



Influence of Societal Beliefs on Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers: A Case of Selected Churches in Mombasa County

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Abstract

The general objective of the study was to determine the effects of societal beliefs on the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. The study specifically sought to determine the influence of societal values, stigma, cultural practices, and stereotyping on the emotional well-being of single mothers among selected churches in Mombasa County. The target population of this study comprised 4 selected churches in Mombasa: CITAM, Crossroads, Mombasa Pentecostal Church, and PCEA Milele. The specific respondents were 367 single mothers from each church. The sample comprised 191 single mothers from churches in Mombasa. The study collected primary data. This data was collected using questionnaires. Questionnaires were organized systematically to facilitate analysis. The study used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 for data analysis. Data were analyzed using quantitative techniques, including percentages, standard deviation, and multivariate regression. The qualitative data (open-ended questions) were used to allow respondents to give their explanations. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency, were used to describe the collected data. It is expected that societal values, stigma, religious practices, and stereotyping affect the emotional well-being of single mothers.

Keywords: *societal beliefs, emotional well-being, stigma, cultural practices, and stereotyping*

1.0 Introduction

Emotional well-being is also known as emotional health. It refers to a person's ability to manage their emotions, navigate life's challenges, and maintain a positive sense of overall well-being. It involves recognizing, experiencing, and managing a wide range of emotions constructively, including self-awareness, stress management, and resilience (Langeland, 2024). Single mothers often face a wide range of stressors, and these, coupled with societal beliefs and religious teachings, can significantly affect their mental health negatively. The psychological well-being of single mothers is often largely affected by the prejudice and stigmatization they face, often leading to depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety (Kissman & Allen, 2019).

Compared to married mothers, single mothers frequently have worse emotional well-being and higher levels of stress, depression, and psychological discomfort. The difficulty of facing society is one of the most important issues single mothers face. The majority of single mothers frequently have their work disrupted by worries about how society will perceive them (Karunanayake, Aysha, & Vimukthi, 2021). Additionally, single mothers are perceived as inadequate; as a result, they experience social exclusion, severe discrimination, and condemnation. Compared to married working mothers, they typically have lower household incomes, lower levels of education, and a higher likelihood of living in extreme poverty, being unemployed, and developing depression (Stack & Meredith, 2018).



Single-parent households are becoming increasingly common in India. Specifically, women are assuming the position in greater numbers. Of all the underprivileged populations, they are the most at risk. Single mothers experience significant emotional stress due to a lack of social and economic support (Ralte & Zehol, 2020). Stereotypes related to culture and religion present perplexing difficulties for single mothers in India. False charges are a common occurrence for single mothers, which often makes them feel inadequate. Therefore, single mothers are still prohibited from attending social gatherings because of their vulnerability (Pollmann-Schult, 2020).

According to Ghani, Ibrahim, Abd Aziz, and Mahfar (2021), their statistics on single mothers indicate that, as of June 2020, there were 463,000 single-parent families in Australia with small children. Additionally, due to increased stress, almost 44% of single mothers smoked every day. Nonetheless, Dey and Cebulla (2023) demonstrated a considerable correlation between a community's religious customs and practices and the well-being of single mothers. Some Australian single mothers rely heavily on their religious convictions and beliefs to support them in their everyday lives and build inner strength. This implies that faith and religious belief are sources of strength that help low-income single mothers facing financial pressures remain resilient.

In Nigeria, being a single mother is frequently linked to an increased risk of depression and other mental health issues. The emotional health of single mothers is frequently adversely affected by societal views. They experience financial difficulty, stigma, and prejudice, frequently as a result of cultural and religious norms that perceive them as lacking or morally inferior. This results in mental health issues, low self-esteem, and feelings of loneliness (Essien & Basse, 2022). Additionally, Owolabi (2023) noted that fostering positive views and altering cultural attitudes around single parenting had improved the emotional health of single mothers.

In Uganda, the emotional well-being of single mothers is often strained due to the unique challenges they face in balancing their roles as mothers and caregivers with the demands of daily life, including economic hardship, social stigma, and a lack of support systems. Unmarried teenage mothers in rural Uganda face the double stigma of mental distress and having a child outside of marriage, leading to feelings of shame and worthlessness. In addition, in some cases, traditional beliefs about mental illness may lead to misunderstanding and stigmatization, making it difficult for single mothers to access mental health services (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024).

Within the context of Christian religious and cultural diversity in Kenya, the treatment of women in the case of single motherhood varies significantly. For example, in conservative Christian communities, women who are found to have committed adultery or are single mothers may face social stigma, exclusion, or even punishment. On the other hand, in more progressive congregations, there may be a greater emphasis on forgiveness, understanding, and support for women in these situations. These beliefs can create psychological stressors, such as emotional tension, low self-esteem, and depression (Kubai, 2023).

In Mombasa County, single mothers in church settings face unique challenges stemming from societal beliefs about family. These challenges include: prejudice, discrimination, judgment, and stigmatization. The society views marriage as a marker of being morally and spiritually upright, the failure to meet these expectations leads to feelings of guilt, isolation, and loneliness for single mothers. The church, while often seen as a source of spiritual support, reinforces societal expectations about marriage and family, creating a challenging environment for single



mothers (Kathanya, 2021). There was therefore a need to determine the effects of societal beliefs on the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Single mothers frequently deal with unique psychosocial issues that may affect their emotional well-being. The cultural and religious narratives and other societal beliefs surrounding single motherhood subject them to marginalization and stigma that is emotionally distressing. These societal beliefs and values are shaped and reinforced in large part by churches, which are powerful social institutions. While some church communities provide acceptance and support, others might reinforce unfavorable stereotypes that negatively influence how single mothers view themselves and how others see them, thereby affecting their emotional well-being (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to determine the influence of societal beliefs on the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. The study specifically sought;

- i. To determine the influence of societal values on the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County.
- ii. To investigate the influence of stigma on the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County.
- iii. To determine the influence of religious practices on the emotional well-being of single mothers among selected churches in Mombasa County.
- iv. To determine the influence of stereotyping on the emotional well-being of single mothers among selected churches in Mombasa County.

2.0 Literature Review

Acoba (2024) examined the mediating function of perceived stress in the relationship between social support and mental health. During the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, 426 Filipino individuals participated in an online cross-sectional survey. According to the study, the association between positive affect, anxiety, and depression and the support of family and significant others was strongly mediated by perceived stress. Support from family and a significant other reduced anxiety and sadness, raised positive affect, and reduced perceived stress. However, the association between friend support and positive affect, anxiety, and sadness was not mediated by perceived stress. This study was done in the Philippines, thus showing a contextual gap.

Thai (2024) examined the effects, difficulties, and solutions of sociocultural factors on mothers' mental health. A survey research design was used for the investigation. Maternal mental health conditions, including anxiety and postpartum depression, are common in all demographic groups. The need for a more nuanced knowledge of how sociocultural influences impact mental health outcomes is highlighted by the fact that the experience and expression of these diseases frequently differ across cultural contexts. For example, mothers seeking assistance may face obstacles due to culturally appropriate healthcare, expectations of motherhood, and the stigma associated with mental illness. Further complicating their experiences with maternal mental health are the particular pressures that low-income, immigrant, and minority women may encounter due to acculturation, discrimination, and socioeconomic difficulties. The study used only qualitative techniques, whereas the current study used both qualitative and quantitative techniques.



Muarifah Widyastuti and Fajarwati (2024) examined how social support affected the subjective well-being of single mothers and, in turn, how this affected therapy. In this investigation, a correlational strategy was used. Using quota sampling, 189 single mothers from Bantul regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, participated in this study. Subjective well-being measures and social support were used to gather the data. To evaluate the data, simple linear regression was employed. The current study demonstrated that social support has a considerable impact on the subjective well-being of single mothers. The study adopted a correlational design, thereby creating a methodological gap.

The impact of cultural beliefs on mental health was the main subject of Amunga's (2020) study, which examined a few villages in Western Kenya. To present data and examine the current state of affairs, the study used a descriptive survey design. The specialists were selected using purposive sampling. The study found that cultural beliefs have both good and bad effects on mental health. While ritual performance brought about psychological contentment and calm, which in turn led to mental health, worry, and trauma from broken taboos and standards caused mental disease. The study was conducted in Western Kenya, thus highlighting a contextual gap.

Lai (2022) concentrated on Taiwanese single mothers' management techniques and societal stigma. In the Taiwanese setting, this study investigates the societal effects that unmarried single mothers face as well as the coping mechanisms they employ to manage their experiences of stigma. These experiences are gathered and categorized through thematic analysis and in-depth interviews with 30 unmarried, adult single mothers. According to the study's findings, many of these women experienced societal shame due to their difficulties. This study reveals the roots of this societal pressure and details how each participant handled their unique circumstances.

Self-stigma and mental health in divorced single-parent women were the main topics of Kim, Jeon, and Song's (2023) study. Participants were chosen at random for the online poll, which targeted divorced single mothers with multiple children under the age of 18. The results showed that the association between self-stigma and mental health was somewhat mediated by self-esteem. That is to say, poorer mental health outcomes were linked to higher levels of self-stigma among women who were divorced and single parents. The study also found that higher levels of self-stigma were associated with higher levels of mental health distress and lower levels of self-esteem. These findings emphasize the importance of internal characteristics, like self-esteem and self-stigma, and their applicability in developing policies to assist women who are divorced and single parents.

Ayebare, Lavender, Mweteise, Nabisere, Nendela, Mukhwana, and Mills (2021) conducted a qualitative study in Uganda and Kenya to examine how cultural practices and beliefs affect parents' experiences of grief after stillbirth. The study used a qualitative descriptive design. Both English and the participants' native tongue were used for the interviews, which were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed. Descriptive thematic analysis was used. The two nations shared cultural practices and values. Three primary motifs were found: The term "gathering round" refers to the group assistance that parents received from friends and family following a stillbirth. Cultural restrictions and prohibitions that affect parents' behavior and coping in the early aftermath of the baby's death are addressed in "It is against our custom.

Social constructivism theory was proposed by Vygotsky (1968). Social Constructivism Theory asserts that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through social interactions and cultural contexts, rather than being passively received. It emphasizes the role of language,



culture, and shared meaning in shaping individuals' understanding of the world and their own identities.

According to Adams (2006), individuals do not simply absorb information; they actively build their understanding through experiences, interactions, and the cultural tools and systems they encounter. Learning is a collaborative process in which individuals share ideas, negotiate meaning, and co-create knowledge with others, particularly in social contexts. Culture plays a crucial role in shaping learning, influencing the knowledge valued and the ways it is transmitted.

In this study, social constructivism clarifies how emotional well-being develops through interaction. It highlights the importance of language, cultural norms, and religious beliefs in shaping an individual's self-concept and emotional resilience. Additionally, it underscores the vital role of supportive environments in alleviating the negative effects of societal stigma.

This theory was particularly relevant to this study as it underscores the significance of social interactions and cultural contexts in shaping beliefs. It posits that emotional well-being extends beyond individual experiences to encompass the shared meanings and understandings prevalent within a society. Furthermore, it elucidates how beliefs about oneself and others, especially those related to social norms and values, can profoundly influence a single mother's mental and emotional well-being.

3.0 Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used for this investigation. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. A target population is a homogeneous grouping of all the elements for which feasible attributes are available (Willie, 2024). The study was carried out in Mombasa County. The target population of this study comprised 4 selected churches in Mombasa: CITAM, Crossroads, Mombasa Pentecostal Church, and PCEA Milele. The specific respondents were 367 single mothers from each church. The Yamani's formula was used to sample single mothers attending churches in Mombasa. Therefore, the sample comprised 191 single mothers from churches in Mombasa.

Stratified random sampling was used to select the single mothers from the churches. The strata were the 4 churches in Mombasa County. The study collected primary data. This data was collected using questionnaires. A request for permission to collect data and an explanation of the project's objectives

Questionnaires were organized systematically to facilitate analysis. The study utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 when carrying out the data analysis process. Quantitative data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the collected data; the description included frequencies and percentages. The results obtained were presented using tables and bar graphs.

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Descriptive Results

This section shows the descriptive results.

4.1.1 Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers

This section shows the descriptive results for the emotional well-being of single mothers

Table 1

Table 1: Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers

statement	Strongly Disagree	disagree	neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	std.dev
I often feel overwhelmed by the demands of parenting alone	10.80%	24.70%	11.40%	25.90%	27.20%	3.34	1.39
I feel stressed and anxious about my financial situation	12.00%	2.50%	23.40%	47.50%	14.60%	3.50	1.15
I feel isolated and alone in my parenting journey	6.30%	16.50%	5.70%	41.80%	29.70%	3.72	1.23
I can manage difficult situations effectively	5.10%	19.00%	7.00%	40.50%	28.50%	3.68	1.22
I have a supportive network of friends and family	49.40%	14.60%	13.30%	22.20%	0.60%	2.10	1.25
I can maintain a positive attitude despite challenges	3.80%	13.30%	27.20%	39.90%	15.80%	3.51	1.03
I feel that I am a person of value, even if society disapproves of my situation.	11.40%	6.30%	1.30%	72.80%	8.20%	3.60	1.11
I accept who I am and feel good about myself as a single parent.	9.50%	5.70%	15.80%	46.20%	22.80%	3.67	1.17
I do not let other people's negative opinions define how I see myself	5.70%	13.30%	22.80%	38.60%	19.60%	3.53	1.12
I feel that I am a person of value, even if society disapproves of my situation.	8.20%	10.10%	17.10%	36.10%	28.50%	3.66	1.22
I accept who I am and feel good about myself as a single parent.	7.60%	5.70%	10.10%	32.90%	43.70%	3.99	1.21
I do not let other people's negative opinions define how I see myself	12.00%	6.30%	7.60%	26.60%	47.50%	3.91	1.37

The results showed that the majority of respondents (53.1%) agreed with the statement that they feel judged because of their single-parent status (mean = 3.59, std. dev. = 1.30). This implies that single mothers often feel judged and stigmatized due to their single-parent status. This perception is often linked to societal expectations surrounding family structures and traditional gender roles. Further results showed that the majority of respondents (62.1%) agreed with the statement that they feel stressed and anxious about their financial situation (mean = 3.50, std. dev = 1.51). This indicates that financial concerns are a substantial source of anxiety, with many individuals struggling to maintain adequate living standards and protect their financial well-being. In addition, results showed that 71.5% of respondents agreed with the statement that they felt isolated and alone in their parenting journey (mean = 3.72, std. dev. = 1.21). Further results showed that the majority of respondents (69.0%) agreed with the statement that they are able to manage difficult situations effectively (mean = 3.68, std. dev. =



1.22). This high level of agreement signifies confidence in handling challenges and a potential capacity for growth and resilience in the face of adversity.

Further results showed that 64.0% of respondents agreed with the statement that they have a supportive network of friends and family (mean = 2.10, std. dev. = 1.25). This high level of agreement signifies confidence in handling challenges and a potential capacity for growth and resilience in the face of adversity. In addition, results showed that the majority of respondents (55.7%) agreed with the statement that they can maintain a positive attitude despite challenges (mean = 3.51, std. dev = 1.03). This finding suggests a strong capacity for resilience and a generally optimistic mindset among the majority of respondents in that study or survey. Further results showed that 81.0% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they feel they are a person of value, even if society disapproves of their situation (mean = 3.60, std. dev = 1.11). A high agreement with this statement suggests that these individuals are not easily swayed by external opinions, which can lead to more independent thought and decision-making processes.

In addition, results showed that the majority of respondents (69.0%) agreed with the statement that they accept who they are and feel good about themselves as single parents (mean = 3.67, std. dev. = 1.17). Further results showed that 64.6% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they feel they are a person of value, even if society disapproves of their situation (mean = 3.66, std. dev = 1.22). This indicates a strong internal sense of personal value, in which individuals recognize their inherent worth and positive contributions, regardless of whether society aligns with their circumstances.

In addition, results showed that the majority of respondents (76.6%) agreed with the statement that they accept who they are and feel good about themselves as single parents (mean = 3.99, std. dev. = 1.21). This finding suggests a strong internal capacity for self-acceptance and self-worth among single-parent respondents. Further results showed that 74.1% of respondents agreed with the statement that they do not let other people’s negative opinions define how they see themselves (mean = 3.91, std. dev. = 1.37). A single mother's resilience against negative opinions has far-reaching implications, leading to personal empowerment, improved mental health, and positive outcomes for her children

4.1.2 Influence of Societal Values on Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers

This section shows the descriptive results for the social values.

Table 2: Societal values and Emotional Well-being

statement	Strongly Disagree	disagree	neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	std.dev
I believe society provides adequate support for single mothers	44.30%	24.10%	17.70%	7.60%	6.30%	2.71	1.13
I often receive support from my family members	18.40%	40.50%	15.80%	7.60%	17.70%	2.32	1.35
I think society recognizes the challenges faced by single mothers	44.30%	9.50%	18.40%	17.10%	10.80%	2.41	1.46
In society, single mothers are seen as capable parents	6.30%	8.20%	24.10%	43.00%	18.40%	3.59	1.08

Society places blame on single mothers for their circumstances	18.40%	5.10%	12.70%	43.70%	20.30%	3.71	1.31
I believe there is moral acceptability of single parenting	43.00%	11.40%	19.60%	16.50%	9.50%	2.38	1.42
Society prefers two-parent families	10.80%	3.20%	10.80%	38.00%	37.30%	3.88	1.25

The results showed that 68.4% of respondents disagreed with the statement that society provides adequate support for single mothers (mean=2.71, std.dev=1.13). This implies that many single mothers face significant challenges and lack adequate support, particularly in areas such as financial stability, childcare, and social support networks. Outcomes also showed that the majority of respondents (58.9%) agreed with the statement that they often received support from their family members (mean=2.22, std.dev=1.35). This implies that single mothers face difficulties in accessing support from their family members. In addition, results showed that the majority of respondents (53.8%) disagreed with the statement that society recognizes the challenges faced by single mothers (mean=2.41, std.dev=1.46). This implies that society often overlooks or minimizes the significant challenges faced by single mothers.

Further results showed that 61.4% of respondents agreed with the statement that single mothers are seen as capable parents in society (mean=3.59, std.dev=1.08). This suggests that society perceives single mothers as capable of handling their challenges. In addition, results showed that the majority of respondents (64.0%) agreed with the statement that society blames single mothers for their circumstances (mean=3.71, std.dev=1.31). This implies that there is a societal tendency to place blame on single mothers for their circumstances. This is often rooted in traditional gender roles and expectations, where the absence of a male figure is seen as a failure on the part of the woman. In addition, results showed that the majority of respondents (54.4%) disagreed with the statement that they believe there is moral acceptability of single parenting (mean=2.38, std.dev=1.42). This suggests a viewpoint that single parenting is not viewed as a desirable or morally neutral family structure. Further results showed that 75.3% of respondents agreed with the statement that society prefers two-parent families (mean=3.88, std.dev=1.25). This infers that while societal views on family structures are evolving, data suggest a continued preference for two-parent families, particularly two-biological-parent households.

4.1.3 Influence of Stigma on Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers

This section shows the descriptive results for the stigma.

Table 3: Stigma and Emotional Well-being

statement	Strongly Disagree	disagree	neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	std.dev
I feel judged because of my single-parent status	12.00%	11.40%	7.00%	44.90%	24.70%	3.59	1.30
I feel discriminated against because of my status as a single mother	5.70%	17.70%	3.20%	35.40%	38.00%	3.82	1.27
I feel ashamed because of my single mother status	10.80%	7.00%	8.20%	46.80%	27.20%	3.73	1.24
I experience negative comments or	13.30%	12.00%	8.90%	40.50%	25.30%	3.53	1.34



stereotypes about my single mother status							
My single mother status negatively affects my self-esteem	6.30%	21.50%	3.80%	32.30%	36.10%	3.70	1.32
I am a single mother with a healthy self-concept	44.90%	27.80%	7.00%	10.80%	9.50%	2.70	1.27

The results showed that 69.6% of respondents agreed with the statement that they felt judged because of their single-parent status (mean=3.59, std.dev=1.30). Single mothers often experience judgment and stigma related to their parenting status, facing assumptions about their character and parenting abilities. In addition, results showed that 73.4% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they feel discriminated against because of their status as single mothers (mean=3.82, std.dev=1.27). This implies that single mothers can experience discrimination due to societal biases and misconceptions about their situation.

The results showed that 74.0% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they feel ashamed because of their single-mother status (mean=3.73, std.dev=1.23). This suggests that most single mothers feel ashamed. In addition, results showed that 65.8% of respondents agreed with the statement that they feel discriminated against because of their status as a single mother (mean=3.53, std.dev=1.34). This implies that single mothers can experience discrimination due to societal perceptions and expectations surrounding family structures. The results showed that 68.4% of respondents agreed with the statement that their single-mother status negatively affects their self-esteem (mean=3.70, std.dev=1.32). This implies that a single mother's status can negatively impact her self-esteem due to societal stigma, financial strain, and the emotional toll of juggling multiple responsibilities. In addition, results showed that 72.7% of respondents disagreed with the statement that single mothers have a healthy self-concept (mean=2.70, std.dev=1.27). This implies that single mothers report lower levels of health status compared to partnered mothers. These inequalities appear to be associated with financial hardship and lack of social support.

4.1.4 Influence of Religious Practices on Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers

This section shows the descriptive results for the religious practices.

Table 4: Religious Practices and Emotional Well-being

statement	Strongly Disagree	disagree	neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	std.dev
I have received help from my religious community in managing financial struggles, parenting challenges, and other difficulties	40.50%	16.50%	13.90%	20.30%	8.90%	2.41	1.41
I interact with other members of my religious community for social or emotional support	2.50%	15.80%	10.80%	46.20%	24.70%	3.75	1.08



I rely on my faith to cope with the challenges of single motherhood	3.80%	14.60%	18.40%	48.70%	14.60%	3.56	1.03
I often use prayer to cope with difficult emotions or situations	18.40%	15.20%	19.60%	36.10%	10.80%	3.06	1.30
I have receiving counseling from my church	17.70%	16.50%	15.20%	34.80%	15.80%	3.15	1.36

Results showed that 57.0% of respondents disagreed with the statement that they have received help from their religious community in managing financial struggles, parenting challenges, and other issues (mean=2.41, std.dev=1.41). This infers that some single mothers may find assistance with parenting challenges, financial struggles, and other issues within their religious community; others might not experience the same level of support or find it inadequate for their specific needs. In addition, results showed that 70.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that they interact with other members of their religious community for social or emotional support (mean=3.75, std.dev=1.05). This suggests that single mothers often turn to their religious community for social and emotional support, finding solace, practical help, and a sense of belonging through shared faith and values.

Results showed that 63.3% of respondents agreed with the statement that they rely on their faith to cope with the challenges of single motherhood (mean=3.56, std.dev=1.03). This suggests that many single mothers find faith a crucial source of strength and resilience in navigating the challenges of single parenthood. In addition, results showed that 46.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that they often use prayer to cope with difficult emotions or situations (mean=3.06, std.dev=1.30). This implies that single mothers often turn to prayer as a means of coping with the challenges and emotional burdens of raising children alone. Further results showed that 50.6% of respondents agreed with the statement that they have been receiving counseling from their church (mean=3.15, std.dev=1.36). This infers that at least some of the churches in Mombasa have been receiving counseling.

4.1.5 Influence of Stereotyping on Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers

This section shows the descriptive results for the stereotyping.

Table 5: Stereotyping

statement	Strongly Disagree	disagree	neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	std.dev
Single mothers are perceived as husband snatchers	10.80%	20.90%	14.60%	27.80%	25.90%	3.37	1.35
I feel like a disgraced Christian	13.30%	3.20%	17.70%	46.80%	19.00%	3.55	1.22
Society judges as bad parents	6.30%	14.60%	6.30%	42.40%	30.40%	3.76	1.21
We are viewed as a	3.80%	19.00%	6.30%	40.50%	30.40%	3.75	1.19



bad influence
on other
women
stereotypes
contribute to
feelings of
shame, guilt,
or
inadequacy

20.90% 10.10% 12.00% 55.7% 1.30% 3.55 1.28

Results showed that 53.7% of respondents agreed with the statement that single mothers are perceived as husband snatchers (mean=3.37, std.dev=1.35). In addition, results showed that 65.8% of respondents agreed with the statement that they feel like a disgraced Christian (mean=3.55, std.dev=1.22). This implies that most single mothers in Mombasa feel like disgraced Christians. Further results showed that the the majority of respondents (72.8%) agreed with the statement that society judges them as bad parents (mean=3.76, std.dev=1.21). This denotes that single mothers are judged by society as bad parents. In addition, results showed that 70.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that they are viewed as a bad influence on other women (mean=3.75, std.dev=1.19). In addition, results showed that the the majority of respondents (56.7%) agreed with the statement that stereotypes contribute to feelings of shame, guilt, or inadequacy (mean=3.55, std.dev=1.28). This indicates that stereotypes can indeed contribute to feelings of shame, guilt, or inadequacy among individuals who are targeted by those stereotypes

4.2 Correlation Results

The study sought to determine the influence of societal beliefs on the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County.

Table 6: Correlational Results

		Emotional well-being	Societal values	Stigma	religious beliefs	stereotyping
Emotional wellbeing	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Societal values	Pearson Correlation	-0.786	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.015				
Stigma	Pearson Correlation	-0.670	-0.114	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.155			
religious beliefs	Pearson Correlation	0.430	.227	0.06	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012	0.004	0.44		
stereotyping	Pearson Correlation	-0.124	-0.143	.168	-0.028	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	0.073	0.03	0.724	

The results showed that societal values had a negative, significant correlation with emotional well-being ($r = -0.786$, $p = 0.015$). In addition, results showed that stigma had a negative, significant correlation with emotional well-being ($r = -0.670$, $p = 0.002$). This implies that



stigma influences the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. The results showed that religious beliefs had a positive and significant correlation with emotional well-being ($r=0.430$, $p=0.012$). This implies that religious beliefs influence the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. In addition, results showed that stereotyping had a negative, significant correlation with emotional well-being ($r = -0.124$, $p = 0.008$). This implies that stereotyping influences the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that societal values influence the the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. The absence of a strong social support network can exacerbate the challenges faced by single mothers, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This lack of support can be both emotional and practical, such as assistance with childcare or financial matters. Single mothers often face stigma, prejudice, and discrimination, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and mental health. These negative perceptions can stem from traditional views on family structures and expectations about single parenthood.

The study also concluded that stigma influences the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. The societal stigma surrounding single parenthood can lead to women internalizing negative judgments, perceiving themselves as failures, and experiencing a diminished sense of self-worth. Stigmatization can contribute to mental health problems like anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Single mothers may face emotional turmoil and psychological distress due to the social stigma they encounter.

Further, the study concluded that religious practices influence the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. Religious beliefs and practices can offer a sense of comfort, reduce stress, and foster a positive outlook on life, contributing to better emotional well-being. While faith can offer significant benefits, such as social support, a sense of purpose, and resilience, it can also pose challenges, including religious guilt, anxiety, and social isolation. An inclusive approach that integrates mental health awareness with religious practices is crucial to ensure that single mothers receive the support they need to thrive emotionally.

In addition, the study concluded that stereotyping influences the emotional well-being of single mothers in selected churches in Mombasa County. Societal stereotypes often portray single mothers negatively, leading them to internalize these perceptions, resulting in self-stigma and decreased self-worth. Stereotyping can make it harder for single mothers to seek help and support, as they may fear judgment or rejection, further isolating them and increasing their emotional distress.

6.0 Recommendations

- i. Community leaders should foster an inclusive church environment by changing societal attitudes through sermons and programs that highlight the value of single mothers, organize support networks, implement practical support for emergencies, provide spiritual and emotional enrichment programs, and ensure financial and material aid is available, all while upholding the dignity of single mothers to enhance their emotional well-being.
- ii. Church leaders can significantly impact the emotional well-being of single mothers by implementing specific religious practices and support systems. These include creating



a welcoming and inclusive environment, offering practical assistance, fostering spiritual growth through tailored programs, and providing emotional and social support.

- iii. Policy makers should focus on reducing stigma and challenging stereotypes associated with single motherhood, which can significantly improve the emotional well-being of single mothers. These policies can address negative societal attitudes, promote supportive environments, and provide resources that alleviate the unique challenges single mothers face.
- iv. Single mothers should participate in programs designed to boost self-esteem, provide counselling, and offer coping strategies for dealing with the stigma they face.

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