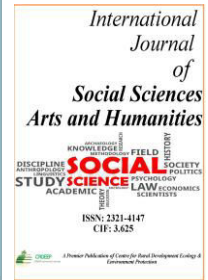


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### Research Paper

## Single Parents' Coping and Adaptive Strategies: A Case of Dehradun, Uttarakhand India

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### ARTICLE DETAILS

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### ABSTRACT

Single-parent households encounter distinct challenges that necessitate a variety of coping and adaptive strategies for effective management of daily life. This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data, to investigate the coping and adaptive strategies utilized by single parents. A survey of 30 single parents revealed that financial burden is a primary stressor for 40% of participants, with additional challenges including balancing work and childcare (33.33%), managing societal expectations (16.66%), and addressing health issues (10%). The data indicates that a significant number of participants struggle with the lack of affordable childcare, which affects their ability to manage work and family life. Confidence in coping abilities varied among participants, with 30% feeling "slightly confident," 26.66% "moderately confident," and 23.33% "very confident." These findings suggest that many single parents fall within the lower to moderate confidence range regarding their coping strategies. The absence of individuals indicating "extreme confidence" highlights the potential need for additional support systems and resources to assist single parents in managing their roles. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of addressing financial constraints, practical challenges, cultural pressures, and health issues to enhance the coping mechanisms of single parents in India and promote their well-being. Providing targeted support could improve their confidence and ability to navigate the complexities of single parenthood effectively.

### 1. Introduction:

Single-parent households constitute an increasing demographic globally, exhibiting unique challenges in contrast to two-parent families. These families frequently manage intricate demands, balancing economic, emotional, and social responsibilities, often with limited resources and support. Analyzing the methods by which single parents manage these challenges and adjust to evolving situations is crucial for formulating effective interventions and policies aimed at enhancing their well-being. Research shows that single parents tend to experience elevated stress levels as a result of the combined responsibilities of parenting and economic provision for their families (Wang et al., 2019). Coping strategies, which are the cognitive and behavioral efforts employed to manage stressors, significantly influence the psychological and emotional well-being of single parents (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Coping strategies can be classified into two main categories: problem-focused strategies and emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused strategies entail direct engagement with the root causes of stress, whereas emotion-focused strategies concentrate on regulating the emotional reactions associated with stress (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Research indicates that single parents utilizing problem-focused coping strategies generally experience improved psychological outcomes (Taylor et al., 2008). Adaptive strategies, alongside coping strategies, are essential for enhancing resilience among single parents when confronted with adversity. Adaptive strategies encompass

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long-term behavioral adjustments and modifications to living conditions that enable parents to more effectively manage their circumstances. Potential strategies encompass the reorganization of work schedules, utilization of social networks for support, and exploration of alternative childcare solutions (Carlson & Berger, 2020). Adaptation represents a dynamic process that is frequently shaped by factors such as socioeconomic status, resource accessibility, and the presence of social support systems (Murry et al., 2011). Although extensive research exists on coping mechanisms, there is limited understanding of how single parents modify their lives in response to continuous challenges, especially when employing a mixed-methods approach. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods facilitates a more thorough understanding of the experiences of single parents. Quantitative research yields generalizable insights regarding demographic trends and coping mechanisms, whereas qualitative research delivers comprehensive perspectives on the adaptive strategies employed to manage the complexities associated with single parenting (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The combination of these approaches can clarify both the quantifiable elements of coping and the intricate, personal experiences of single parents.

This study seeks to investigate the coping and adaptive strategies employed by single parents through a mixed-methods approach. This research will analyze demographic information quantitatively and utilize both quantitative and qualitative measures to explore coping and adaptation. The aim is to deliver a comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered by single-parent households and the strategies they implement to address those challenges.

**2. Material and methods**

*2.1 Study area*

For the purpose of present study, we select an urban area of Dehradun, a capital city of state Uttarakhand, India. A investigation will be undertaken covering 30 single parents who live with the children. It will be done to identify the important variables regarding the general information related to the single mothers such as age, religion, education, family structure, number of children, number of dependants, savings, debts, liabilities etc

*2.2 Sample Selection*

For the proposed study, 30 respondents will be selected. All the cases will be residing Dehradun city, Uttarakhand, India. The respondents will be identified using sources like family courts, NGOs, and advocates, as well as by applying the snowballing method.

*2.3 Data Collection*

Researcher will adopt both methods of data collection such as Primary Data Collection and Secondary Data Collection. This study used a mixed-methods research approach to examine single parents' coping and adaptive strategies based on demographics, employment status, and support systems. A sample of 30 single parents was selected from Dehradun area based on gender, marital status, number of children, and employment status. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data on demographic characteristics, coping mechanisms, and adaptive strategies. Participants were divided into gender, marital status, number of children, and employment status. They were asked about their reliance on extended family support, emotional support from friends, and engagement in religious activities. The study also explored the most significant stressors faced by single parents, including financial strain, managing work and childcare, emotional isolation, and societal pressure. The study also explored participants' confidence in their ability to adapt to the challenges of single parenting. The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent.

*2.4 Data Analysis*

Researcher will adopt basic research approach namely; quantitative and qualitative research approach. Quantitative research will be based on Interview schedule to get necessitate information from the respondent and analysis it in statistical bases. First data will be collected from the study area then data will examine, and prepare in tabulation form for analysis with the help of different form of chart, bar and other statistical diagram. Qualitative research will be based on the detailed and in-depth examine of the respondents about the research problem.

**3. Results**

**Table 1.** Gender of respondents

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	07	23.33
Female	23	76.66
<b>Total</b>	30	100

The data presents the gender distribution within a sample of 30 individuals, with 7 males (23.33%) and 23 females (76.66%). This indicates that females comprise the majority of the group, accounting for over three-quarters of the total. The substantial difference in percentages reflects a higher representation of females compared to males in this sample.

**Table 2.** Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Divorced	09	30
Widowed	10	33.33
Separated	11	36.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Among the 30 single parents surveyed, the majority were separated (36.66%), while 33.33% were widowed, and 30% were divorced. These findings indicate that single-parent households emerge from diverse marital backgrounds, each of which can shape the unique coping and adaptive strategies of the individuals involved. This diversity in marital status highlights the varied experiences and challenges that single parents face in their daily lives.

**Table 3.** No. of children

Number of Children	Frequency	%
01	11	36.66
02	19	63.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of single parents in the group (63.33%) have two children, while the remaining 36.66% have one child, with no participants having more than two children. This indicates that most single parents in this sample are managing the responsibilities of raising one or two children, which may influence their caregiving dynamics and the specific challenges they face in balancing work, childcare, and other obligations.

**Table 4.** Employment Status

Current Employment Status	Frequency	%
Government	15	50
self employed	07	23.33
unemployed	08	26.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Half of the single parents in this group are employed in government positions (50%, or 15 participants), offering them some employment stability, while 23.33% (7 participants) are self-employed and 26.66% (8 participants) are unemployed. These employment variations suggest that financial stability and the ability to cope with parenting responsibilities may be influenced by their job status. Those with government jobs may experience more financial security, which can affect their coping mechanisms and resilience compared to those who are self-employed or unemployed.

**Table 5.** How often do you rely on extended family support (parents, siblings)

	Frequency	%
Always	15	50
Sometimes	12	23.33
Never	03	26.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Half of the participants (50%) consistently rely on extended family support, while 23.33% depend on it occasionally, and 26.66% never rely on extended family. This variation underscores that not all single parents have access to or depend on extended family support, highlighting the importance of alternative support systems for those without extended family involvement. The availability or absence of extended family support can significantly impact the coping strategies single parents adopt to manage their responsibilities.

**Table 6.** How often you Seek emotional support from friends

	Frequency	%
Always	08	26.66
Sometimes	17	56.66
Never	05	16.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The study shows that 83.32% of single parents rely on their friends for emotional support, with over half occasionally seeking it. However, a small percentage does not seek support from their social circle, suggesting a lack of available support or personal coping strategies. This highlights the importance of social networks in a single parent's emotional well-being.

**Table 7.** How often you are Engaged in religious or spiritual practices (e.g., prayers, temple visits)

	Frequency	%
Sometimes	15	50
often	15	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The study shows that religious or spiritual practices are moderate to significant in the lives of single parents, with 50% engaging in these activities occasionally and 50% often, suggesting that spirituality may serve as a common coping mechanism for emotional or psychological support.

**Table 8.** How often do you feel financially strained due to single parenting?

	Frequency	%
Always	15	50
Sometimes	02	6.66
Often	13	43.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The study found that most single parents experience significant financial strain, with 50% feeling strained always, 43.33% often, and 6.66% sometimes. This highlights the ongoing challenge faced by single parents and calls for financial support systems and interventions to alleviate these economic pressures.

**Table 9.** What are your biggest stressors as a single parent?

	Frequency	%
Managing work and childcare	10	33.33
Financial burden	12	40
Emotional isolation	03	10
Societal pressure/stigma	05	16.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Financial strain is the primary stressor for 40% of single parents in this group, followed by the challenge of balancing work and childcare, which affects 33.33% of participants. Additionally, 16.66% report experiencing societal pressure or stigma, while 10% feel emotionally isolated. In total, these 30 stressors underscore the need for comprehensive support systems, including financial assistance, flexible work arrangements, and social initiatives aimed at reducing stigma and providing emotional support. Addressing these issues can help alleviate the multiple burdens faced by single parents.

**Table 10.** What are the primary challenges you face as a single parent in the Indian context?

	Frequency	%
Lack of affordable childcare	12	40
Balancing work and family life	10	33.33
Health issues (mental and physical)	03	10
Managing societal expectations	05	16.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Single parents in India face multiple challenges, with 40% of participants identifying the lack of affordable childcare as a major issue, followed by 33.33% struggling to balance work and family life. Additionally, 16.66% experience difficulties in managing societal expectations, reflecting the impact of cultural norms, while 10% report mental and physical health issues. These findings indicate that financial and practical concerns, cultural pressures, and health-related challenges are significant issues affecting single parents in India, underscoring the need for accessible childcare, flexible work policies, and support systems to address societal and health-related pressures.

**Table 11.** How confident are you in your ability to adapt to your role as a single parent?

	Frequency	%
Not confident at all	06	20
Slightly confident	09	30
Moderately confident	08	26.66
Very confident	07	23.33
Extremely confident	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

The confidence levels of participants in their coping abilities varied, with the majority (30%) reporting being "slightly confident." Additionally, 26.66% (8 individuals) described themselves as "moderately confident," while 23.33% (7 participants) felt "very confident." Conversely, 20% (6 participants) expressed that they were "not confident at all," and notably, none reported being "extremely confident." This distribution indicates that most participants fall within the lower to moderate confidence range regarding their coping strategies. The absence of respondents expressing "extreme confidence" suggests that managing their roles may pose challenges, highlighting the need for additional support systems or resources to enhance their coping capabilities.

#### 4. Discussion

There is a notable gender gap among single parents, as this study's sample shows that 76.66% of respondents were female and 23.33% were male. This gender gap mirrors worldwide trends, where females experience a higher rate of becoming single parents as a result of marital dissolution, separation, or widowhood (Hertz et al., 2001). Because of cultural expectations of caregiving, women may be expected to shoulder a greater burden than males, which could explain why there is a gender gap in coping techniques and adaptive mechanisms (Bianchi, 2011).

##### *Spousal Status and Methods of Coping*

Of the single parents in the sample, 36.66 percent were in a separated relationship, 33.33 percent were widowed, and 30 percent were divorced. Individuals' coping mechanisms may be impacted by these different routes into single parenthood. For example, Umberson et al. (1996) found that parents who have been through a divorce or separation may experience greater stigma and social isolation, while parents who have been widowed may receive more social support. The fact that people's marital statuses vary further highlights the importance of having individualized support networks to deal with the specific problems that each demographic faces.

##### *Taking Care of Children and Working*

Two children were the most common number of replies (63.33%), and no one had more than that. The number of children a family has can have an effect on their stress levels and the ways they cope, especially when trying to juggle employment and childcare (Baxter & Alexander, 2008). Half of the people who took the survey had secure positions with the government, which helped them financially. Another quarter were self-employed, and 26.66 percent were jobless. Smith and Halpern-Meehin (2014) found that having a stable job is associated with more social support and access to resources, which can make being a single parent easier. Consequently, employment status is an important factor in determining coping strategies.

##### *Dependence on Auxiliary Resources*

Half of all single parents relied on family help at some point in their lives, highlighting the importance of extended family support. Additional difficulties may arise for those who do not have access to such assistance. Particularly in collectivist societies where family is paramount in caring, prior research has shown that extended family assistance helps alleviate financial burdens and mental stresses experienced by single parents (Kagitcibasi, 2007). Similarly, 56.66 percent of people said they occasionally reached out to their social networks for emotional support, which is a significant coping mechanism. Since social support has been associated with reduced stress and depression levels among single parents, this shows that single parents who keep strong social connections may have better coping mechanisms (Dykstra, 2009).

##### *Dealing with Financial and Emotional Pressures*

Fifty percent of single parents report feeling financially strained at all times, and 43.33 percent report experiencing it often; this is a noteworthy conclusion from the study. In line with worldwide patterns, where one-parent households typically encounter greater financial difficulties than two-parent homes, forty percent of participants cited financial pressure as the most significant source of stress in their lives (Amato, 2000). Forty percent of people polled said they couldn't afford daycare, which means that financial programs aimed at solving this problem could help single parents deal with stress better (Gornick & Meyers, 2003).

##### *Parental Self-Assurance and Flexible Approaches*

The capacity to adapt is further complicated for single parents by the difficulties they encounter in meeting societal expectations, working and caring for their families, and coping with health problems. None of the respondents were very confident in their capacity to manage as single parents, and 30% were only somewhat confident, according to the survey. Their insecurity might originate from a lack of institutional supports that would encourage flexibility, such as low-cost child care, government subsidies, or accommodating job schedules (Cooper et al., 2009).

##### *Context for Future Policy and Assistance*

This study emphasizes the importance of providing specific interventions to help single parents, especially those who are facing financial difficulties and don't have family nearby to offer support. Childcare affordability, workplace flexibility, and

access to mental health services are all areas where policymakers could make a big difference for single parents (Christopher, 2012). Single parents face unique challenges juggling the responsibilities of a provider and a caregiver, but they can overcome these obstacles with the help of community programs that aim to decrease social stigma and increase emotional support. Ultimately, there are still many obstacles for single parents to overcome, despite the many coping mechanisms they use. In order to improve the well-being and resilience of single-parent families, lawmakers, businesses, and community groups must address the important stresses such as financial instability, emotional isolation, and a lack of help for childcare.

## 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the many obstacles single-parent households encounter and the different coping and adaptive mechanisms they utilize to cope. The investigation found that single parents, especially those with higher education and secure work, use problem-focused coping techniques. The frequency of emotional control and social support shows the importance of psychological and social resources in single parenting. Qualitative observations reveal single parents' adaptations to financial strain, work-life balance, and parenting. Social networks, resourcefulness, and flexibility were crucial to their adaptive behaviors, stressing community support and the ability to change habits and jobs. The absence of extended family support for certain participants underlines a need for alternate support structures. Gender, marital status, and employment position also affect coping mechanisms, according to one study. The sample's gender gap matches cultural trends that single-parent women bear more. Financial hardship was also a major stressor, highlighting the need for focused measures to reduce economic demands on single-parent families.

Policymakers and community organizations must create personalized support networks for single parents to help them cope. Increased job flexibility, affordable daycare, and mental health supports are recommended. Society can help single-parent households achieve stability and well-being by identifying and addressing their needs. In conclusion, this mixed-methods study illuminates single parents' coping and adapting techniques and emphasizes the need for comprehensive policies and community activities to promote their resilience and quality of life. We should study these processes with larger and more diverse samples to better understand single parents' experiences in different cultural and socioeconomic circumstances.

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