



EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE FATHERS INVOLVED IN CHILD  
UPBRINGING IN KITGUM DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY OF PAMOLO  
VILLAGE

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## DECLARATION

I, Alaroker Eunice, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and it is entirely a result of my hard work and guidance from my research supervisor. It has not been submitted for any other degree award to any other University before.

Signature .....  ..... Date 28/12/2022 .....

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## APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation has been carried out under professional supervision and it has been approved for submission in partial fulfilment for the award of a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Social Administration.

Signature: 

Date 28/12/2022

Professor Paul Bukuluki

Supervisor.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family, friends and the University supervisor. A special appreciation to my loving parents, Mr. Okello Arweny and Mrs. Alma Aroma whose words of encouragement and push for persistence enabled me to successfully carry out this research study. My sisters Kevin and Franka, as well as my brothers Samuel and Julius are very special and never left my side.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
COVID-19:	Corona Virus Disease
DHS:	Demographic and health Survey
FDGs:	Focus Group Discussions
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
L.C1:	Local Council Chairperson 1
MGLSD:	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NGOs:	Non-Government Organisations
PEAP:	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
U.S:	United States
UBOS:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UDHS:	Uganda Demographic Health Survey
VAC:	Violence Against Children
VACS:	Violence Against Children Survey

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Single fathers have both positive and negative experiences while raising their children. The study explores the experiences of single fathers in Pamolo, Kitgum district, factors influencing their roles, challenges faced and how they cope with the challenges they face as men in society adopting to traditionally feminine roles.

**Methodology:** The study was carried out using qualitative data collection methods; in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Through an analysis of key informant interviews with 2 community leaders and in-depth interviews with 10 single fathers of varying class status, age and education, the ways in which these men carry out child upbringing, challenges they face, and how they cope with these challenges, were captured.

**Findings:** The study shows that even though the single fathers had similar roles and challenges, their individual experiences were unique. Some of the main challenges facing single fathers included: managing child care work, emotional struggles, balancing child care and work, financial constraints, negative attitudes from family and community members. More to this, some of the coping mechanisms included: saving and investments, support networks, re-arranging work schedules, among others. The commonest sources of social support are family (mothers, sisters, aunties, uncles), friends and neighbours. By exploring how these fathers carry out childrearing in society, a greater awareness and understanding of this population is created.

**Conclusion:** Single fathers face a number of challenges that are social, emotional, and economic in nature. Despite all these challenges, single fathers are willing to raise and care for their children and redefining masculinity by playing the roles of both a mother and a father.

**Recommendation:** The government can provide free psychosocial support and counselling services to single fathers so as to improve their emotional, social and mental wellbeing.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides information on the background to the study, statement of the research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, justification of the study, and definition of terms and concepts.

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Non-traditional families, including single parent households, have become a common phenomenon within our society, yet even the single parent family structure has undergone significant change over the last few decades, including an increase in single-father households (Stephens and Gillies 2011). Scholars have concluded that there is nothing simple or easy about raising children, and once combined with additional factors such as low-income strains and/or “doing it alone” for single parents, childrearing becomes more difficult and presents numerous more challenges (Coles 2002, 2009; Gibson-Davis 2008; Roy 1999; Waldfogel et al. 2010).

Previous literature has examined single mothers in the contexts of work and family conflict, parental practices, daily life, parenting struggles, service access/usage, support networks, as well as how some combination of these factors influences their parenting practices and parenting experiences (McLanahan and Booth 1989; Neblett 2007; Nelson 2006; Olson and Banyard 1993; Quinn and Allen 1989). Single fathers, on the other hand, have not received the same level of scholarly interest (but see: Coles 2002, 2009; Doucet 2004; Grief 1985; Hamer and Marchioro 2002; Hatter et al 2002; Roy 1999; Schindler and Coley 2006; Smith and Smith 1981; Williams 2007), thereby creating need for the question upon which this dissertation is based: How do single fathers experience parenthood?

There are 1.8 million single fathers in the US, meaning that 15% of all single parents were men according to the 2010 US census data (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Furthermore, this number has increased by over 60% in the last ten years (US Census Bureau 2010). In 2016, the United States (U.S) Census Bureau found that of the 2million single fathers in the United States, about 40% were divorced, 38% were never married, 16% were separated, and 6% were widowed. Besides, according to a new report from the U.S. Census Bureau, 16% of single parent households today are headed by fathers, up from 12.5% in 2007.

In the Uganda Demographic Health Surveys (2016) conducted with persons aged 15-49 years most of the Ugandan fathers live in marital relationships (married/living together 53.5%), but

a substantial number of men (41.3%) are reportedly never married, and a very small number (0.3%) are widowed (UBOS, 2016), perhaps because most men tend to remarry quickly after losing a spouse or because they are polygamous. According to a Pew research report from 2013, single fathers are most likely to be living with a cohabiting partner (41percent versus 16percent), meaning they are not always entirely on their own. In addition, according to a Pew Research report, the term ‘single father’ includes men in a variety of family circumstances. About half (52%) are separated, divorced, widowed or never married and are living without a cohabiting partner; some (41%) are living with a non-marital partner; and a small share (7%) are married but living apart from their spouse.

Historically, single-parent families were the result of parental death; about one-fourth of children born around the turn of the nineteenth century experienced the death of a parent before they reached age fifteen (Amato, 2000). While a lot of the research is with married fathers, some men are single fathers due to among others, widowhood and the fear of remarrying, separation, sexual permissiveness, or divorce, family/marriage instability, (Ainebyona and Atekyereza, 2017). Additionally, single fathers have reported difficulty in managing demands of fatherhood, poor emotional and psychological health, lack of time for their children, friends, personal interests, financial challenges among others.

As single fathers are a seemingly growing population, it is important to study their struggles and experiences. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of single fathers in relation to their position as primary caregivers to their children. This will be explored through conversations about daily life, scheduling, work and/or school balance, services and support networks and social reactions. Through the analysis of 10 interviews with single fathers, the researcher will explore the ways that these fathers experience parenting in relation to the above discussed conversations. This study was conducted in Kitgum, Pamolo among single fathers who had at least half-time care of their children. It facilitated a deep understanding of the struggles and barriers that single fathers face as males in the parenting field. Therefore, this study provides a broader understanding of the practices and needs of single fathers in Uganda.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

More fathers are taking care of children alone following separation and divorce than ever before. The dominant understanding of fathers in Uganda is that they are absent, irresponsible, less involved in caregiving and domestic work, and that they are the leading perpetrators of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC), (AfriChild, 2021). This kind of thinking is due to the culturally-shaped gender norms that have continued to discourage

or limit the time Ugandan men and fathers put in child upbringing and child care (AfriChild, 2021). Although it is difficult to establish which age category the majority of Uganda's single fathers fit into, it is important to note that there are single fathers who are teenagers, adults and young adults.

It is also important to note that men's attitudes to participation in child care tend to positively correlate with their education and family size, suggesting that the more fathers are educated, the more they are likely to consider primary child care activities to be less of the main responsibility of the mothers alone. Besides, fathers' perception of their involvement in childcare work is also largely influenced by gendered social norms pertaining to the division of labour and socio-economic status in the household (Nkwake, 2015). Despite this, the descriptions we have of the single fathers who are occupying what is still considered a non-traditional role, are based on stereotypes and small research samples (Greif, 1985). Although single fathers play a critical role in the parenting process, the information about them is limited and yet this is something to be investigated. This study will therefore examine the experiences of single fathers in raising their children, the challenges they encounter and how they cope with the challenges.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The main objective of this study is to inform the government to put in place policies that address the challenges faced by single fathers in Pamolo, Kitgum district, so as to improve their social, emotional, economic and psychosocial wellbeing.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

- i. To determine how single fathers raise their children in Pamolo, Kitgum district.
- ii. To identify the factors that influence how single fathers raise their children in Pamolo, Kitgum district.
- iii. To examine the challenges faced by single fathers during child upbringing in Pamolo, Kitgum district.
- iv. To assess how single fathers cope with challenges faced during child upbringing in Pamolo, Kitgum district.

## **1.4 Research questions and hypotheses**

- i. How do single fathers raise their children in Kitgum district?
- ii. What are the factors that influence the way single fathers raise their children in Kitgum district?
- iii. What are the challenges faced by single fathers during child upbringing in Kitgum district?
- iv. How do single fathers cope with the challenges they face while raising their children?

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

### **1.5.1 Geographical scope**

The study was carried out in Pamolo, Kitgum district, which is located in the northern region of Uganda. Kitgum is one of the seven districts in the Acholi sub-region in Northern Uganda. At Independence in 1962, Kitgum was part of Acholi District. In 1974, under the provincial administration, the Acholi District was divided into two districts, West Acholi and East Acholi. The latter became Kitgum District in 1980. Kitgum is located between Longitude 320E and 340 E and Latitude 020N and 040N. It is bordered by the Republic of Southern Sudan to the north, Karenga District to the east, Kotido District to the Southeast, Agago District to the South, Pader District to the Southwest and Lamwo District to the Northwest. Kitgum District has a total land area of 4,042 square kilometres. According to the Population Census 2014, Kitgum District has a total population of 204, 012 which is, there are 98,438 males constituting 48.3% of the district population and 105, 574 females constituting 51.7% of the district population. The total population of Kitgum (204,012) is 0.59% of the total National population (34,856,813) according to the 2014 provisional census results (Kitgum District Local Government, 2022). The study was carried out in Kitgum district because it has a large population of single fathers.

### **1.5.2 Content scope**

The study focused on how single fathers carry out child-upbringing, factors that influence how they raise their children, their various roles, challenges faced, and how they cope with these challenges.

## **1.6 Justification of the Study**

The study is very important due to various factors as shown below;

The government will be helped to understand and address the challenges faced by single fathers. This will provide a baseline on which human rights activists are going to work in order to promote quality life of children, men and women.

The government will also be helped to educate the public on the roles of fathers, especially the single fathers in child-upbringing and child care activities, and provide awareness on how the community members can help them.

The study results will provide information to the public policy makers to recognize the effects of single parenthood on children's livelihood. This will lead to the formulation of policies that are gender sensitive hence put children's' rights at the fore front.

The study will act as a guide to future research on the topic of single fatherhood in Uganda since there is little knowledge about them.

## **1.7 Definition of terms and concepts**

**Single fathers:** This is a father who has a dependent child or dependent children and who is widowed, divorced, or unmarried (Collins English dictionary, 2022).

**Child upbringing:** The activity of rearing children (Collins English dictionary, 2022).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter looks at the definitions of child-upbringing and single fatherhood, the causes of single fatherhood, roles of single fathers, how they carry out child upbringing, challenges faced, how they cope with these challenges and the gaps in the literature available.

#### **2.1 Single fatherhood and child upbringing**

Previous research on fathers and masculinity has shown that there is a binary tension for fathers to accept and balance between fulfilling the gendered idea of the breadwinner role and being a more active and participatory father (Williams, 2007; Hatter et al, 2002). For men, there is also a general struggle over their identities as fathers, and when in a single-parent situation there is a drive to “prove” themselves capable of traditional “mothering” roles in providing full care for their children (Coles, 2009).

It has also been noted that fathers struggle with a constant need to reaffirm their masculinity and the feeling like they no longer fit the traditional masculine male role (Coles, 2009;). Some men address these personal struggles with gender roles (mothering and fathering) by changing how they view and conduct these roles, while others attempted to dismiss or ignore them altogether (Williams 2009). The conflict between nurturer and provider appears in several articles on single fathers and this research found that this is a constant struggle, as well as a form of stress that single mothers tend not to have (Coles 2002, 2009; Doucet 2004; Williams 2009). There was a fair amount of research on single fathers in the 1980s and early 1990s when it was seemingly apparent that this population was expanding (Coles 2002; Greif 1985; Smith and Smith 1981).

This early research has been expanded to a certain degree, and the significant portion of recent and current research on fathers has been looking into smaller and more cohesive groups, such as African American men who chose custody (Coles 2002, 2009), African American men in poverty (Hamer and Marchioro 2002; Roy 1999), stay-at-home fathers (Doucet 2004), homeless fathers (Schindler and Coley 2006) and widowed or divorced men (Smith and Smith 1981). Yet still, the research of the current single father’s overall experience is lacking, especially with respect to the inclusion of a broader or more generic population, more variation of class-status issues, and gender relations within current societal norms and social issues.



The previous research on single fathers did find that there was a struggle with adjustment to full-time parenting, the acceptance of new roles, and difficulty and confusion with respect to the many facets of childrearing or parenthood (Coles 2002, 2009; Dufur et al 2010; Hamer and Marchioro 2002). Adjusting to full time single parenting for fathers has been shown to be a very difficult transition and this struggle was similar across differing circumstances that led to single parenthood, whether by personal decision or choice, by happenings like being widowed, or by the need to remove the child(ren) from the other household for child(ren)'s safety or well-being (Coles 2002, 2009; Hamer and Marchioro 2002).

It was found that many times the transition included a need to increase patience, learn new forms of communication, balance the added responsibility and set personal mental decisions on childrearing including such things as discipline and schedule (Coles 2002, 2009; Hamer and Marchioro 2002). Fathers appear to have a more difficult time not only adjusting to the new role, but also accepting it, and some findings suggest that single fathers are associated with having more negative feelings towards single parenting, especially with younger children, due to the massive amounts of time and care involved with younger ages (Dufur et al 2010).

Due to the historical difference suggesting that fathers are less engaged and participatory in child rearing (Doucet 2004; Riina and Feinberg 2012) there is a social concern of possible struggle for single fathers to manage daily childrearing aspects appropriately when looking at guidance, discipline and developmentally appropriate rules and boundaries (Kielty, 2006). Dufur et al's research (2010) found that single fathers tended to be less affectionate, stricter on daily routines such as bedtime, Television and foods, but also less tough in their discipline techniques. They also found that different activities and games were played in single father homes, things such as singing and imaginary play occurred less, but things such as puzzles and sports occurred more frequently. As is the case with use of assistance services, previous research has found that men are more prone to have a strong desire for autonomy, yet, at the same time, many single fathers depend on their families of origin as a main support network for their child-linked responsibilities and care (Coles 2002).

Fathers in Uganda are conceptualized as all male parents of both biological (who are the most common in demographic terms) and non-biological children. They are heads of households or families with overall authority and power over their families (Lubanga et al., 2019). In a study on male involvement in pregnancy and child birth, fathers described themselves as the "biological father of the unborn child", "father of her children", "father of the children" or a

“lover”. Lovers and men whose partners were pregnant regardless of whether they were responsible for the pregnancy, are also described as fathers (Kaye et al., 2014). Fathers are in formal marital relationships, cohabiting or may be single fathers, having either lost their spouses, divorced or separated with the mothers of their children, or they became fathers due to non-marital childbearing or through extra-marital affairs (Ainebyona and Atekyereza, 2018).

Another category of fathers includes all the extended male relatives of the father especially uncles, male partners of mothers with children from earlier relationships who in literature (Lewis & Lamb, 2007; Bzostek, 2008; Berger et al., 2008) have been described as ‘social fathers’, because of cultural and other social-relational ties. For example, in most ethnic groups in Uganda, paternal uncles are addressed with titles that have ‘father’ in them, for example, taata-omutto among the Baganda ethnic group, and tatento and isento among the Banyankole and Bakiga, both of which titles can be literally translated as ‘young daddy’, irrespective of whether the uncle is older in age than the biological father. Being a ‘young daddy’ culturally carries social roles and expectations over the children of one’s brother. In the same context, in Acholi, the fathers are referred to as “won-latin”.

These concepts of a father suggest the need to advocate for more inclusive laws and structural interventions that recognize the wide range of categories and of fathers in Uganda. For example, the Children’s Act defines a parent as the biological or adoptive father or mother of a child, but Article 35 of the Registration of Persons Act (2015) prohibits registration of the name of the father unless he appears personally before the registrar with the mother of the new born child or unless a court order or DNA test confirming paternity of the child is presented.

Parents are responsible for “duties, powers, responsibilities, and authorities which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child,” and in the case of divorce the best suited parent will be given primary custody. Under national law, parenting is the responsibility of both the father and mother, yet there are very few guidelines and service agencies which address fathering specifically (Lubanga et al., 2019). Similarly, there is need to review paternity policies to ensure single fatherhood is also understood as a transition to adulthood and an important resource for constructing a desired masculinity. It is a status by which young men establish their masculine identity in the community. Formally marrying and having children is central to masculine identity and fatherhood (Nyanzi, 2009). It is also a vital source of respect and trust in the society (Siu et al., 2013). To ascend to these social statuses, young men must

prepare economically by finding gainful employment (Mathur, 2016) or inheritance (Asiimwe, 2009).

Child up-bringing on the other hand is a gendered activity that takes place in domestic spaces that are usually considered either feminine or masculine. Understanding the appropriateness of the physical and social spaces where child rearing is done by Ugandan fathers is important for efforts to increase their effective involvement in child care work. However, very limited evidence exists on spaces of child rearing in Uganda. Siu et al., (2017) delivered a parenting training programme and found that when fathers increased their involvement in child care monitoring in the domestic sphere, the unintended consequence was that it had the potential to diminish the only main space that was traditionally reserved for women.

## **2.2 Causes of single fatherhood**

There are various causes of single fatherhood that may be social, economic, political and these include the following:

### **2.2.1 Breakups and divorce**

This may be legal separation (divorce), or non-legal separation that may take place due to various reasons including violence, poverty, loss of interest in the relationship among others. When fathers separate with the mothers of their children and are left with the responsibility of raising these children alone, they automatically become single fathers.

### **2.2.2 Gender based violence**

This takes place in different forms like beating, sexual abuse, hitting, emotional abuse, among others. This can force the mother of the child to leave hence making one a single father. Generally, in most literature, fathers are commonly presented as perpetrators of violence against children and women (Vlahovicova et al., 2019; MGLSD, 2015) or as negligent and unavailable to provide parental care (Boydell et al., 2017).

### **2.2.3 Travel of the mothers**

Some mothers may travel to foreign countries and leave their husbands to take care of the children on their own hence making them single fathers.

### **2.2.4 Extra-marital affairs**

This occurs when a married person engages in sexual activity with someone other than their spouse. This may lead to family breakups in case the female partner finds out about the husband's involvement in such activities hence leading to single fatherhood.

### **2.2.5 Adoption**

This is another reason for single parenting and it refers to a process whereby a person assumes the parenting for another who is not kin and, in so doing, permanently transfers all legal rights and responsibilities from the original parent or parents to himself. Unlike guardianship or other systems designed for the care of the young, adoption is intended to effect a permanent change in status and as such requires societal recognition, either through legal or religious sanction. Thus, some men may adopt children yet they are unmarried, hence becoming single fathers.

### **2.2.6 Death of the mother**

This can be due to HIV/AIDS, wars, accidents, sicknesses among others. A father may therefore end up alone after death of the mother and in charge of child care hence becoming a single father.

### **2.2.7 Poverty**

Economic insecurity or low incomes prevent men from fulfilling their male roles as breadwinners (Silberschmidt, 2001, Siu et al., 2012). When a father fails to provide for his family, the mother may be forced to leave and the father becomes responsible for their wellbeing hence becoming a single father.

### **2.2.8 Fear of remarrying**

This is especially after loss of a partner or separation. In this case, many fathers decide to remain single and solely look after their children out of fear to remarry due to a bad experience with their spouses who might have died, left abruptly, involved in extra-marital affairs among others

### **2.2.9 Age factor**

This is also a major cause of single fatherhood. Some men become fathers while they are still young adults or teenagers thus making it difficult for them to take care of their wives and children. They may therefore face various challenges like difficulty in providing basic needs for their families, poverty due to lack of a stable source of income, limited knowledge on proper parenting skills, among others. These issues may force them to separate with their partners hence becoming single fathers.

### **2.2.10 Large number of children**

Most parents that have a large number of children face economic challenges and difficulty in providing all the basic needs for their children. Other challenges may include: poor accommodation, congestion, poverty, limited clothing and health care among others. As a

result of the poor standards of living, a woman may be forced to leave her husband hence leading to single fatherhood.

### **2.3 Roles of single fathers during child-upbringing.**

This section presents review findings on how single fathers carry out child-upbringing. Specifically, it gives a general overview of single fathers' parenting roles, examines fathers' views and community perceptions or expectations around fathers' roles. The review establishes that single fathers play a wide range of roles in their families and communities in relation to child up-bringing and these include the following.

#### **2.3.1 Provision of survival needs**

In almost all the studies, the value placed on the role of single fathers in the family as a provider has been discussed. Both single fathers and the wider community describe a father's typical role to be that of a provider. This involves the expectation to provide food and/or money for family upkeep, making available other material possessions and assets or enterprising, such as keeping domestic fowl and animals, investments to later give to the children, and providing education by paying school fees for children (Lubanga et al., 2019; Siu et al., 2013; Kansiime et al., 2017).

#### **2.3.2 Educating children**

Investing in children's future through education is a symbol of positive parenting (Boothby et al., 2017), and a central aspect of the provider role. Although single fathers value providing school fees, they are less likely to fully participate in educational support activities, such as visiting at school, monitoring academic performance and discipline (Lubanga et al., 2019). These are even more likely to happen with girl children whose education is often less prioritized compared to boys (Ategyereza, 2001). However, most of the single fathers ensure that they take their children to school to attain education and these are often the ones that have the power to do so because they have a reasonable level of education and are often in positions of authority, such as teachers, government officials, doctors, and magistrates among others. Often, these are in paid employment and have control over money, which they could choose to spend on education for their children (Warrington, 2012).

#### **2.3.3 Provision of housing**

Besides school fees and food, it is considered a single father's role to provide sleeping space and beddings to their children. However, studies often describe fathers as unable to provide adequate and good quality housing and bedding for their families (Lubanga et al., 2019).

Fathers predominantly perceive their main role to be that of providing financial support (Baguma et al., 2016). In one of the reviewed studies, community members (both children and adults) perceived a good father to be one who works hard to provide for the family and a bad father inadequately fulfils this responsibility (Boothby et al., 2017). Fathers are expected to provide basic household survival needs such as food, shelter, clothes, medical care, school fees and scholastic materials in addition to undertaking school visitations (Lubanga et al., 2019).

#### **2.3.4 Safety, security and emotional needs**

Single fathers play an important role in providing security and ensuring safety of children, as well as meeting psychological needs of their children. Some studies report about the father's role in building positive relationships and bonding with their children (Singla et al., 2015; Siu, 2017) and respectful character building as fathers carry the family vision to uphold family honour (Siu et al., 2017), whilst others describe it in relation to decision-making and discipline (Mehus et al., 2018; Magezi, 2009).

#### **2.3.5 Nurturing children**

Besides providing for family, societal expectations of single fathers included providing nurturing care moulding of children's character, being a father figure and role modelling children in the community (Lubanga et al., 2019), roles that are frequently described in father's explanations too. Single fathers are also more likely to be involved in child care tasks such as helping children with homework, talking with the child about any personal matters in their lives, changing clothes, or doing various leisure activities (Vlahovicova et al., 2019).

#### **2.3.6 Teaching children acceptable social behaviour**

Fathers perceived their role(s) as teaching boys how to be men, and what is right and wrong in preparation for their own future roles as fathers (Mehus et.al, 2018). Fathers understand that they should spend time with their children as a way to positively influence their characters (Lubanga, 2019). Single fatherhood is also perceived as an expression of love to initiate children in acceptable values like greeting, responsibility, avoiding bad groups, avoiding drinking alcohol, violence, among others. Traditionally, fathers taught children around the fire place through storytelling, however, this practice has since diminished (Mehus et. al, 2018).

#### **2.3.7 Promote family peace**

The findings from the review of literature indicates that fathers also perceive themselves to have a responsibility of ensuring the peace of children, the family, and the family's wealth. Single fathers understand that they are responsible for making a stable and peaceful home for

the children in which children freely interact with the parents, implying that parents should promote love, respect and freedom for children at home (Mehus et al., 2018).

## **2.4 Factors that Influence the way single fathers raise their children.**

Although it is well known that single fathers may not necessarily be fully providing as it is socially constructed, the extent to which various fathers fulfil the provider role is not clearly described and quantified in the studies reviewed, calling for further inquiry. Where there was some data, a father's ability varied by the father's socio-economic status.

### **2.4.1 Socio-economic factors**

Economic insecurity or low incomes prevent men from fulfilling their male roles as breadwinners (Silberschmidt, 2001, Siu et al., 2012), and for young men, their lifelong aspiration of fatherhood and marriage (Sanyukta et al., 2016). Due to financial hardships, many Ugandan fathers tend to perceive themselves as not able to meet all the needs of their children and family. As a result, they tend to focus on what is perceived as important by the community, such as providing school fees and scholastic materials.

Besides, unemployment or lack of a stable source of income is one of the major challenges that limit fathers' ability to provide basic need for their children.

More to that, some fathers may be employed and yet receive low-income wages/salary and this can also lead to difficulty in the provision of needs like shelter, food, health services, among others.

### **2.4.2 Socio-cultural factors**

Although single fatherhood is an increasing phenomenon, most of these fathers re-marry quickly due to family and community pressure to do so. Most communities and families have a belief that child-upbringing is traditionally a woman's duty, and therefore a man cannot raise a child alone hence the need to re-marry as soon as they become single fathers. More to that, less than a third of men and women said they personally feel it is shameful when men engage in caring for children or other domestic work (Vlahovicova et al., 2019, pp 69).

Cultural norms in Uganda (as elsewhere) generally present a division of labour, meaning that fathers are meant to provide a stable home but do not assist as much in childcare. Women often do not accept help and men do not help perform unpaid childcare and domestic work because it is seen as a "woman's task". The widespread social expectations that men do not care for children limits paternal involvement in child-care (Nkwake, 2009), and perhaps means that

fathers lacked a clear understanding of their roles (Kaye et al., 2014). Other studies also emphasized that fatherhood roles in Uganda primarily relate to provision, decision-making and discipline (Mehus et al., 2018; Magezi, 2009), whereas mothers focus more on childcare and domestic work (Guloba et al., 2018).

Besides, single fathers that cross the traditional lines to support girls' education are usually the employed ones and these are unique in that they stand out from the rest of their communities. They are often the ones that have the power to do so because they have a reasonable level of education and are often in positions of authority(employed), such as teachers, government officials, doctors, magistrates, clergymen, and journalists, and often they are in paid employment and have control over money, which they could choose to spend on education for their children (Warrington, 2012).

#### **2.4.3 Family, community and personality characteristics.**

Personal factors which positively influence fathers' involvement in childcare include paternal confidence and motivation, access to paternity leave, shorter work time requirements, higher education levels, and harmony in marital relationships (Nkwake, 2009).

Studies have indicated that active and present fathers have countless positive impacts for their children, including children being disciplined, self-driven, and performing well at school as opposed to fathers who are absent or inactive, with such fathers increasing the risk of child labour, early pregnancy, low self-esteem, and negative school outcomes (Lubanga et al., 2019). Absence of spousal conflict and violence, positively influences fathers' involvement in childcare (Nkwake, 2009). First, absence of marital disharmony ensures fathers find no excuse to be away from home, thereby allowing them to monitor child behaviour and provide child care (Siu et al., 2017).

#### **2.5 Challenges faced by single fathers**

The study further indicated that active and present fathers have many positive impacts for their children, including children being disciplined, self-driven, and performing well at school as opposed to fathers who are absent or inactive, with such fathers increasing the risk of child labour, early pregnancy, low self-esteem, and negative school outcomes (Lubanga et al., 2019). However, Ugandan fathers' presence in the lives of their children is hampered by a range of personal, economic and social factors which include the following.



### **2.5.1 Marital status**

Compared to single mothers, single fathers find it very difficult to rear children alone for a number of reasons. Traditionally, the child care role was strictly for mothers and therefore men are never socialized to nurture and care for children making it very stressful and challenging for single fathers to perform without female support. As a consequence, on child care, little intimacy and affective bond is developed between single fathers and their children (Ainebyona & Atekyereza, 2017).

### **2.5.2 Difficulty balancing between work and child care**

Fathers also find it hard to balance between work and child care, which is worsened by absence of childcare services (Ainebyona & Atekyereza, 2017). Harmony in marital relationships, defined by absence of spousal conflict and violence, positively influences fathers' involvement in childcare (Nkwake, 2009). First, absence of marital disharmony allows fathers the opportunity to discuss shared responsibilities around child care with their wives and second, it ensures fathers find no excuse to be away from home, thereby allowing them to monitor child behaviour and provide child care (Siu et al., 2017).

### **2.5.3 Lack of policies promoting gender equality**

This inclusivity becomes a barrier when fathers wish to be involved in domains that have historically excluded them, such as pregnancy and child health appointments. As a result, Kaye et al. (2014), found fathers felt unwelcomed and intimidated by health systems and made it difficult to be successfully involved in the pregnancy and childbirth stage of their children.

### **2.5.4 The age of some single fathers**

This is because some fathers are teenagers and young adults and so they may have no stable source of income to look after their children, provide their basic needs like shelter, clothing, healthcare, among others. For example, a study on male involvement in children's immunisation found that involvement increased with the age of the father, with older fathers (45 years and more), likely to be more involved than younger parents (Baguma et al., 2016).

### **2.5.5 Financial hardships**

Many single fathers tend to perceive themselves as not able to meet all the needs of their children and family. While assessing gender dynamics affecting maternal health and health care access and use in Uganda, Morgan et al., (2016) found that low social-economic status was an important constraint.

### **2.5.6 Cultural norms in Uganda**

These generally present a division of labour, meaning that fathers are meant to provide a stable home but do not partake as much in childcare. Women often do not accept help and men do not help perform unpaid childcare and domestic work because it is seen as a “woman’s task”. Cultural and gender norms and practices around maternal and child health care, in particular in relation to pregnancy and childbirth, present specific barriers, which undermine fathers’ involvement in this important child care role.

### **2.5.7 HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses**

The context in which fathers perform their role in Uganda have evolved significantly, primarily due to the impact of HIV (Mukiza-Gapere and Ntozi, 1995; Kipp et al., 2007) as well as due to the impact of globalization (Kanyesigye, 2014), migrations, and other social influences. This has resulted in breakdown of extended family care models and tendency towards nuclear family models, increased family economic stress, absentee parents, child headed families (Evans, 2010), and an increasing number of single fathers.

### **2.5.8 Negative attitudes from community members**

A recently concluded national time use survey (UBOS, 2019) also found that 81% of the women interviewed agreed that it is a woman’s responsibility to take care of her home and family compared to 79% among men. Similarly, more women (76%) agree that child rearing is the mother’s responsibility compared to their male counterparts (68%). This suggests the existence of negative attitudes towards gender equality with respect to child care work among Ugandan men and women (Nkwake, 2009). More to that, although stigma and discrimination are not commonly evident towards single fathers, they experience this through facing a cold reception from family members who constantly remind them to find new wives, community members who label them cursed, wizards and unlucky.

### **2.5.9 Limited Time**

The societal designation of fathers as providers means that fathers are busy with looking for income earning opportunities away from home (Karuiki & Sewragi, 2016), leaving limited time for them to be available although some fathers may use this as an excuse for being away, yet in fact disguising their lack of interest in child care work (Lubanga et al., 2019). The time use is an important measure for men’s engagement in childrearing. There are few studies with respect to how single fathers spend their time and how much of this is allocated to childrearing.

The closest is a recent national time use survey (UBOS, 2019) that assessed time use by women and men (not necessarily fathers).

The one study that explored this issue reports that fathers generally spend minimal time with children at home. There were variations in the extent to which fathers were present and actively and positively managing their children. Some fathers were physically present but not active and positively relating with their children. Some fathers lived in distant places but kept being active and supportive of their children. Other fathers are active temporarily and leave the responsibilities of caring to mothers, grandparents and other relatives (Lubanga et al., 2019).

#### **2.5.10 Lack of respect**

Some single fathers may lack respect from both their children and the general public. This is mainly because the children are usually left on their own with maids or at day-care centres which in turn creates a distant relationship between the children and their fathers. Besides, failure to fulfil the provider role greatly challenges a man's masculinity and undermines his self-worth in their society and family (Siu et al., 2013). A good father is known by the extent to which they not only care and provide for their children but also commands respect in the community (Boothby, et al, 2017).

#### **2.5.11 Low self esteem**

Many single fathers have low self-esteem. This is because they have fear of being judged by the public and their family members, who may think they have bad luck or that they were involved in violence against their spouses.

#### **2.5.12 Limited support from NGOs and Government**

Single fathers also have difficulty in soliciting for support from the Government and Non-Government Organizations. This is because there is currently no functional organization that focuses on single fathers and their challenges, instead most of them focus on single mothers.

### **2.6 Coping mechanisms of single fathers**

#### **2.6.1 Ensuring financial security**

This has been done through savings and acquiring job opportunities, starting up income generating activities, and access to financial resources in retirement. Financial security is not determined by the level of resource only but also by the financial literacy, financial practices and the ability to maintain a given number of resources towards a certain kind of consumption. The strategies used by single fathers to meet their needs and those of their children include

borrowing money and getting loans thus creating long term financial burdens. However, this can be managed by adopting new strategies like self-employment. This can also enable them to have their children at work if necessary, or to work from home with the presence of their children if needed. Other fathers have reconfigured their work by changing to employment that more suited childrearing alone. Another way in which these fathers had reconfigured their lives to accommodate childrearing alone was to re-enter or begin a higher education program. How these fathers reconfigured their lives with employment or education to adapt to issues such as childcare was a unique finding within this research.

## **2.7 Gaps**

### **2.7.1 Content gap**

Single fathers' involvement in child-upbringing has been the subject of very few studies in Uganda. This is to say most studies focus on single parenthood in general, or single mothers, but few of them focus on single fathers only.

Secondly, the concepts and perceptions of who a single father is in the Ugandan context reveal a gap in the legal and policy framework which excludes fatherhood outside the biological context. This presents the need to advocate for more inclusive laws and structural interventions that recognize the wide range of categories and fathers in Uganda.

### **2.7.2 Time gap**

Some of the studies about experiences of single fathers involved in child rearing are outdated and so there is limited information from the current studies.

### **2.7.3 Regional gap**

Most of the studies about single fathers have been carried out in different countries or regions and very few studies focus on Ugandan single fathers.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter explores the experiences of single fathers. It provides the causes of single fatherhood, roles of single fathers, challenges faced, and how these fathers cope with the challenges. It provides a comparison with other studies on single fatherhood and provides a clear understanding of their situations.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter consists of the research design, research approach, geographic location, target population, sample size determination, sampling procedure, data collection methods, research tools and requirements, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations/challenges.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The study was carried out using an exploratory case study design. This is because there is limited information on the experiences of single fathers in Uganda. Therefore, the study was carried out using a case study of Pamolo village in Kitgum district. Exploratory case study designs are usually regarded as the first stage in what will turn out to be a detailed research process.

#### **3.2 Research approach**

The study was exploring the overall experience of single fathers in Pamolo, Kitgum, so performing a qualitative study provided a means to investigate and explore this experience and any specific assumptions on what the experiences may be, but also allowed gathering a thorough and in-depth understanding of the experiences of single parenting on fathers that is grounded in previously researched concepts. A qualitative methodological approach was the most suitable approach to explore the daily life experiences of single fathers, and their social, economic and political challenges. Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data like texts, audios or videos, to understand concepts, opinions or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem to generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2022). Therefore, this approach corresponded well with the type of information that the study was looking for which justifies why the qualitative approach was used. This study was conducted in Pamolo, Kitgum district, due to the availability and willingness of participants.

#### **3.3 Study population**

The selected sample was single fathers in Pamolo, Kitgum district, with at least one child under the age of 14 if they have been the primary caregiver. These factors standardized the sample to be comparable to each other. The population of this study included single fathers aged between

26 to 45 years. Kitgum is one of the seven districts in the Acholi sub-region in Northern Uganda. Kitgum is located between Longitude 320E and 340 E and Latitude 020N and 040N. It is bordered by the Republic of Southern Sudan to the north, Karenga District to the east, Kotido District to the Southeast, Agago District to the South, Pader District to the Southwest and Lamwo District to the Northwest. Kitgum District has a total land area of 4,042 square kilometres. According to the Population Census 2014, Kitgum District has a total population of 204, 012 which is, there are 98,438 males constituting 48.3% of the district population and 105, 574 females constituting 51.7% of the district population. The total population of Kitgum (204,012) is 0.59% of the total National population (34,856,813) according to the 2014 provisional census results (Kitgum District Local Government, 2022).

### **3.4 Sample size**

The sample size was determined using the principle of saturation. Here, a sample of 10 single fathers were interviewed during the In-depth interviews and 3 key informants also interviewed in Pamolo, Kitgum district. Given the detailed nature of the study, this number provided adequate information on how single fathers raise their children in the area of study. Guest et al. 2005 used data from their own study to conclude that 88 of the codes they developed when analysing data from 60 qualitative interviews were created by the time 12 interviews had been conducted. These findings were the basis upon which the sample size for this study was concluded at 10 participants.

### **3.5 Sampling procedure**

Non-probability sampling techniques were used. Here, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for the study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgement when choosing members of the population to participate in their surveys (Alchemer, 2021). Researchers use purposive sampling when they want to access a particular subset of people, as all participants of a survey are selected because they fit a particular profile. Purposive sampling enables researchers to squeeze a lot of information out of the data that they have collected. This allows researchers to describe the major impact their findings have on the population (Alchemer, 2021). Therefore, this was the most favourable sampling procedure to use during this study.

**Table 1: Summary of the number of participants for each method used**

Method	Number of participants
Focus Group Discussion	FDG 1-10 FDG 2-8
In-depth Interviews	10
Key informant interviews	3

### **3.6 Data Collection methods and tools.**

#### **3.6.1 Focus group discussions**

The focus group discussion had a total of 10 fathers for FDG 1 and 8 fathers for FDG 2. During the focus group discussions, the single fathers were divided into two groups with five fathers in each group. The groups were then asked questions that included the common challenges faced by single fathers in the Pamolo, Kitgum district. The discussions were moderated by the researcher with the help of a note-taker, centered on key topics that included how single fathers raise their children, challenges and coping strategies. The focus group discussions were used in addition to semi-structured interviews because there was need to generate a variety of responses from the fathers. This method also provided an opportunity to end up with more realistic accounts of the single fathers think about their situations.

**Table 2: Number of single fathers and duration of the two focus group discussions for the single fathers.**

Focus Group Discussion	Focus Group Discussion 1	Focus group discussion 2
Number of single fathers	10	8
Focus Group Discussion duration	1hour 20minutes	45minutes

#### **3.6.2 In-depth interviews**

Researchers use in-depth interviewing as a way to check out theories they have formulated through naturalistic observation, to verify independently knowledge they have gained through participation as members of particular cultural settings, or to explore multiple meanings of or perspectives on some actions, events or settings (Johnson, 2002). In-depth interviews with 10 single fathers were done using an interview guide. This design allowed for potential variance and independent perceptions and experiences that arose in these individual experiences of single fathers. The interviews were semi-structured and an interview guide was constructed to

guide the conversation. Here, many fathers' stories covered future cues in the interview guide and not all questions were asked, but all concepts were discussed to their best.

The characteristics that were based on to select the single fathers for the study included; their tribe (Acholi), place of residence (Pamolo), number of children (less than 5), years being a single father (maximum of 6years), level of education (highest level S.6), age of the father (26-45), and age of children (3-14years old). The 10 fathers who matched these characteristics were chosen for the study.

**Table 3: Study Participant Data**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age of father</b>	<b>Number of children and their age</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Highest level of education</b>	<b>Years as a single parent</b>
Father 1	37	2children. Age:5 and 6years	Carpenter	S.4	3years
Father 2	31	1 child Age:5years	Driver	S.4	2years
Father 3	29	2children Age: 7 and 4years	Builder	P.7	1year
Father 4	30	2children Age: 4 and 3years	Farmer	P.7	1year
Father 5	26	1child Age: 3years	Boda boda cyclist	S.2	1year
Father 6	32	1child Age: 4years	Boda boda cyclist	S.4	2years
Father 7	45	3children Age: 8, 12 and 14years	Farmer	S.4	5years
Father 8	27	1child Age: 3years	Boda boda cyclist	S.2	1year
Father 9	37	1child Age: 8years	Barber	S.6	6years
Father 10	29	1child Age: 5years	Boda boda cyclist	S.3	3years

As shown in the table above, all the fathers were Acholi by tribe and lived in Pamolo, Kitgum district with their families.



Age of children: Children's ages ranged from three to fourteen years old. Two fathers had been single parents for five to six years. Four had been single parents for two to three years and four had been single parents for one year.

Causes of single fatherhood: Three of them had become single fathers due to unwanted pregnancies, five of them had divorced and two were widowers.

Level of education: One father had the highest level of education being upper secondary school (S.6), four had studied up to lower secondary school (S.4), one had studied up to senior three (S.3), two had dropped out after lower secondary school (S.2), and two had only studied up to Primary seven (P.7).

Number of children: For six fathers, they had one child, while three had two children, and the other one had three children.

Helper: Four of the single fathers had a helper, and the rest lived alone.

### **3.6.3 Key informant interviews**

Key interviews were conducted with 3 key informants. These included the Local Council Chairperson (L.C 1), and 2 elders. The guide used to interview them captured issues on their views about the challenges faced by single fathers, key services provided to single fathers, and how they thought these fathers coped with the various challenges, as well as the recommendations they could give the government and other organizations to support single fathers. The interviews were conducted in Acholi and English, and they lasted for about 30minutes. These interviews helped to explore new ideas and issues which were useful to the study. Such included the different ways in which government programs and NGOs support single fathers.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data was analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved becoming familiar with the data, generating valid codes (coding), searching for themes, review of themes and writing a report. Transcripts for each of the participants were read multiple times and relevant words and paragraphs were coded. The various codes were carefully compared and five main themes emerged. Some of the themes included: how single fathers raise their children, factors influencing the roles of single fathers, challenges faced by single fathers, how they cope with

them and recommendations for policy and practice. These were also in line with the objectives of the study.

### **3.8 Data Entry and Management**

Participant comments were entered electronically into a database that was stored on a secure, password protected laptop accessed only by the researcher. Recorded data was also destroyed post analysis. All identifying information (consent forms, contact information, etc.) were stored separately from the data provided by the participants.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations.**

This research study adhered to all relevant ethical requirements for undertaking this kind of research. The following ethical considerations were considered;

**Informed consent:** The researcher obtained written informed consent from the participants before interviewing them or making audio recordings. They were also informed about the purpose of the study, the selection criteria and the benefits of participating prior to their involvement in the study.

Besides, the researcher was granted permission to carry out the research, by the department of Social Work and Social Administration, Makerere University and the office of the Local Council chairperson (LC1).

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** The principle of confidentiality and anonymity of participants was maintained by using pseudonyms to present research findings.

**Plagiarism:** All the sources of information and authors of different data sources that were used in the study were fully acknowledged.

**Risks and Benefits:** The single fathers were at risk of bringing up sensitive issues that could trigger sadness or other emotions. They were also at risk of revealing personal information that they may be unwilling to discuss. On the other hand, the benefits included creating awareness of their challenges and creating the opportunity to get financial support from the government and other community members.

### **3.10 Limitations and challenges**

As with any research there are bound to be limitations that are important to recognize and should be noted, explained, and limited to the best of a researcher's abilities.

Single fathers' involvement in direct care giving for children has been the subject of very few studies in Uganda. Hence, the evidence remains weak, but nonetheless, informative. The

limited evidence on the factors that shape father involvement in direct child care need to further be studied with the participation of different population sub-groups including children, women and fathers themselves.

Within the context of in-depth interviews, there was a small sample size. Small sample sizes lead to generalizability issues as well as reliability. The ability to apply these findings to another population or area outside of Pamolo, Kitgum or in different areas may be difficult and recreating the research could lead to differences in experiences.

The tendency for responses to be framed in a socially favourable manner rather than in strictly honest answers is another challenge. This can be decreased significantly with an understanding of the subject matter, and the manner of approaching it. The researcher framed the discussion and interviews in a manner that is non-threatening, and made the interviewee feel at ease and out of the scope of judgment by developing common ground and allowing multiple discussions to occur.

There was limited time to carry out the research hence limiting the amount of information that was collected.

There was a problem with raising the financial resources needed to facilitate the research process, hence restricting the researcher from carrying out serious data analysis by use of advance methods.

Despite these limitations this research can serve as a means to learn more about single fathers, add to the existing literature in parenting and help inform ideas for policy and practice implications, as well as be used as a base for further research as is discussed in the Conclusion chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview of life for these 10 fathers in relation to raising their children alone. I look at how they describe their daily lives in relation to raising children, balancing their schedules with other parental responsibilities, and their perspectives of the importance of their relative roles as father, participant in society, and as an individual outside of the fathering role. This includes daily life, scheduling and emotional challenges that these fathers faced in doing this alone.

#### **4.1 Single fathers**

The study indicated that active and present fathers have many positive impacts for their children, including children being disciplined, self-driven, and performing well at school as opposed to fathers who are absent or inactive, with such fathers increasing the risk of child labour, early pregnancy, low self-esteem, and negative school outcomes.

#### **4.2 How single fathers carry out child-upbringing**

##### **4.2.1 Daily life experiences**

Findings showed that single parenting requires sacrifice and adaptations to one's life. In describing their caregiving as single parents, fathers faced challenges in seeking and receiving support in their parenting. Despite these challenges, these fathers viewed their time with their children as primary. To illustrate the main theme in this chapter, I provide an in-depth story of one father, and then provide supporting stories from several other fathers.

“I feel like I am raising my daughters in the best way possible although my main challenge is that I have little money to provide for all their needs. I also think that my older daughter receives less attention from me, while my young daughter receives more attention because I always help her with her homework, which has contributed to her academic excellence.” **(Father 3, 29years old, 2 daughters, self-employed).**

“My daily routine is quite complicated. One of my daughters arrives at school at 7:00am, while the other leaves for school at 7:30am. I then rush across town to work, hopefully arriving by 9:00am. Then, I have to leave by 4:00pm to pick up my daughters from their respective schools. The evening consists of cooking food, overseeing homework, some play time, followed by bathing, and reading then bedtime at around 9:00pm. I repeat this schedule day in and day out on school and workdays, also sometimes having to work evenings and weekends for my own business to complete jobs. On some days, I take my daughters with me to work. On days when I have had to pick them up from school and go back to work, I will work late into the evening or night and often my daughters will fall asleep on the floor with a blanket until I am

finished. I really feel a lack of time to spend actively engaged with my children individually in activities, games and conversations” (**Father 1, 37years old, 2children, Carpenter**).

These struggles with schedule, daily financial strains, stressors with lack of time, and coping mechanisms or adaptations were not unique to this father’s situation, but this was similar with many other father’s stories. They all discussed issues related to doing it alone, schedule conflicts and balance, daily life and hardships, and child engagement and routines as well. These fathers most specifically described the lack of another caregiver, the struggle of juggling their schedules day to day, and accomplishing everything necessary while still being able to work and maintain their own peace of mind. The discussion of how to balance childcare and was a common theme through many of these fathers’ narratives. These discussions of doing it alone fell into two main categories which included; the struggles with balancing daily life and work, and the emotional struggles faced.

#### **4.2.2 Positive aspects**

Some of the fathers discussed the experience of single fatherhood in a negative light, but others saw a double and almost equal balance of benefit and disadvantage to being a single father. Their narratives suggest that being positive about the benefits of childrearing alone appeared to provide a more positive outlook overall:

“I think I experience it all and I have not missed too much of my daughter’s life. The relationship that I have with her, is so strong and it is so interesting because I experience so much on a daily basis. The conversations I have with her and enable me to understand her better every day and that makes me happy” (**Father 9, 37year old, full-time employment**).

Although their daily routines and schedules are difficult, and they struggle with lacking another caregiver, they felt they were able to create a strong bond with their children through spending some quality time with them. For example, father 2 says;

“Despite all that, my son is doing well in life and in school, emotionally, physically and socially. And so, to me I feel redeemed that I can succeed as a father and take care of my son regardless of financial challenges, time limitations and little time for myself. However, to me my son’s happiness is the most important thing” (**Father 2, 31years old, 1child, driver**).

Even though these discussions included shortcomings, the lack of another opinion or the differences of expectations, they were all positively related to this close and necessary single caregiver relationship. These areas of schedule conflict, lack of another caregiver and sacrifices seemed to depend highly on the ability to work and carry out parenting. Therefore, although these fathers expressed that it is difficult to balance family commitments with work,

and individual time, many of them also considered the ability to bond easily with their children as an advantage.

### **4.3 Challenges faced by the fathers**

#### **4.3.1 Difficulty balancing the schedule for work and childcare**

The discussions of difficulty in daily scheduling for each father carried variations in times and routine, but each described their schedules as non-stop. Father 10 discussed several themes in his descriptions and story of daily life as did many other fathers, but all of them clearly illustrated the constant care and huge responsibility that child upbringing alone required. It was described as a constant juggling act and changed day to day. Many fathers discussed the theme of not having another caregiver to balance the daily responsibilities. This overwhelming responsibility and time commitment was not expected by many of these fathers in relation to childrearing.

“I have had a large portion of my son’s care since he was born. There are times when I have been able to create a co-parenting situation where the son spends a night or two with his mother, but the routine is me to have full care seven days a week. This lack of consistency has affected my ability to balance work and parenting. To cope with this, I have organized my work so I work from home and use support networks especially from my mother and sisters for child care to maintain income and home balance for my family. My main struggle has been limited time to work, since I don’t have the money or the desire to place my son in day-care. There are times when I have had to cancel appointments due to childcare roles and therefore reducing my income potential and disrupting my clients’ schedules as well. Sometimes I feel like I have not been able to balance my time well, but I have been able to take care of my son to the best of my ability and he is happy. This has been a very memorable experience” **(Father 10, 29years old, 1child, self-employed).**

These fathers expressed this lack of time to spend engaged with their children was difficult for them as shown in Father 9’s story below.

“For me, being a father is a blessing and I do not regret this. I admit that it gets tough sometimes especially balancing work and childcare, as well as financial challenges but I believe I am managing my roles well especially as a provider. I also think I experience it all and I have not missed too much of my daughter’s life. The relationship that I have with her, is so strong and it is so interesting because I experience so much on a daily basis. The conversations I have with her enable me to understand her better every day and that makes me happy. When things get tough, I take her to her grandmother and there I am sure of her safety and care. She will also be joining a boarding school next term so I know I will be able to concentrate on my work even more” **(father 9, 37years old, 1child, barber).**

The time that remained after daily schedules where they may have had this available time was usually given to errands and house chores. Many fathers discussed the huge amount of time it took just to keep their house clean, laundry done, compound clean among others. Many felt

this daily maintenance of their homes was extremely hard. Many of the fathers also said that their schedules around children, work, housework, left them with little time to sleep or rest. This meant that time to engage in various activities and quality time with their children was sometimes gained only in sacrifice of other things that needed to be done.

#### **4.3.2 Lack of another caregiver**

This was also a common theme as father admitted to consistently feeling overwhelmed and overextended, and this had negative impacts on coping with the children daily. Discussions of task overload along with other discussion of childrearing also created feelings of loneliness and feelings of failure for these fathers. For example, father 7 says:

“I often get help from my sisters who visit the children at school and monitor their academic performance. My family and neighbours are very supportive and so I can say that I am not overly stressed. However, I feel that I would be helped with someone to assist me here at home because I feel lonely sometimes, but now I am too old to marry again. It is important for fathers to just focus on their children’s happiness and always get help from family and friends when they are stressed because feeling overly burdened, tired and stressed can lead to overreacting to children’s behaviours and beating them mercilessly” (**Father 7, 45years old, 3children, Farmer**).

Most of the fathers stated that the advantage of the other parent, or another adult would enable a balance in dealing with certain situations with their children, and reduce frustration. As shown in the story above, father 7 stated that he feels he would be helped with someone to assist him. Feeling overly burdened, overly tired and overly stressed has been associated with single parenting and this can lead to overreacting to children’s behaviours. The final themes that emerged in conversations of lacking another caregiver were feelings of possible failure by child caring alone, as well as a general feeling of loneliness and lack of sharing the experience. Part of this self-doubt could be due to the socialization of gendered parenting and struggles with adopting the traditional mothering role.

There were a broad range of areas that these fathers discussed, although many were in relation to daily life routines and discipline. Questions arose around punishment, what kind and for what actions, and behaviours that were or were not age appropriate or acceptable in their homes. These fathers also shared limitations to what their children should watch on television, media, read, how to dress, how to act, and manners that were age appropriate.

The lack of another caregiver and the insecurity of whether these fathers were doing well as parents were a theme in their narratives. These discussions of feelings of failure though, were directly associated with overall feelings of loneliness or lack of emotional support in relation to child upbringing. For these fathers, being unable to share stories of their children with

someone who had an intimate understanding of not only them, but also the children, was discussed as a very lonely realization:

“My children do very annoying things. For example, my youngest is a girl named Florence, the stubborn one. Sometimes she does very funny things and I feel like I need to speak to someone about it, or even go to the neighbours to share the story. It is sad that I have no partner to share all that with. **(Father 8, 32 years old, self-employed)**.”

It seemed that these fathers accepted and embraced the amount of time and care involved with raising their children. Attempting to adapt to or relive the chaos of daily life and be a fully participant parent was obviously a struggle for these fathers.

### **4.3.3 Childcare struggles**

One of the struggles that many fathers had found was that their ability to work around their children’s schedules, and available childcare significantly affected their Income potential, growth of their business, as well as time with their children. The childcare that these fathers used varied depending on ages of children and options available; these included day-care, social/familial support, school and/or after school programs, this varied based on availability and many had some combination of these. Several fathers, when asked about how many hours they worked and what childcare arrangements they had, discussed them as complicated. For example, father 1 says:

“My daily routine is quite complicated. One of my daughters arrives at school at 7:00am, while the other leaves for school at 7:30am. I then rush across town to work, hopefully arriving by 9:00am. Then, I have to leave by 4:00pm to pick up my daughters from their respective schools. The evening consists of cooking food, overseeing homework, some play time, followed by bathing, and reading then bedtime at around 9:00pm. I repeat this schedule day in and day out on school and workdays, also sometimes having to work evenings and weekends for my own business to complete jobs. On some days, I take my daughters with me to work. On days when I have had to pick them up from school and go back to work, I will work late into the evening or night and often my daughters will fall asleep on the floor with a blanket until I am finished. I really feel a lack of time to spend actively engaged with my children individually in activities, games and conversations” **(father 1, 37years old, carpenter)**.

## **4.4 How single fathers cope with their challenges**

### **4.4.1 Balancing work and childcare**

To illustrate the main theme in this chapter, an in-depth story of one father is provided below:

Father 10 is a 29-year-old father of one boy aged 5. He and the mother went through hard times and separations during their relationship and finally decided to permanently separate. Father 10 has had a large portion of his son’s care since he was born. His mother has struggled with



mental illness and it has been difficult to care for their son, and sometimes it has been unsafe and harmful for them to visit or stay with her. There are times when father 10 has been able to create a co-parenting situation where the son spends a night or two with his mother, but the routine is for father 10 to have full care seven days a week.

This lack of consistency has affected his ability to balance work and parenting. To cope, Father 10 has organized his work so he works from home and uses support networks for care to maintain income and home balance for his family. Sometimes, provide full time childcare and still provide for his family, he takes his son into his parents' home. A large struggle for Father 10 has been time to work, not having the money or the desire to place his son in 'day-care'. There are times Father 10 has had to cancel appointments due to childcare roles and therefore reducing his income potential and disrupting his clients' schedules as well. Father 10 struggles with work and childcare balance which was a common theme among these fathers.

Therefore, one of the ways that these fathers managed to balance work and childcare included changing employment to one that is more flexible, creating their own employment opportunities (becoming self-employed), or changed jobs to more family friendly positions or employers. Several had started their own businesses, and others were working from home. For example, father 1 says:

“On some days, I take my daughters with me to work. On days when I have had to pick them up from school and go back to work, I will work late into the evening or night and often my daughters will fall asleep on the floor with a blanket until I am finished. I really feel a lack of time to spend actively engaged with my children individually in activities, games and conversations” (**father 1, 37yearsold, carpenter**).

#### **4.4.2 Re-arranging Work to create time for childcare**

Five fathers established self-employment businesses which were run mainly from home, or out of their homes. This allowed them the flexibility to participate in their children's lives around a practical schedule, as well as flexibility when they were ill, or when an unexpected situation arose. Self-employment was also a strategy that created the ability to have their children at work with them if necessary, or work from home with their children present when needed. Although some fathers admitted to having losses in their business, the ability to feel that they were parenting and balancing their schedules more effectively was worth the financial loss:

“I have been able to parent and father, and my kids are doing well in life and in school, emotionally, physically, socially. And so, to me I feel redeemed that I can succeed as a father and take care of my children which is the most important thing” (**Father 2, 31years old, employed**)

Re-arranging work from a status of being employed to being self-employed allowed these men to take the time to care for their children, although that means having their children join them on the job occasionally. Most of these fathers were not able to work as many hours in their businesses as they would desire, but they were able to adjust their timetables to accommodate their children's needs. Other fathers have re-arranged their work by changing to employment that provides them with some time for childcare responsibilities. Few fathers felt that they had managed to effectively balance work and childcare, although many had maintained some balance through the re-arrangements discussed above.

#### **4.4.3 Access to services**

In this chapter, I examine the use of community and government services, as well as the use of social and familial support networks for these 10 single fathers in providing daily care, emergency care, financial assistance, and stability for their children. Single fathers have been shown to rely less on social services than do single mothers (Coles 2002, 2009; Paulin and Lee 2002), but they are more likely to use social and familial support networks consistently (Coles 2002). This is shown in father 7's story when he says:

I often get help from my sisters who visit the children at school and monitor their academic performance. My family and neighbours are very supportive and so I can say that I am not over stressed. However, I feel that I would be helped with someone to assist me here at home because I feel lonely sometimes, but now I am too old to marry again (**father 7, 45years old, farmer**).

Most of these fathers stated that they would use whatever means necessary to provide for their children, including accessing state and community services even though they acknowledged the potential negative impact of utilizing these services upon them and their children. They were also aware of the struggles that they, as men raising children alone, face in particular when dealing with assistance programs and obtaining of services.

In addition to that, the majority of these fathers had strong and extensive support networks that facilitated their parenting and daily lives. These fathers indicated that their social support network helped to meet their needs, as well as those of their children, including assisting with work or school demands in addition to allowing them to take some time to themselves. During the interviews, the fathers also spoke about the need for greater community support, not only for themselves and their children but for all the village members.

#### 4.4.4 Support Networks

To examine the use of support networks, these fathers were asked a series of questions about whether they had friends, family or others that they could call for assistance or support. This included forms of emotional support or childrearing questions; childcare assistance, emergency errands, time to self or a night out, as well as financial and emotional support. If fathers indicated that they had used social networks, they were then asked if they had received what they needed and if they would ask for this assistance or support again. Many times, these support networks were mentioned through other stories of daily life, hardship, and balancing childrearing. They were also mentioned often within the context of work and school, implying that these were highly important to these fathers as a way of balancing childrearing alone.

These fathers use of support networks varied, with several of them having no real forms of social support, to some having a strong reliance upon them, but most fell somewhere in between. Many of the fathers had a decent and stable support network of some form and only a few were significantly lacking any such network. Most of these fathers had intentionally built some form of a support system for themselves and their children. These networks consisted of family, friends, community, and other parents, as well as some school staff networks for emotional and childrearing support. Although the fathers highlighted in this section tended to use familial support, other respondents depended on neighbours, other parents, friends, religious leaders.

For example, Father 3, when talking about his childcare arrangement explained that he lived with his mother out of necessity so that he could continue in his current job by having her care for his children while he worked.

“I have a fixed schedule and time limits and that is why I am sometimes unavailable for the children, mainly because of my job as a builder. Sometimes, I leave the children with my mother so that I can continue in my current job by having her care for my children while I work” (**father 3, 29 years old, builder**)

This ability to depend on support for both work and the ability to step away was discussed as highly important for many of these fathers. This concept of needing to provide and achieve financial and career success as a male in society penetrated these fathers' stories not only as seen in daily life and work in the previous chapters, but again here in their use of support networks that allowed this type of success. In addition to necessary childcare for work, school or daily life, some fathers also discussed the need for a break and the desire and benefits of some time to themselves. This assisted with the alleviation of their daily life challenges. The

use of familial support to help acquire this time of relief was common, although slightly requested due to existing childcare arrangements or other assistance from the same network.

The concept of the village is a notion of using the broader community to assist in childrearing. The reference comes from the “it takes a village” ideal, and this is what these fathers described as being an important aspect of their support networks. It was expressed from these fathers that building this village within the community to support each parent, each child, and to expand the assistance that was available for the families was important and necessary. For example, father 7 says:

“I often get help from my sisters who visit the children at school and monitor their academic performance. My family and neighbours are very supportive and so I can say that I am not over stressed.... It is important for fathers to just focus on their children’s happiness and always get help from family and friends when they are stressed because feeling overly burdened, tired and stressed can lead to overreacting to children’s behaviours and beating them mercilessly” (**father 7, 45years old, farmer**).

The concept of support networks providing a more positive experience and allowing more success for single fathers has been discussed by Coles (2002, 2009) and others. The capability to parent alone successfully and with more contentment is affected by the willingness to accept assistance in the broad sense of either services or support networks. Fathers who used either or both of these resources had an overall calmer and seemingly more positive perspective to share about their parenting experiences and were more willing to discuss them.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the study, conclusion, discussion and recommendations.

#### **5.1 Summary of findings**

##### **5.1.1 Experiences of single fathers**

The study found out that single fathers in Kitgum district have similar experiences and face similar challenges. Most of the fathers described their experience as difficult, tiresome, emotionally draining and stressing, while a few of them described their experience as exciting and memorable.

##### **5.1.2 Factors influencing the roles of single fathers**

The factors that influenced the way single fathers raise their children were social-economic, social-cultural, community factors and personal factors. The social-economic factors included: their employment status, income security, minimum wage/salaries, among others. The social-cultural factors included the societal norms and values that govern how these fathers raise their children. Community factors included social and financial support from community members. Personal factors included: the personal characteristics of the fathers, their age, number of children, among others.

##### **5.1.3 Challenges faced by single fathers**

The study showed that single fathers face a number of challenges that are social, emotional, economic and mental in nature. The social challenges included: social isolation from community members and friends and stigma. Economic challenges included financial instability, unemployment and low-income wages. The emotional challenges included the lack of a strong support system, neglect from family members, anxiety, stress and fear.

##### **5.1.4 How single fathers cope with the challenges**

The study showed that single fathers have adopted a number of ways to handle the challenges that they face. One of the key coping strategies included the use of support networks. The major providers of this support were the family members particularly mothers, grandparents, sisters, aunts, neighbours, friends and other community members. This support was provided in terms of counselling, advice, encouragement among others. The use and access to services provided by the government and NGOs was also another way of coping. Besides, other fathers

embraced saving, loan schemes, and investment as a way to cope with their challenges. To balance work and family time, some single fathers arranged their work in a manner that allowed them to have time for childcare.

## **5.2 Discussion**

Each of these fathers faced daily struggles, challenges, barriers, and stress in their roles of lone parenting. In addition, they faced a number of social and personal struggles in relation to going against the traditional masculine role expectations and fulfilling the traditionally female gendered roles of child upbringing. Despite all of these barriers and challenges, these fathers are raising their children successfully and have taken their fathering role as key, as well as the most fulfilling aspect of their lives. The major change in roles of men that these fathers have shown from this research give assurance and recommendations for the future that the negative consequences of the belief of what men should be can be transformed for the betterment of these fathers and men of the generations to come.

Fathers appeared to be generally more interested in trying to fulfil the provider role, and yet this was also a challenge due to poverty and financial crises. However, there were differences in the way fathers were present, active and positively participating in child-upbringing. In addition, the higher the income, wealth and education, the more single fathers were likely to be involved in direct and effective child care work. Strong evidence exists that socio-economic factors and social-cultural norms related to male authority, power and privilege shape fathers' engagement in caregiving.

Lacking another caregiver led to struggles and questioning in relation to child behaviour and discipline as well as feeling overwhelmed and overloaded. This study created the understanding that all single fathers can be properly care for their children, though they need support from different social networks including family, friends, relatives, neighbours, the community and organizations.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

The study shows that single fathers face a number of challenges that are social, economic, mental and emotional in nature. However, they have adopted a number of ways to cope with these challenges. Social support networks have proven to be essential in promoting emotional and psycho-social wellbeing of these singles fathers as most of the fathers relied on social support to improve their general wellbeing. Therefore, it is important to note that single fathers

have re-defined masculinity by playing the roles of both a mother and a father. They have provided evidence that men can also be actively involved in childcare activities besides paying school fees and buying food for the family. For example, single fathers carry out a number of childcare duties like washing clothes, cleaning the house, cooking food for their children, and yet these have originally been known as the roles of a mother.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the study, the following are some of the recommendations that can be adopted for policies and practice.

### **5.4.1 To the single fathers**

They should join saving groups and also invest more so as to ably care for their children.

Single fathers need to seek out psychosocial support, advice and guidance from their family, friends, and community members in case they are faced with any challenges.

They should also embrace self-employment so as to generate jobs that are flexible and create time for childcare activities.

### **5.4.2 To the government/ policy makers**

Policies to include single fathers in relation to social and community services are of high importance. Relieving the challenges these fathers described in relation to accessing services could be accomplished through policy and through education/knowledge to those providing such services.

Besides, providing programs that could build community and support networks for these fathers would be important. These fathers discussed social support and networks as one of their most desired services, and one that was lacking the most.

Policies to encourage the provision of free psychosocial support and counselling services to single fathers should be created for practice.

### **5.4.3 To the family, friends, community members**

Community members should embrace social acceptance of single fathers to reduce social discrimination.

Social acceptance should also be encouraged so as to enable support systems to provide single fathers with the advice, care, encouragement that they need. This can also help to dismiss

fathers' feelings of inability to parent if it is expressed that what they are doing is common and expected as it is for mothers.

More so, making work places more friendly towards single fathers would alleviate some of the struggles they face.

#### **5.4.4 Non-government Organizations**

Providing affordable quality childcare through NGO programs could not only assist in the work and success of these fathers, but also assist all single parents, and parents in general. The difficulty in balancing daily life, work, childcare, finances and support is a childrearing struggle not only faced by single fathers but by all parents in general.

They can also create programs to provide vocational skills training to single fathers so as to create better employment opportunities for them and improve their income stability.

#### **5.4.5 Implications for further research**

This study contributes to the existing literature on single fathers (Coles 2002, 2009; Connelly 2004; Greif 1985; Hamer and Marchioro 2002; Roy 1999; Schindler and Coley 2006; Smith and Smith 1981) in a broad sense of illuminating their experiences and exploring further some previously researched concepts.

There is also a broad contribution to single parenting and parenting literature in general. The consistent findings with overall concepts verify there may be general themes and ideals in these fathers' ideas of childrearing. The lack of differences found across class boundaries in this research is also significant and needs further exploration with a larger sample.

Secondly, this research also stands to contribute to literature on gender and masculinity. The stories and identities of these single fathers can help in furthering the understandings of masculinity in society and the ways in which it can be challenged, changed, and redirected for future generations.

More to that, this study has explored and found useful and unique information on the experiences of single fathers, which has been an area of minimal research. This population of single fathers should be explored further in future studies with multiple angles. Expanding this research to a larger sample and expanding the geographical location would be of great value to this body of research.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Research Participant Information and Consent Form

#### Study Title: EXPERIENCES OF SINGLE FATHERS IN KITGUM DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY OF PAMOLO

Investigators: Alaroker Eunice

##### 1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH.

You have been requested to participate in a focus group for single fathers. The purpose of the focus group is to assess the experiences of single fathers, how they carry out child care, their roles, challenges and how they cope with them. Information from this study will help child and family service providers in the county better serve the needs of single fathers.

##### 2. WHAT YOU WILL DO.

Parents will be asked to participate in roundtable full group discussions, facilitated by a moderator/ group leader. You will be asked to provide information about you, your family, and your experiences in childcare as a single father.

##### 3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS.

You may experience indirect benefits through discussion with other single fathers and directly benefit from increasing service providers' knowledge of your parenting needs and wishes. There is potential for an accidental disclosure of information, loss of privacy, and emotional triggers. However, the overall potential risks of participating in this study are minimal beyond that of average discussion.

##### 4. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY.

All participants will be asked to respect the privacy of others by not sharing any content of the discussion outside of the focus group. Results of this focus group may be published or presented at professional meetings, but all names and identifying information will not be included in any report.

##### 5. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW.

Participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. You may choose whether or not to participate or to stop participating at any time.

##### 6. COSTS FOR BEING IN THE STUDY.

There will be no cost to single fathers for participating in the focus group.

##### 7. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have any questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to answer any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher (Alaroker Eunice, 0785954230).

**8. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.**

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. NON-DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:**

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the information discussed by all participants and researchers during the focus group session.

If you cannot agree to the above requirements, please see the researcher as you may be ineligible to participate in this study.



## **Appendix B: Demographic Screening Questions**

(These questions were designed to ensure that participants are eligible for the study and to obtain background information).

1. What is your name?
2. How many children do you have?
3. What is/are their ages?
4. Are your child(ren) male or female?
5. How much time does your child spend under your care in a week?
6. Do you have a child under the age of 14?
7. Were you ever married? If so, was it to the child/ children's mother?
8. Are you currently living with child's mother?
9. Do you live alone in your own home with your children? If no: who else lives in the home?
10. Are you the biological father? Adoptive father? Caregiver father?
11. How old are you?
12. What is your formal level of education? (i.e., No Formal Education, High school, diploma, technical school, undergraduate degree, graduate degree).
13. Are you currently employed? AND/OR In school?
14. What is your average annual or monthly income? (Feel free to give a range if that is more comfortable)

## **Appendix C: Interview Guide**

### **Introductory questions**

1. How long have you been a single father?
2. Describe the circumstances that made you a single father?
3. Describe the best moments and challenges that you have encountered as a single father?

### **Fathering/Parenting**

1. What did you expect the fathering role to be like?
2. Is there a gap between what you expected and what you actually experience?
3. Was there anything that was surprising to you in taking on this role?
4. Can you tell me a story that describes what it is like being a primary care-giving father?
5. IF PREVIOUSLY WITH MOTHER AND SINGLE LESS THAN 2 YEARS: How is the experience of being a father different from when you and your partner were together?
6. IF CHILD IS OLDER THAN 5 AND FATHER HAS BEEN SINGLE FOR AT LEAST 2 YEARS: How is fathering different now than it was when child was younger/ an infant?
7. Explain the types of experiences that have influenced your parenting style? How did you learn to be a parent? Who do you look to as a role model for your parenting?
8. Describe the factors that make you a successful single father?
9. How would you describe yourself as a father?
10. What is most important to you in your roles as a father?
11. Describe to me the relationship you have with your children. Is there a story you could tell me that would illustrate your relationship with your children?
12. If I were to follow you for a day with your children, what might that day look like?
13. Can you describe what a typical week is like for you?
14. What activities do you feel you do most with your child(ren)? Which are most enjoyable to you?
15. Do you do chores/house maintenance, etc. with your children? What do you do? What do they help with?
16. Have you had situations with your child that you have struggled with handling? Explaining? Example?

## **Gender and Fathering**

1. Do you think men and women care for children differently?
2. Is fathering the same as mothering? OR how are mothers and fathers alike? Different?
3. In what ways do you see your role as a caregiver similar or different from that of a mother?
4. How is being a single father perceived by others?

a. Family

b. Friends

c. Employer?

d. Co-Workers?

e. Other men?

f. Other parents?

g. Other children?

5. How do people respond to you at the playground? / At the school that your child attends?  
/ At community programs or activities that your child attends?
6. What types of comments do you get from others concerning your role as a single father?
7. Has being a single father changed the way that you view yourself as a man?

## **Childcare and Work or School Conflict:**

1. If employed: How long have you been employed in this job?
2. If employed: How many hours per week do you work?
3. If in school: How long have you been going to school?
4. If in school: How many hours per week are you in class/homework/etc.?
5. Tell me about your current childcare arrangement. How long have you had this arrangement?
6. Is this your ideal childcare and work arrangement? / What is your ideal childcare and work arrangement? What would you change?
7. How do you feel this influences your time with your child?
8. How do you feel about working and balancing your family? Can you think of a time when commitments to work made you miss something at home? How about when something at home made you miss work?

9. Do you feel like you balance your time at work and your time parenting?
10. What other activities, hobbies, etc. do you enjoy doing without your children?
11. Do you have or take personal time or time for yourself? When and how?
12. Do you feel like this is balanced with your home/work/etc.?
13. Time to self: How often do you do this? Do you think it's beneficial?
14. What do you do when you have time to yourself? With friends?
15. Tell me what kind of advice you would give to other single fathers?

**Services:**

1. Do you access community resources for parents? What kinds? Why? / Why not?
2. Do you receive some support in form of food, clothing or supplies from churches or organizations?
3. What changes would you make to the resources available in your community to make them more accessible/enjoyable/relevant to you?
4. If you were designing an ideal program for fathers, what would it be? Feel like? Are there any other resources or services you wish were available, i.e., food, counselling, clothing, support, etc. anything?

**Support:**

1. Sometimes a person needs the support of people around them, such as friends, family, and other parents. When you need someone to listen to your problems when you're feeling low, are there people that you can or do call or talk to?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you did need support and sought help as a father? To whom did you turn? What type of help were you seeking/hoping for? Did you get help that was truly helpful to you? What kind of help did you receive?
3. When you have a question or concern about parenting your children, what resources do you access? / Who do you ask?
4. When you need someone to take care of your child(ren), either regular care or babysitting, when you can't be there, have to work, run errands, emergency, are there people that you can call?
5. What about when you just want to have some time to yourself or a night out, are there people that you can or do call?
6. Who do you call when you need help with small favours? (Moving, getting a grocery, late-night medicine, among others.)

7. When you need someone to loan you money in an emergency, do you have someone that you can contact?
8. Is there anything else that I have not asked about that you would like to add?

Thank you so much for your time, and would it be possible for me to contact you if I would like clarification on anything in the future?

## **Appendix D: Focus Group Discussion**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS- Part 1**

Full Group Introduction (30-45 minutes)-led by Group leader.

1. Please tell us your name and a little bit about yourself and your children.
2. What has been the most memorable/important parenting moment you have experienced?
3. What has been the most challenging parenting moment you have experienced?
4. How do you cope with the challenges that you face during child care?
5. How do you balance child care and work?
6. What makes how you raise your children unique?
7. Have you heard about parenting education before? (Show of hands)
  - How did you learn about it?
  - What (if any) value did you receive from parenting education?
  - If you haven't participated in parenting education, why not?

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS- Part 2**

Small Group Discussion (35 minutes) – led by Group leader

1. What are the societal thoughts/attitudes toward single fathers?
2. Do you get any help from family, friends and the community members?
3. What community resources are you aware of that can offer support? What kind of single father parenting resources would you like to see more of in your community?

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS- Part 3**

1. Would anyone like to please share any of their unique experiences as single fathers?
2. What could be done differently or kept the same to encourage you to participate in other single father focus group discussions?