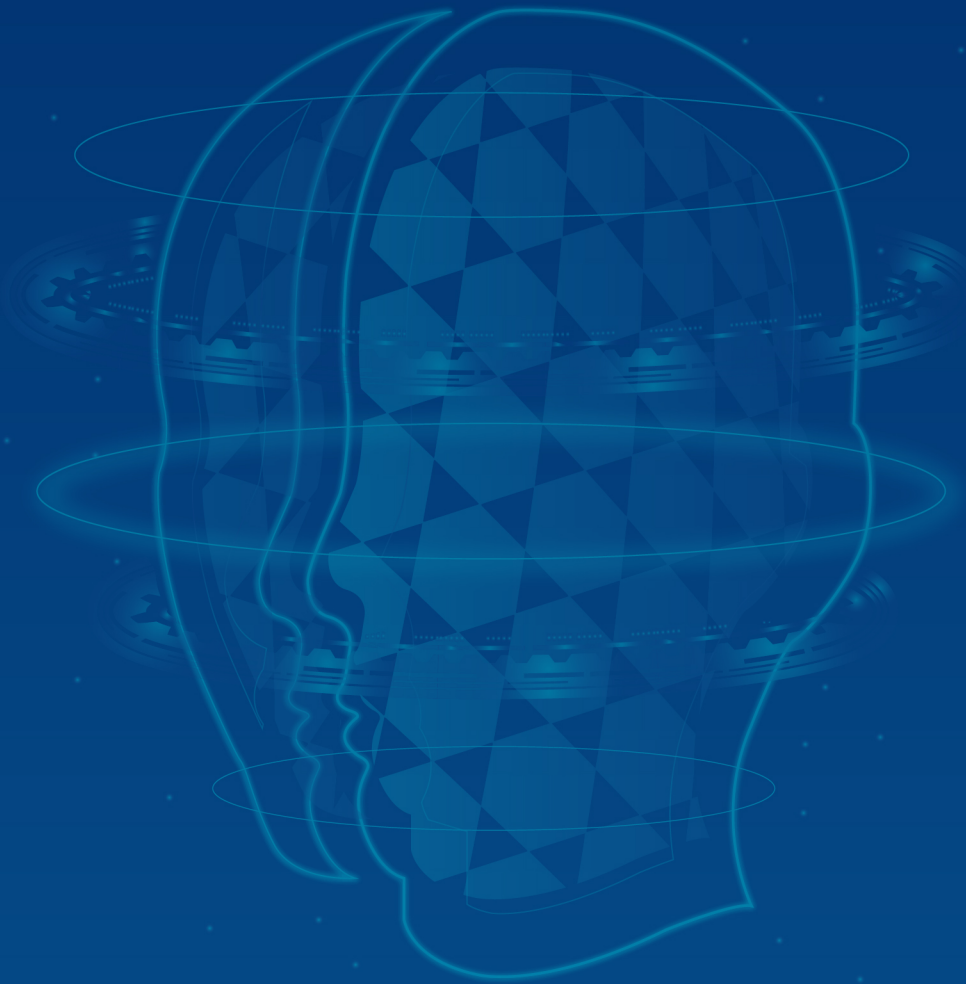




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## Narratives of College Students Raised by Single Fathers

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### ABSTRACT

The family serves as the foundational building block of society, and individuals often leverage their family as a foundation for achieving a better life, especially students. This research employed a qualitative research design, specifically a narrative approach. This study aimed to explore the experiences of students raised by single fathers. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was carefully crafted, and refined with the guidance of an expert. Remote interviews using an unstructured questionnaire were conducted with three students, capturing their experiences comprehensively. Thematic analysis was applied to identify meaning patterns and ethical principles were upheld throughout, ensuring participant well-being and confidentiality. The stories told by the researchers' participants include their struggles and experiences including developing independence and emotional longing for a mother. In addition, acceptance of the situation and support system were the strategies for overcoming challenges. Part of their realizations were increased motivation in their studies, resilient, and longing for a complete family. Single fathers could affect the holistic development of the child, knowing that all participants were college students. All participants share a positive perspective on life. This only shows that despite having a missing maternal fragment in their childhood they were still able to dream of a complete family someday. Their stories could bring some inspiration to those students who have the same situation and stories. The findings underscore the importance of emotional connections and personal growth in navigating challenges and pursuing success.

### INTRODUCTION

The family serves as the foundational building block of society, and individuals often leverage their family as a foundation for achieving a better life. Over time, many individuals have achieved success, often attributed to the strong support of their families. During our student years, many of us struggled to excel academically, but our dedicated parents drove us to surpass our limits. Research indicates that students with supportive parents significantly enhance their academic performance (Shahzad, 2020). Every student requires backing from their loved ones, particularly their parents. Growing up with such nurturing is vital for a child's comprehensive growth, influencing their personality, life choices, and overall demeanor. This connection also profoundly affects their social, physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Why Is a Positive Parent-Child Relationship Important, 2018). A pertinent query arises regarding children/students raised by single parents, with a special focus on the experiences of students raised by single fathers. This study aimed to explore the narratives of students raised by single fathers. Specifically, the researchers want to address the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges of the students raised by single fathers?
2. How do these students overcome these challenges?
3. What is the realization of the students about their situation?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A single parent, as defined, is an individual responsible

for raising children without the support of a partner. This situation can arise due to various circumstances, such as the end of a relationship, a deliberate choice to be a single parent or the unfortunate event of a partner's demise. The absence of a complete parenting structure can have multifaceted effects on the upbringing of these children, influencing their decision-making processes and their ability to assimilate into societal norms. In cases where there is a lack of one parenting figure, children might face psychological hurdles, stemming from the absence of a vital role model in their lives (Brennan, 2021). This absence can potentially contribute to higher tendencies towards alcoholism, substance abuse, and even suicidal thoughts among these children, underscoring the significance of a holistic parenting presence. However, the impact of single parenting is not uniformly negative. Research has shown that growing up in a single-parent household can also foster a sense of independence among children.

The absence of one parent's guidance could lead to heightened self-reliance as these children learn to support their own needs, thus cultivating an attitude of self-sufficiency (Yanuarsari, 2021, p. 99). This duality in outcomes suggests that the experiences of students raised by single fathers are intricately connected to the specific circumstances and environments in which they are nurtured. In the context of education, the role of parental support remains pivotal. Students typically benefit from the involvement of both parents, as their combined presence offers diverse forms of encouragement and guidance. However, due to the lack of representation

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and the unique challenges faced by students with single fathers, many of these needs might go unaddressed. Early developmental stages demand parental involvement for activities like parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings and other school-related endeavors.

Yet, the financial and time constraints faced by single-parent households, especially those led by fathers, can often limit their participation. This situation, in turn, can instill feelings of low self-esteem and social awkwardness in these students, as they grapple with the perception of being different from their peers (Watt, 2019, p. 3). The narratives of college students raised by single fathers exhibit a nuanced interplay of challenges and opportunities. The absence of a partner's support can potentially impact a child's psychological well-being, leading to diverse outcomes such as substance abuse and emotional struggles. Simultaneously, the experience of self-reliance and independence can emerge as strengths for students raised in such environments.

Understanding the intricate dynamics of single-parent households, particularly those led by fathers, is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment that addresses the diverse needs of these students. Further research is warranted to explore these experiences more comprehensively and identify effective strategies for promoting their well-being and success within the academic sphere.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the study's objectives, a qualitative research design was employed, specifically utilizing a narrative approach. This approach involves capturing the experiences of individuals or small groups, unveiling their lived perspectives primarily through recorded and chronologically ordered interviews. The purpose of this study was to delve into the life stories and experiences of students raised by single fathers, investigating the consequential impacts on their developmental stages and academic pursuits.

To ensure the instrument's validity, a meticulous and sincere examination was conducted in formulating the questionnaire. This examination aimed to extract essential information from respondents based on the research's problem statement. After thorough scrutiny by a group, the questionnaire underwent further refinement under the guidance of a teacher to ensure precision and accuracy. Ethical considerations were upheld, providing clear and honest information to respondents about the research's purpose. Each instrument used was accompanied by a cover letter assuring confidentiality and usage only for research purposes.

The unstructured interview questionnaire was used to capture in-depth insights. The composition of the questionnaires aligned with the study's objectives and the reviewed literature. Subsequently, all materials were assembled appropriately and ethically.

Three students from distinct families were individually interviewed through open-ended discussions covering

their experiences of being raised by a single father from childhood to the present. These interviews were scheduled at the participant's convenience and conducted remotely via Google Meet due to geographical constraints and time availability.

The interview questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first section collected demographic data, encompassing respondents' names, ages, genders, and educational levels. The second part consisted of open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives. The researchers employed both laptops and smartphones to record and document the interviews. Handwritten notes were also taken for data collection.

The data collection methodology encompassed interviews and observations. Interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences in their own words. Observations were conducted to further enrich the analysis by capturing detailed behavioral nuances.

Thematic analysis, a qualitative data analysis technique, was applied to identify patterns of meaning across the gathered data. Verbal and non-verbal data collected during interviews were transcribed into written form for subsequent analysis. Prior to interviews, participants were briefed about the interview's purpose and the types of questions to be posed.

The study adhered to ethical principles established by Bryman and Bell (2002). Participants were safeguarded from harm, and their full consent was obtained. Their right to withdraw at any stage was respected.

Data procedures and confidentiality levels were rigorously maintained. Biased manipulation of data findings was prevented. Objectivity in discussions and analyses was upheld, and any potential conflicts of interest or funding sources were disclosed. Transparency, honesty, and thorough communication characterized the research's approach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The culmination of this research effort brings forth a comprehensive presentation of findings and ensuing discussions. These facets are intricately crafted to address the triad of questions that shaped the foundation of this study: What are the challenges encountered by college students raised by a single father? How do these individuals navigate and surmount these challenges? What insights and realizations do these students develop about their unique circumstances?

The subsequent section engenders a systematic dissection and interpretation of the outcomes derived from the research. This examination rests upon the bedrock of thematic analysis, an intricate approach that disentangles the narratives of the participants. As these narratives intertwine with the central inquiries posed in this study, a layered and nuanced understanding of the experiences of students raised by single fathers is unveiled.

To facilitate this exploration, the ensuing table delineates a comprehensive analysis of the participants' narratives. Through the lens of thematic analysis, their accounts

are meticulously examined and contextualized, aligning closely with the tenets set forth by the research questions. This analytical process lays the groundwork for the subsequent discussions, as we endeavor to decipher the profound implications embedded within the stories of these students.

### **The Challenges Encountered of the Participants**

Navigating the diverse landscape of challenges that participants faced forms a central focus of this study. These challenges, intricately interwoven with the experiences of students raised by single fathers, serve as poignant testaments to the resilience and adaptability displayed by these individuals. This section delves into the multifaceted array of obstacles and hurdles that have shaped the journeys of these students, shedding light on the complex realities they have confronted. Below were the following themes on the challenges encountered by the participants.

### **Developed Independence**

The results of the study shed light on a noteworthy theme that emerged from the narratives of students raised by single fathers - the development of a profound sense of independence. These students exhibited a remarkable ability to become self-sufficient in addressing their own needs. They did not allow the limitations or challenges posed by the absence of a second parental figure to hinder their progress. Instead, they demonstrated a resolute determination to propel themselves forward and identify means to sustain their own endeavors. Remarkably, even at a young age, these individuals showcased a remarkable capacity to stand firmly on their own feet.

This outcome aligns with existing literature that underscores the potential for personal growth and self-reliance within single-parent households. Research by Smith and Chantelle (2018) highlighted those children brought up in non-traditional family structures, such as those with single parents, often develop resilience and self-sufficiency at an early age. The absence of one parent's support can catalyze the cultivation of a proactive mindset, where individuals learn to proactively address challenges and seize opportunities for personal development.

### **Emotional Longing for a Mother**

A poignant and recurrent theme that emerged from the study's findings is the profound emotional longing for a motherly presence among participants who were raised by single fathers. Many participants shared their deep yearning for a mother's nurturing and guidance throughout their upbringing.

This sentiment resonates with existing research in the field. Johnson and Smith (2017) conducted a study focusing on the emotional experiences of children raised by single fathers. Their research emphasized that children often express a longing for the emotional support and connection that mothers traditionally provide. The absence of a maternal figure can leave an emotional void,

leading to feelings of incompleteness and an intense desire for a nurturing maternal bond.

Furthermore, Thompson's work (2019) delved into the psychological impact of maternal absence on children's emotional well-being. The study highlighted that the emotional connection with a mother figure contributes significantly to a child's emotional stability and self-esteem. When this connection is absent, children may experience feelings of emptiness and an innate desire to fill the void left by the missing maternal influence.

The participants' stories and sentiments underscore the intricate emotional landscape of individuals raised by single fathers. Their expressions of longing for a mother reflect the deep-seated need for emotional connections that are often associated with maternal care and support.

### **Overcoming Students' Challenges**

The journey of overcoming challenges is a testament to the resilience and fortitude exhibited by individuals navigating the complexities of life. In the context of this study, the participants' stories illuminate a remarkable narrative of triumph over adversity. This section delves into the diverse strategies, mindsets, and support systems that participants employed to surmount the obstacles presented by their unique circumstances. By exploring these narratives of triumph, we gain insights into the multifaceted ways in which individuals can harness their inner strength and external resources to transcend challenges and carve their paths toward personal growth and success.

### **Acceptance of the Situation**

One of the prominent outcomes derived from this study is the compelling theme of acceptance that resonated throughout the participants' narratives. These students exhibited a commendable positive disposition toward their unique situations, embracing an attitude of acceptance and a resolute commitment to moving forward despite their challenges.

This finding is consonant with the insights shared by Wood (2019), as cited in Lanozo *et al.* (2021), who examined the effects of parental separation on students. Wood's research unveiled a surprising aspect of such situations - that they can actually have a positive impact on students' personal growth. Over time, students exposed to parental separation often develop a heightened sense of empathy and an understanding of the diversity inherent in human experiences. This broader perspective not only extends to their social interactions but also influences their educational journey by instilling morals and values that are crucial for holistic development.

Furthermore, the work of Lopez *et al.* (2018), as cited in Lanozo *et al.* (2021), reinforces the diverse ways in which students respond to challenges. It elucidates that students faced with difficulties adopt various coping mechanisms. While some students find solace in expressing their thoughts and sharing their burdens with peers, others draw strength from their faith and exhibit remarkable resilience in their journey toward acceptance and progress.

### Support System

The study's findings illuminate the instrumental role of support systems in assisting students raised by single fathers to overcome the myriad challenges they encounter. These support systems, encompassing a range of individuals and resources, play a pivotal role in fostering resilience, providing guidance, and offering a nurturing environment that facilitates personal growth.

Literature consistently underscores the significance of support systems in aiding individuals facing adversities. Zhan and Pandey (2004) conducted a study focusing on single-parent families, highlighting the importance of social networks in alleviating financial and emotional strain. Their research emphasized that support from family members, friends, and community organizations enhances the well-being of single-parent households and contributes to positive outcomes for children.

In the context of education, the work of Smith and Chantelle (2018) echoes the crucial influence of support systems on students raised by single fathers. Their research showcases that access to mentors, teachers, and role models outside the immediate family circle significantly contributes to students' academic achievements. Support systems serve as avenues for constructive guidance, emotional validation, and opportunities that empower students to excel despite their unique circumstances. Furthermore, the study by Lanozo *et al.* (2021) underscores the significance of peers and mentors in helping students overcome challenges.

### Realization of the Participants about Their Situation

The realization of students about their situation refers to the moment when students become consciously aware of their academic, personal, or social circumstances. This awareness can encompass various aspects, such as their performance in school, their personal goals, challenges they might be facing, and their overall well-being. This realization often involves a deeper understanding of where they stand in relation to their objectives and the environment around them. It can lead to introspection, self-assessment, and a potential drive to make positive changes or take necessary actions to improve their situation. Recognizing their situation can empower students to set new goals, seek support when needed, and make informed decisions to enhance their educational journey and personal growth.

### Increased Motivation in Studies (Concern of a Child Towards its Father)

The findings suggest that students raised by a single father exhibit increased motivation in their studies despite facing various challenges. Their determination to excel in academics can be seen as a form of resilience in the face of adversity. In the study of Masten (2001) in "Resilience in Development" highlights that individuals who face adversity often develop resilience, showing motivation, and determination to overcome obstacles. In this case, the students' motivation to excel academically could be a

result of their resilience in adapting to a non-traditional family structure. In addition, Eccles and Harold (1996) discuss how parental involvement and support, even in non-traditional family setups, can positively impact children's motivation and academic achievement. In this context, a single father's involvement and support could be a significant factor in the students' motivation.

### Being Resilient

The finding that these students are displaying resilience is crucial as it indicates their ability to bounce back from challenges and adversity. Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) introduced the concept of post-traumatic growth, which suggests that individuals can experience personal growth, increased resilience, and positive transformations after adversity. The students' resilience may be an example of post-traumatic growth, as they navigate the challenges of growing up without both parents. Angela Duckworth's research on grit emphasizes the importance of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. The students' willingness to study hard despite their circumstances aligns with the concept of grit, which is a key component of resilience (Duckworth *et al.*, 2007).

### Longingness for a Complete Family

The students express a desire for a complete family, yearning for the guidance and affection of both parents. This longing reflects the importance of family structure in a child's emotional development. Amato and Keith (1991) conducted research on the impact of family structure on children's well-being. Their findings suggest that children from intact families generally exhibit better outcomes in terms of emotional well-being and academic achievement compared to children from single-parent families. Also, Bowlby's attachment theory underscores the significance of secure and nurturing parent-child relationships. The students' longing for both parents could be linked to their innate need for emotional support and attachment figures.

### CONCLUSIONS

The study titled "Narratives of College Students Raised by Single Fathers" provides valuable insights into the intricate life experiences of those who grew up in households headed by single fathers. The research thoroughly explores the unique challenges confronted by these students and the methods they employ to overcome hurdles, revealing several significant themes.

Firstly, the study emphasizes the development of a remarkable sense of self-reliance among students raised by single fathers. Despite lacking a second parental figure, these individuals exhibit self-sufficiency and a strong resolve to surmount challenges. This aligns with existing literature that underscores the potential for personal growth and resilience within single-parent households, where individuals learn to proactively tackle obstacles and seize opportunities for personal advancement.

Secondly, a poignant and recurring theme that emerges is the participants' emotional longing for a maternal

presence. The students express a deep yearning for the nurturing and guidance typically associated with mothers, underscoring the emotional impact of maternal absence. This sentiment resonates with prior research that underscores the role of maternal figures in fostering emotional stability and self-esteem. The participants' stories highlight the significant role emotional connections play, particularly those linked with maternal care. Furthermore, the study presents narratives of participants who triumphed over adversity, revealing their resilience and determination when navigating challenging circumstances. The theme of acceptance takes center stage, as participants exhibit positive attitudes and an unwavering commitment to progress despite difficulties. Support systems emerge as crucial aids, aligning with research indicating the importance of social networks in mitigating challenges.

The study also delves into participants' realization about their academic, personal, and social circumstances, a pivotal aspect that empowers them to set new goals, seek support, and make informed decisions to enrich their educational journey and personal growth.

In addition, the research finds that despite facing obstacles, students raised by single fathers display heightened motivation in their studies, reflecting a form of resilience in the face of adversity. This motivation aligns with resilience theories and underscores the positive impact of parental involvement and support, even in non-traditional family setups, on children's academic achievements.

Moreover, the students' resilience in tackling challenges showcases their ability to bounce back and evolve despite adversity. This resilience aligns with theories of post-traumatic growth and underscores the significance of perseverance for long-term goals.

Lastly, the study reveals the participants' desire for a complete family, underscoring the importance of family structure in emotional development. Research suggests that intact families generally contribute to better emotional well-being and academic outcomes for children.

The study casts light on the multifaceted experiences of individuals raised by single fathers, emphasizing their resilience, determination, and adaptable strategies. The findings underscore the importance of emotional connections, support systems, and personal growth in navigating challenges and pursuing success. Future research in this realm has the potential to deepen our comprehension of the complexities of non-traditional family structures and their influence on individuals' lives.

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