<u>Research Paper</u>
Impact of Single Parenting on Children: A Case Study

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Corresponding Author: Priyanka Bisht *Key words:* Single parenting, emotional well-being, social relationships, academic performance, child development.	This study examines the impacts of single parenting on children's emotional, social, and academic well-being through a questionnaire distributed to 200 single parents. The findings reveal significant challenges, with 76% of respondents reporting poor emotional well-being in their children and 78.5% observing frequent signs of emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression. Social relationships were negatively affected, with 76% noting strained peer interactions and 78.5% highlighting frequent social challenges like bullying and isolation. Academically, 75.5% of respondents reported a decline in performance, and 76.5% observed negative shifts in attitudes toward school and learning. These results align with existing literature that links single parenting to increased stress, reduced resources, and limited parental involvement, which exacerbate these outcomes. The study underscores the urgent need for comprehensive support systems, including mental health services, social integration programs, and academic assistance, to mitigate these challenges and promote resilience and positive development in children from single-parent households.

1. Introduction
The family often regarded as the most fundamental and universal social unit, plays a critical role in shaping individuals and ensuring the stability and transformation of societies (Badiger, 2015). Defined as "a fundamental social group typically consisting of one or two parents and their children" (Merriam-Webster, 2016), the family has undergone significant transformations over time. Scientific and economic advancements have fostered changes in family structures, leading to an increase in diverse configurations, including single-parent households. This evolution reflects adaptive responses to socio-economic conditions, cultural shifts, and personal circumstances, making single-parent families a prominent phenomenon in contemporary society (Bahadur & Dhawan, 2008). Single-parent families, characterized by the absence of one parent and the sole responsibility of the other for the upbringing of children, are increasingly prevalent worldwide. According to the Census of India (2011), 5.2% of households in India are headed by single parents, with urban areas reporting slightly higher proportions than rural regions. This is consistent with global trends, where approximately 16% of families are single-parent households (Leman, 2005).

Notably, widowed mothers account for the majority of single-parent households in India, followed by divorced or separated parents, highlighting the influence of traditional societal norms and economic constraints (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). Graphical data reveals that single-parent families experience disparities in socioeconomic outcomes compared to two-parent households. For example, children in single-parent homes are more likely to face educational challenges, with 75% of parents in such households reporting negative impacts on their children's academic performance (Census of India, 2011). Similarly, emotional and social well-being is often compromised, with 78.5% of single parents observing symptoms of emotional distress in their children, including anxiety and depression. These findings underscore the critical need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the unique vulnerabilities of single-parent families. Children raised

by single parents often experience emotional distress due to various factors, including the absence of one parent, economic hardships, and increased responsibilities within the household (Amato, 2000). These circumstances can lead to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). Studies have shown that children in single-parent families are more likely to experience behavioral problems and internalized distress than those in two-parent households (Duncan et al., 2005).

Emotional distress in children of single parents is often linked to disruptions in family routines and reduced emotional support. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that these children are at higher risk for depression and other emotional difficulties due to the reduced presence of parental guidance and emotional availability. Additionally, the societal stigma surrounding single-parent households may exacerbate their feelings of distress, further impacting their mental health. Children from single-parent families may face challenges in building and maintaining social relationships. The lack of a traditional family structure can sometimes lead to social stigma or exclusion (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000).

Furthermore, these children might struggle with trust issues or feel isolated due to limited time and resources from their sole caregiver, which can hinder their ability to form strong friendships (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). Social challenges for children of single parents often stem from economic constraints and limited opportunities for extracurricular activities (Amato & Keith, 1991). These barriers can reduce their exposure to peer networks, leading to feelings of exclusion or difficulty in fitting into social groups. Children in such situations may also be more likely to exhibit behavioral issues that impact their interactions with others. The academic performance of children raised by single parents can be influenced by several factors, including economic hardship and reduced parental involvement. Children in these households often receive less support with homework and fewer opportunities for enrichment activities, which can impact their educational outcomes (Pong, Dronkers, & Hampden-Thompson, 2003).

Moreover, the stress associated with familial instability may detract from their focus and motivation to excel academically (Kim, 2004). The attitude of children from single-parent families toward school and learning is often shaped by their home environment. Reduced parental involvement and emotional support can lead to a decline in motivation and interest in education (Sun & Li, 2009). However, some children develop resilience and a strong determination to succeed academically; inspired by the challenges they observe their parent overcoming.

1.1 Objective
- *To study Impact of Single Parenting on Children*

2. Methodology
2.1 Sample
The study focuses on single-parent households in urban Dehradun, Uttarakhand, with a targeted sample size of 200 respondents. The respondents will be selected through a combination of non-probability purposive sampling and the snowball sampling method, leveraging resources like family courts, NGOs, and legal advocates. The target population includes single mothers aged 18-50, representing categories such as divorced, separated, adoptive, and widowed women.

2.2 Procedure
Data collection will employ both primary and secondary methods. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and surveys, allowing participants to share detailed life experiences, including challenges related to single parenting, financial instability, and social stigmatization. The interview schedule will include both closed and open-ended questions, refined through pre-testing and expert evaluation to ensure relevance and clarity. Case studies will provide an in-depth understanding of family management strategies, support systems, and the emotional and financial struggles of single parents. Secondary data will be sourced from existing literature, government records, journals, and other official documents to complement and contextualize the primary data. Data collection will prioritize sensitivity, with personal visits to respondents' homes to establish rapport and ensure confidentiality. Pre-survey communication will emphasize the purpose of the study and guarantee anonymity to encourage honest responses. The findings aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and emotional dynamics of single-parent households, contributing to the formulation of targeted interventions and policies for their support.

3. Result and discussion
*3.1 Emotional well-being of Children*
Of the 152 single parents who responded, a noteworthy 76% said their child's emotional well-being is poor. Just 5%, or 10 single parents, see their child's mental state as neutral. With a significant majority of the respondents expressing discontent, this distribution shows a general concern about the emotional health of the youngsters among them.
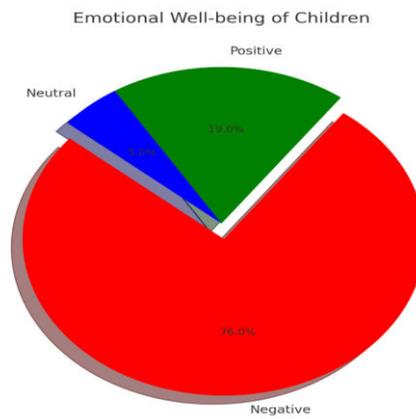
Fig 1   Emotional well-being of Children

3.2 Children with emotional distress of single parent

Of a sample of 200 single parents, 78.5% (157 respondents) say that their children regularly show symptoms of emotional suffering, such anxiety or depression. By contrast, just 21.5% of respondentsshow these symptoms only seldom. This distribution emphasizes the possible difficulties single-parent households have in meeting their children's mental health needs since a significant majority of children are suffering from regular emotional turmoil.
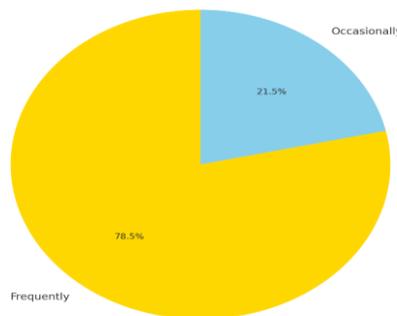
Fig 2 Signs Of Emotional Distress In Children Of Single Parents

*3.3 Impact of single parenting on children social relationships*

Of the 200 single parent in the sample, 76% (152 respondents) say that single parenting influences how their children interacts with friends and peers. Just 5% (10 respondents) of the respondents believe the impact to be neutral, implying neither a particularly positive nor a negative influence. This distribution shows a solid agreement that single parenting often disturbs children's social dynamics, therefore raising issues on the wider social consequences of single-parenting circumstances.
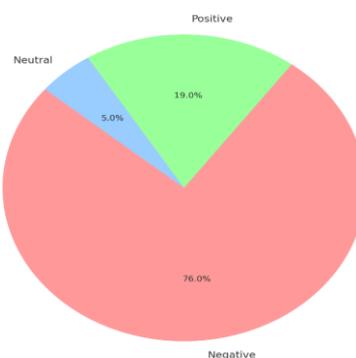
Fig 3   impact of single parenting on children's social relationships.

3.4 Children of single parents experiencing social challenges

Out of a sample of 200 single parents, a significant 78.5% (157 respondents) said their children regularly face social challenges like social isolation and bullying. 21.5% (43 single parents) noted however that their child only infrequently faces these difficulties. This distribution emphasizes the significant influence of single parenting on children's social experiences since it shows that most of them confront regular social challenges while a smaller portion deals with these problems less often.
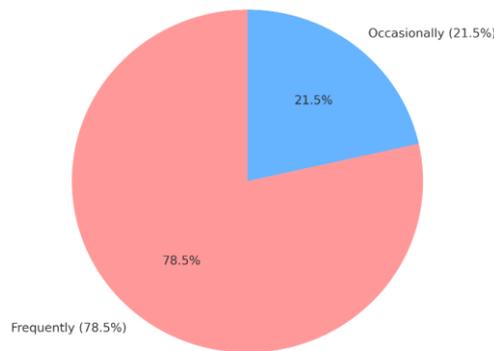
Fig 4 Children with social challenges

*4.5 Children academic performance of single parents*
A noteworthy 75.5% (151 respondents) say solo parenting negatively affects the academic performance of their children. On the other hand, 24.5% (49 single parent) say they have a positive impact, implying that occasionally solitary parenting can be linked with better academic results.
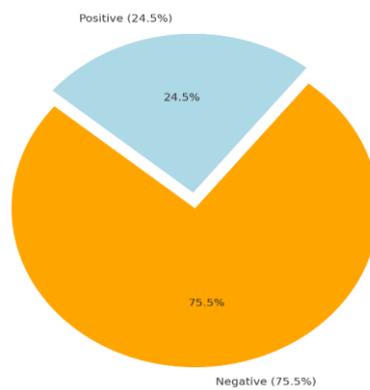
Fig 5 Academic performance of children impacted by single parenting.

4.6. Changes in children attitude towards school or learning of single parent
A significant 76.5% (153 respondents) had noticed a change in the attitude of their children toward school. A small minority, 5% (10 single parent), report that their children's attitude has not changed.
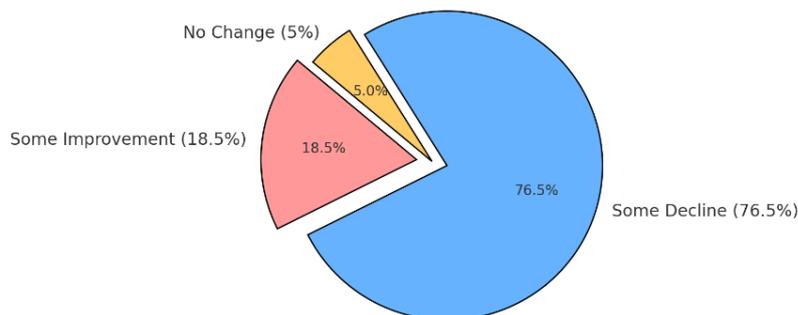
Fig 6 Children attitude towards school or learning of single parent

5. Discussion
According to a sample of 200 single parent, the general emotional well-being of the children is rather bad; 76% of them describe their child(ren) as having low emotional well-being. This high percentage points to a major worry about the emotional well-being of the sample children. Studies by Cummings and Davies (2010) confirm this conclusion: the stress and unpredictability of parental separation cause children of single parents sometimes more emotional difficulties. The majority of negative evaluations could reflect the larger challenges children have adjusting to the changes brought about by single parenting. The facts on emotional suffering since the change to solo parenting support these worries even further. Of those, a significant 78.5% said their child(ren) often exhibit symptoms of emotional turmoil including anxiety and sadness. This is consistent with research by Amato and Keith (1991), who discovered that children from single-parent homes are more likely to have emotional and behavioural issues. The regular incidence of emotional pain in this sample

implies that the change to single parenting might have significant consequences on children's mental health, hence specific assistance and intervention are rather important.

On social relation, 76% of the respondent agreed that single parenting has a negative impact on the relationship between child(ren) with friends and peers. This view is supported by Hetherington and Kelly (2002) who conducted a research trying to understand the ability of kids who grow under single parentage to form and sustain social relationships due to instability and interferences in home affairs. The idea that single parenting overloads social relationships hence the need for change of social support, and formation of environments that minimizes on such impacts. Similarly, the evidence of frequency of social problems—Single parent was identified to have their child(ren) getting affected with nuisances such as bullying and social rejection at a rate of 78.5%—supports the overall thesis about complicated social inclusion for children of single parents. As identified by Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman (2002), the children that experience their parents parting are likely to experience more peer issues concerning compromising their education to be abused and harassed. The large proportion of regular social problems points to the need for treatments that are problem specific and assist youths who are affected. Regarding academic performance, 75.5% of the respondents used single parenting as having caused a negative impact on their child(ren). This is a similar finding to McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), who found that children in single-parent households might struggle academically for a variety of reasons: finance constraints, among others, low parental involvement. The strong belief of negative impact on academic performance is in support of educational intervention and pertinent inputs in form of material support for children from single-parent homes.

Observations of attitudes toward education or learning show that 76.5% of respondents had observed a shift in their child(ren)'s attitude since they started single parenting. This drop fits results by Bianchi and Milkie (2010), who discovered that stress and turmoil in their home environment typically cause children of single parents to display lower drive and school performance. The general drop in attitudes about education emphasizes the need of removing psychological and motivating obstacles that can prevent academic involvement in single-parent households. According to the findings, therefore, overall, problems that children in single parent homes face include; poor mental health, higher emotional stress, social problems and challenges in academics. These findings accord with the recent literature on the impact of single parenting on children's development and mental health. The negative attitudes in many spheres indicate the need to provide the most comprehensive support with psychological counselling, social care and assistance with education as a way to reduce challenges children growing in single parent homes undergo.

6. Conclusion
The following focused on the social/emotional and learning consequences which children raised by single parent encounter. The survey unveils high percentages of emotional problems; 76% of respondents, for example, described their child(ren)'s emotional state as poor with 78.5% reportedly noticing symptoms of anxiety or depression often. Social issues are also very common as per the parents; 76% of parents complained about their child are deteriorating peer relations and 78.5% complained about problems like bullying or feeling left out. In the academic area, it was found that 75.5 % of children require some sort of assistance and 76.5% children showed less interest towards their school and learning. These findings are consistent with other studies that have looked at the effects of single parenting on child development are usually as a result of some causes such as; poverty, lack of parental care and timely family, breakdown of marriage, parental conflict just to mention but few. According to the findings of the paper, concerning the challenges highlighted above it is important to stress the necessity of early and complex positive developmental support for children from the one-parent families.

7. Recommendations
To mitigate the challenges faced by children in single-parent households, the following recommendations are proposed:

Mental Health Support:
✓ Establish accessible mental health services tailored to children in single-parent households, including counseling and therapy.
✓ Conduct community workshops for parents to enhance emotional support strategies and coping mechanisms for their children.

Social Integration Programs:
✓ Develop peer-support groups and extracurricular programs to improve social interactions and reduce isolation.
✓ Foster partnerships between schools and community organizations to address issues like bullying and create inclusive environments.

Educational Assistance:
✓ Provide targeted academic support, including tutoring and mentoring programs, to children facing learning challenges.
✓ Offer parenting workshops to single parents on effective ways to support their children's academic progress.

Policy and Financial Interventions:
✓ Advocate for government policies that provide financial aid and resources to single-parent families, reducing economic strain.
✓ Implement social welfare programs that support educational and extracurricular opportunities for children from single-parent homes.

Community-Based Support Systems:
✓ Encourage the establishment of local networks where single parents can share resources, experiences, and mutual support.
✓ Train educators and community workers to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by children in single-parent families.

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