Lu, 2011). This includes sexual assault which increases the vulnerability of the hawkers to sexually transmitted infections, increased risk of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion. Other hazards include physical assaults, mobbing, involvement in road traffic accidents, kidnapping and ritual killings. Street hawking leads to increased exposure to antisocial activities like smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, cultism and crime. Hawkers are exposed to harsh weather conditions, insect and reptile bites and hunger. When children are involved, in addition to these other risks, they are deprived of education and sound health and these constitute child abuse. There is also an increased risk of physical injuries sustained by the hawkers when they carry their goods on their heads or hands and run after moving vehicles in an attempt to ensure their sales are completed. This in addition contributes to the

impediment in the flow of traffic as they flood these major roads and junctions.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Marxist Conflict Theory

The Conflict Theory of Karl Marx is considered to be an appropriate or useful theoretical framework for understanding the role of single motherhood in driving street hawking among children in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. This approach highlights the interplay between economic factors, power structures, and social relations in shaping societal dynamics and inequalities (Fagade, 2018). Marx's conflict perspective exposes the inherent contradictions and the underlying economic conditions that contribute to the prevalence of child street hawking in any society including Port Harcourt. According to Marxist theory, capitalism is driven by the pursuit of profit and the exploitation of labour, leading to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few while the working class remains impoverished (Marx & Engels, 1848 cited in Amato, 2020). In the context of single motherhood in Port Harcourt, the lack of economic opportunities and limited access to resources can be seen as a manifestation of this capitalist system, which marginalizes and oppresses certain segments of society.

Moreover, according to Fagade (2018) Marx's concept of alienation can be applied to the experiences of single mothers and their children engaged in street hawking. Alienation refers to the separation of individuals from their labour, their human essence, and the products of their labour. In this case, single mothers and their children may feel alienated from the economic system that fails to provide them with dignified employment opportunities, forcing them to push their children into precarious and exploitative forms of labour, such as street hawking. Additionally, the conflict perspective emphasizes the role of class struggle and power dynamics in shaping societal structures. Single mothers in Port Harcourt, often belonging to lower socioeconomic classes, may face systemic barriers and oppression within the existing power structures, limiting their access to resources, education, and social support (Wolpe, 1980 cited in). This power imbalance can perpetuate a cycle of poverty and marginalization, making street hawking a survival strategy for their children.

By employing the political economy approach, the study can critically analyze the economic, social, and political factors that contribute to the prevalence of child street hawking among single-mother households in Port Harcourt. It can shed light on the structural inequalities, power dynamics, and systemic oppression that shape the lived experiences of these families, ultimately informing potential interventions and policy recommendations to address this multifaceted issue.

3. Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. Surveys make it easy to elicit information that is easily analyzed for generalization. The population of study is single mothers in Port Harcourt City. Sadly, the population of single mothers and even street hawkers in Port Harcourt is not known. However, it is important to note that the study focused on just households that are headed by single mothers of all category in the city. The study recruited 200 participants using the snowball sampling technique, also known as chain referral sampling (Naderifar et al., 2017). This non-probability sampling method was chosen due to the difficulty in obtaining a comprehensive sampling frame for the specific target population. The initial participants were identified through purposive sampling by locating single mothers with children involved in street hawking in specific areas of Port Harcourt, such as markets, busy streets, and low-income neighborhoods. These initial participants then assisted in referring the researchers to other single mothers in their social networks who met the criteria for the study. The chain referral process continued until the desired sample size was achieved. During the data collection process, 200 single mothers were successfully approached and recruited. However, the final sample size analyzed in the results section is 160. This discrepancy is attributed to incomplete or invalid responses, as well as participants withdrawing from the study or being deemed ineligible upon further screening. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire that gathered information on the sociodemographic characteristics of the single mothers and the involvement of their children in street hawking activities. The questionnaire was administered through face-to-face engagement with the participants, ensuring accurate data collection and addressing any potential literacy or comprehension barriers. It is important to note that the study specifically targeted single mothers who were the primary caregivers and decision-makers for their households, regardless of their marital status (never married, divorced, widowed, or abandoned). This criterion ensured that the participants represented the diverse experiences and challenges faced by single mothers in Port Harcourt. Descriptive statistical parameters such as tables, percentages, charts and cross-tabulations were used to analyze the data.

4. Results

The data analysis was done based on 160 questionnaires that were duly filled and returned. The data are presented in percentage and frequency tables below;

Table 1: Causes of single motherhood in Port Harcourt

Status	Frequency	Percentage%
Having children outside wedlock	124	75.6
Divorce	23	14.4
Death of husband	16	10.0
Total	160	100

Source: field work, 2023

Table 1 presents data on the reason why respondents are single mothers. The table reveals that 124(75.6%) of the respondents are single mothers because of extra marital affairs, hence they had children outside wedlock, 23(14.4%) of them became single mothers through divorce, while 16(10%) of them lost their husbands.

Table 2: How Single motherhood leads to street hawking

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Lack of money to support children	130	81.3
Absence of the support of one of the parents usually a father figure	13	8.1
Lack of social security from the state	17	10.6
Total	160	100

Source: field work, 2023

In Table 2, data on how single motherhood leads to street hawking in Port Harcourt city is presented. From the table, it is shown that 130(81.3%) of the respondents agreed that children from single parent homes dropout of school mostly because of insufficient financial base to support schooling, 13(8.1%) of them said it is due to the absence of the support from one of the parents usually the father figure, while 17(10.6%) of them said it is due to the lack of focus on the part of children from such homes.

Table 3: Challenges of single mothers in Port Harcourt

Answer alternative	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of resources to take care of their children	65	40.6
Insults from family members and neighbours	20	12.5
Lack of time for proper upbringing of their children	67	41.9
Others	8	5.0
Total	160	100

Source: field work, 2023

Table 3 presents data on the challenges that single mothers face in Port Harcourt. The table reveals that 65(40.6%) of the respondents said lack of resources to take care of children, 20(12.5%) of them said they face insults from family members and neighbours, 67(41.9%) of them said lack of time for proper upbringing of their children, while 8(5.0%) said others.

Table 4: Ways to reduce effects of single motherhood on street hawking

Answer Alternative	Frequency	Percentage
Government should introduce free education at all levels	116	72.5
Single mothers should be put under a welfare or social security scheme	38	23.8
Single parents should make out time to advice their children	6	3.8
Total	160	100

Source: field work, 2023

Table 4 reveals data on the suggested ways of mitigating the effects of single motherhood on street hawking in Port Harcourt city. It is revealed in the table that 38(23.8%) of the total number of respondents said government should introduce free education at all levels, 116(72.5%) of them said single mothers should be put under a welfare or social security scheme, while 6(3.8%) of them said single parents should endeavour to make out time to advice their children on the importance of education for their future.

5. Discussion of Findings

The first focus of the study is to find out the causes of single motherhood in Port Harcourt city. Data in this regard was presented in Table 1. Although there were other causes identified such as death of a spouse and divorce, premarital affairs leading to child birth stands out as the highest cause of single motherhood in the study area. The prevalence of premarital affairs leading to childbirth as the primary cause of single motherhood in Port Harcourt city is attributed to a myriad of economic and cultural factors. For instance, Amato (2018) notes that in an urban setting like Port Harcourt, the traditional norms surrounding marriage and family dynamics has undergone shifts, leading to greater acceptance and engagement in premarital relationships that often lead to child births. The finding of premarital affairs as the predominant cause of single motherhood in Port Harcourt city aligns with Marxist conflict theory, which emphasizes the role of social and economic factors in shaping familial relationships and dynamics. Within the framework of Marxist conflict theory, the prevalence of premarital relationships leading to childbirth can be seen as a manifestation of broader societal inequalities and power dynamics. In urban environments like Port Harcourt, where economic disparities are pronounced, individuals may engage in premarital relationships as a means of seeking economic security or upward mobility, particularly in the absence of viable economic opportunities.

Next, the study addressed the issue of how single motherhood leads to street hawking in Port Harcourt. Data gathered in this regard was presented in Table 2 above and the analysis that followed revealed that a significant number of the respondents point to the fact that because of the lack of money to support household needs, children from single mother homes are more often driven to hawk in the streets because of the need to augment family income. This finding is consistent with that of Nsasaki, et al. (2019) which underscores the significant impact of financial constraints on single mother households, as evidenced by the necessity for children from these homes to engage in street hawking to augment family income. This shows the pervasive nature of poverty and its implications for household dynamics and children's well-being within urban settings. This is further justified by the Marxist conflict theory especially given the necessity for children from single mother households to engage in street hawking as a means of augmenting family income as a falloff of the economic exploitation and deprivation experienced by marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the study focused on determining the challenges that single parents face in Port Harcourt. The data for this was presented in Table 3 above and the analysis led to two equally relevant findings. The first is that lack of resources to take care of their children on the single motherhood is a critical challenge affecting single

mothers and the second finding is that lack of time for the proper upbringing of children since single mothers are always away from their homes in search of their livelihood. The challenges faced by single parents in Port Harcourt city resonates with Marxist conflict theory, which underscores the systemic inequalities housed within capitalist system. The first challenge of lack of resources to care for their children, reflects the economic deprivation experienced by single mothers within the capitalist economic structure. This deprivation is perpetuated by unequal access to resources and opportunities, exacerbating the vulnerability of single-parent households. Additionally, the second challenge concerning the lack of time for proper child upbringing due to single mothers' need to seek livelihood outside the home, exposes the inherent conflict between the demands of wage labour and familial responsibilities within the capitalist system.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusion reached is that single motherhood homes maintain low parental involvement in the upbringing of children when compared with homes where both parents are intact. Evidence also suggests that single motherhood has positive relationship with street hawking in the city of Port Harcourt.

The study also concludes that single mother homes go a long way to create enabling conditions for street hawking in Port Harcourt for three primary reasons: Single mother households in Port Harcourt usually have fewer financial resources to devote to children's upbringing and education, less time and energy to nurture and supervise children, and reduced access to social security that can supplement and support parenting efforts.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. *Implement comprehensive sex education programmes*: Given that premarital affairs leading to childbirth emerged as a significant cause of single motherhood, there is a need for targeted interventions to educate adolescents and young adults about responsible sexual behaviour, contraception, and the potential consequences of early and unplanned pregnancies. Comprehensive

sex education can empower individuals to make informed choices regarding their reproductive health, thereby reducing the incidence of unintended pregnancies and subsequent single motherhood.

- ii. *Strengthen social safety nets*: To address the economic challenges faced by single mother households, government and non-governmental organizations should implement programmes aimed at providing financial assistance, vocational training, and employment opportunities for single parents, particularly women. By enhancing access to resources and economic opportunities, these initiatives can alleviate financial hardship and reduce the need for children from single mother households to engage in street hawking to supplement family income.
- iii. *Time management*: Single mothers should manage their time in such a way that they would be able to have time with their children to give them useful advice.
- iv. *Schooling*: Teachers and school administrators should be encouraged to offer the necessary help and psychological support for students from single mother homes to overcome their challenges. When the right help is given, they would focus on learning and deemphasize street hawking.

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