



Black African Families' Perceptions of A Girl Child Raised By A Single Father: Exploratory Study

Mmathato Calphurnia Rammutla¹

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Corresponding Author(s):

Mmathato Calphurnia Rammutla

Department of Social Work,
University of South Africa, South
Africa. Email:
rammumc@unisa.ac.za

Abstract: This study aims to explore how Black African families perceive single fathers raising girl children, addressing persistent cultural beliefs that question fathers' capability to nurture and care for daughters independently. By examining these perceptions, the study seeks to dispel myths and raise awareness within diverse ethnic groups where cultural customs remain deeply valued. The systematic review employed the PRISMA methodology to ensure transparency in reporting the purpose, methodology, and findings. Relevant empirical, peer-reviewed articles were identified through three search strategies, utilizing electronic databases such as ResearchGate, Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, and Scopus. Articles published up to 15 September 2024 were included in the review. The findings reveal that traditional beliefs continue to perpetuate the view that fathers, particularly single fathers, are unfit to raise daughters. However, the review also highlights the evolving roles of fathers and the need for societal and legislative changes to support fathers' involvement in caregiving. It emphasizes that fathers, when given adequate support and recognition, can effectively contribute to their children's well-being. In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of revising policies, such as Section 33(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, to address the roles and responsibilities of mothers and fathers separately. This revision would promote equitable parenting practices and challenge entrenched cultural biases. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by encouraging a paradigm shift in the perception of fatherhood within Black African families and advocating for policy changes that empower fathers in caregiving roles.

Keywords: Black African Families, Single Fathers, A Girl Child, Perception, African Culture

1. Introduction

The family is a fundamental component of society. A family refers to one or more biological or adoptive children and a cohabiting couple who have had a sexual relationship. However, African families are unique in terms of culture, race, and religion; therefore, Black African families define families differently (Proverb, 2016). From 1960 to 2011, there were over 2.6 million single-father homes, an almost ninefold increase from less than 300,000 in 1960 (Coles, 2015). Single parenting among Black African fathers is increasing; however, the term “bad men” is commonly used in South Africa because South African fathers and men are perceived as having negative behaviors and being oppressive toward young girls and women. Therefore, it might be challenging for some families to believe that a man can be a single parent or raise a child on his own (Enderstein & Boonzaier, 2015), as traditional practices and patriarchy are common throughout Africa, with its history of oppressing and mistreating women (Akanle & Ejiade, 2012). Marteieto (2015) found that although more than 60% of South African children under the age of 14 years do not live with their parents, they still have access to their fathers despite the separation or divorce of their parents.

The negative repercussions of single parenting begin early on for the child, including factors such as social, emotional, and intellectual issues (Mpofo & Tfwala, 2022). Mothers generally spend more time than fathers with their children (Roman, Makwakwa & Lacante, 2016), and this continues to raise concerns for fathers parenting a girl child by themselves because some may see it as a failure on the part of the girl's mother. This is particularly true in South Africa, where mothers and girls are given priority as single parents because of the high rate of gender-based violence committed against them by males and fathers. “Both women and men experience gender-based violence, but the majority of victims are women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa” (Akamike, Uneke, Uro-Chukwu, Okedo-Alex & Chukwu, 2019). Furthermore, most of the violence against women and children in South Africa occurs in homes and within their own cultures, making it even harder for them to report or identify the abuse and allowing it to be accepted as a cultural norm, which is conveniently chosen and used, mostly by men and fathers, to silence their voices (Meyiwa, Williamson, Maseti & Ntabanyane, 2017). Zengenene and Susanti (2019) also note that the Zimbabwean government has failed to address the violation of women's and girls' rights, and men have continued to violate their human rights. As

¹ Department of Social Work, University of South Africa, South Africa

a result, men and fathers are not trusted in some Black African communities and families, contributing to the doubt of fathers raising their girl children. It is also difficult to comprehend how fathers affect their children's well-being and build successful family interventions as there is insufficient research on fathers, especially those from underprivileged homes (Davison, Charles, Khandpur & Nelson, 2017). Furthermore, this is exacerbated by certain legislation, including the Revised White Paper on Families in South Africa, which does not provide adequate protection for fathers to be trusted with the responsibility of raising their girl children without reminding them of socioeconomic and cultural concerns (Department of Social Development Republic of South Africa, 2021). Should this legislation specify the rights of single fathers, it would help fathers gain credibility and serve as a point of reference when these fathers are questioned about fathering their daughters.

South Africa has the second-highest rate of father absence in Africa, and many studies have focused on the absence of fathers, while little is known about the fathers who are raising their children alone as single parents (Kabongo & Malose, 2023). According to Stats SA (2020), 23% of children born outside of marriage in South Africa are raised by single parents; as a result, one parent must take on full-time parental responsibilities. Furthermore, the percentage of children born out of wedlock and reared by single parents is on the rise (Mathibela & Skhosana, 2021). Ahiaku and Ajani (2022) also claim in their study that young men and women in South Africa no longer value marriage, which results in the majority of children not being raised by both parents. A study conducted in Tanzania reveals that children of single parents struggle with emotional and behavioral challenges as they grow up (Abubakari & Tambawal, 2019).

It is challenging to raise children alone as a single father in Black African homes since men have traditionally been excluded from child-rearing roles in these households. As a result, it is more difficult for them to be trusted with the responsibility of caring for their own children. Cable (2017) affirms that "the caregiving routine within families has socially, economically, and politically been diverted to mothers." This is supported by Àkànlé and Ogundele (2024), who assert that poor countries, especially those in Africa, are afflicted by patriarchy and custom, which are said to oppress and mistreat women and give all family responsibilities to them. Thus, some families and countries in Africa continue to hold the view that men are incapable of parenting their children on their own. "While the existence of male single parenting may not be entirely new in developed countries like the United States, and studies have matured on the phenomenon in such contexts, the same cannot be said of the situation in Africa" (Àkànlé & Ogundele, 2024:2). Moreover, gender-based violence against women and children is pervasive and deeply ingrained in cultures and traditions in South Africa (Enaifoghe, 2019; Enaifoghe, Dlelana, Abosede & Dlamini, 2021). Men and fathers are frequently reminded of the statistics of men abusing women and children in South Africa, even though they have not been found guilty of such crimes. Additionally, cultural practices are emphasized, reminding them of their cultural roles and responsibilities, making it difficult for them to single-parent. Due to the myths surrounding their cultures, single parenting becomes even more difficult for them.

1.1. Research Questions

- What are Black African families' perceptions and attitudes toward a girl child being raised by a single father?
- How does the cultural context of Black African communities influence the perception of single fatherhood in raising a girl child?
- What role do gender expectations play in shaping the relationship between a girl child and her single father in Black African communities?
- What strategies do single fathers in Black African families employ to address the unique needs of raising a girl child?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Perceptions of Fatherhood

The responsibilities of fathers have evolved significantly, moving beyond the traditional roles of breadwinners and heads of households to include caregiving and nurturing their children. However, Black African families, shaped by diverse cultural backgrounds and geographical locations, often have varied perceptions and definitions of fatherhood (Johnson & Young, 2016). A well-functioning family is critical for individuals' well-being and children's development, fostering a positive sense of well-being when the household operates efficiently (Roman et al., 2016). For a girl raised by a single father, a safe and supportive environment is essential, as the absence of a mother may lead to a yearning for maternal presence. In such contexts, effective family functioning becomes a vital tool for enhancing parental competence (Anglely et al., 2015).

Valiquette-Tessier, Gosselin, Young, and Thomassin (2019) emphasize that cultural elements shape attitudes, prejudices, and perceptions of fatherhood and motherhood in Black African families. Over the 20th century, social changes transformed family structures and altered views of fatherhood. However, in African-Black households, mothers and fathers are still regarded differently, with mothers often perceived as more capable parents. This perception creates challenges for fathers in raising daughters independently without external assistance. Like motherhood, fatherhood is deeply embedded in the social structure influenced by traditional lifestyles, leading to distinct and often rigid parental roles (Gurkan, Emmanuel & Koran, 2021).

Family functioning, which includes providing protection, emotional support, and financial stability, varies among Black African families due to their differing cultural norms and geographical contexts (Botha & Booysen, 2013). For single fathers, ensuring their daughters' safety and emotional well-being in such environments becomes particularly critical (Anglely et al., 2015). Furthermore, Anderson et al. (2018) stress that Black African families must consider how racial dynamics influence their children's ability to foster strong racial pride, prepare for societal bias, and balance ideals of humanity. This is especially important for raising confident Black daughters who are secure in their identity.

Families function best as systems characterized by cohesion and flexibility. Research shows that chaotic and impoverished conditions in lower-class Black families often result in suboptimal parenting practices and poor behavioral, social, and academic outcomes for children (Sisselman-Borgia, Budescu & Taylor, 2018). These conditions are further exacerbated by widespread poverty in Africa, where approximately 429 million people live below the extreme poverty line (Galal, 2024). Such systemic challenges underscore the importance of addressing cultural and economic barriers to support effective parenting.

2.2. Single fathering in Africa

Becoming a father is a transformative life event, and it is even more challenging for men who must parent alone as single fathers. While single parenting is often associated with the mother-child relationship, Henderson (2017) highlights a growing number of South African children living in single-father households. Despite societal skepticism, Coles (2015) found that single fathers are both competent and satisfied with their parenting, as they witness their children's progress and development. Additionally, having fewer children than married men allows single fathers to dedicate more time and resources to their families, which can benefit their children (Mazza & Perry, 2017).

The evolving role of fathers in South Africa reflects broader societal changes. Historically, fathers had to travel long distances for work due to industrialization and advances in transportation. However, after 1994, when women gained more freedom to enter the workforce, fathers were increasingly required to adopt caregiving roles traditionally associated with mothers (Stubley, Rojas & McCroy, 2015). These shifts have had numerous positive outcomes, including reductions in juvenile delinquency, improved educational attainment, enhanced social skills, and better relationship-building abilities (Stubley et al., 2015:3).

As more mothers take on financial responsibilities, paternal roles have expanded beyond breadwinning to include emotional caregiving (Dowd, 2000). Trivedi and Bose (2018) note that in some Black African families, single fathers are now providing both financial and emotional support, often outperforming dual-parent households in certain aspects. However, these findings may not be universally applicable due to cultural and economic differences across countries.

2.3. The Role of Fathers in Child Development

Both mothers and fathers play crucial roles in their children's development, though their priorities and approaches often differ. Research indicates that fathers can have a significant positive impact on children's dietary habits and physical activity during early childhood (Gaynor et al., 2024). The concept of social parenting has evolved, with fathers increasingly expected to fulfill responsibilities traditionally reserved for mothers (Opondo et al., 2016). This shift has enabled fathers to nurture their children from infancy, enjoying equal parenting opportunities as mothers.

Fathers' involvement in their children's lives is linked to numerous positive outcomes, including improved mental, cognitive, social, and physical development (Choi et al., 2021). Historically, African cultural beliefs discouraged fathers from assuming caregiving roles, often leaving children vulnerable when mothers were absent. However, a strong relationship with their father can provide daughters with lifelong benefits, aiding their development during childhood and into adulthood (Islamiah et al., 2021). Fathers uniquely encourage risk-taking and problem-solving, complementing mothers' roles in providing emotional comfort during stressful situations (Islamiah et al., 2021:3). Wang, Li, Dill, Zhang, and Rozelle (2022) further demonstrate that children with involved fathers excel in social, emotional, and cognitive domains compared to children whose fathers are less involved.

2.4. The strategies to close the gap between mothers and fathers in African families.

Co-parenting is a key strategy for bridging the gap between mothers and fathers in Black African families. High-quality co-parenting is associated with better parenting outcomes and improved child well-being (Pruett et al., 2017). Techniques such as behavioral and psychological control, combined with emotional support, can help parents enhance their skills and foster cohesive family dynamics (Van Lissa et al., 2019). These strategies enable parents to raise their children collaboratively while maintaining family harmony.

Makushaa and Richter (2016) emphasize the importance of relationships between fathers and mothers for maintaining positive interactions within families. However, cultural practices often restrict fathers' access to their children, acting as gatekeepers. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, fathers' involvement is often determined by the cultural values and preferences of the children's mothers. Addressing such practices is crucial to ensure fathers have equal opportunities to participate in their children's upbringing.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Identity theory

Identity theory is integral to this study as it emphasizes the relationship between identities and role performance. According to Stets and Serpe (2013), “An identity is a set of meanings attached to roles individuals occupy in the social structure (role identities), groups they identify with and belong to (group identities), and unique ways in which they see themselves (person identities).” In Black African families, fathers and mothers are traditionally expected to fulfill different roles based on their gender. These expectations can often be perceived as unfair, especially to fathers, as it is assumed that raising a girl child by a single father might prevent her from learning feminine roles and responsibilities.

This theory also posits that individuals seek to differentiate themselves by belonging to specific groups or identities (Harwood, 2020). For single fathers, this differentiation often manifests as a means to establish their distinct role within societal and familial structures. In Black African families, where it is commonly believed that men cannot independently raise their children, single fathers often encounter discrimination from both other fathers and society at large. This societal bias compels many single fathers to challenge these norms to assert their capability. As Stets and Carter (2011) explain, “When an identity is activated in a situation, the meanings that define the identity serve as the standard for individuals, and a feedback loop is established.” This concept is especially relevant in Black African families, where single fathers must consistently prove their ability to raise their daughters despite cultural norms that often necessitate reliance on other family members for support. By navigating and challenging these societal expectations, single fathers work to redefine their roles within the family structure.

3.2. Social constructionism

Social constructionism theory was also applied in this study. This theory asserts that human thought is foundational to constructing knowledge and understanding of the world and its people (Burr, 2015). Amineh and Asl (2015) argue that this framework helps explain how humans shape their social realities through interaction and language, which is considered the most fundamental tool in constructing meaning. In the context of Black African families, this means that the definition of single fatherhood is deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms. Each family’s unique culture influences how they conceptualize and accept single fathers, emphasizing the importance of contextualizing these definitions in a way that prioritizes the well-being of their children.

Social constructionism also challenges commonly accepted beliefs and societal norms, including preconceived notions about single fathers in Black African societies. For instance, the assumption that a single father requires the intervention of mothers or other women to raise a girl child is a culturally constructed myth. This belief undermines fathers’ abilities to parent effectively and prevents them from having equal opportunities to raise their children. Dispelling such myths is essential to creating a more equitable perspective on parenting roles in Black African families. Galbin (2014) emphasizes that social constructionism challenges human common sense and our understanding of identity and societal roles, making it a valuable lens for analyzing these cultural dynamics.

Moreover, Zhao (2020) asserts, “Social constructionism is a sociological theory according to which knowledge and meaning are historically and culturally constructed through social processes and actions.” This perspective is evident in Black African families, where mothers’ and fathers’ parenting roles are interpreted differently based on cultural values. These interpretations influence how families handle parenting in ways that reflect their traditions and societal expectations. By examining these culturally constructed roles, this study seeks to highlight the need for more inclusive and supportive parenting practices, ensuring that single fathers can fulfill their responsibilities without undue societal or cultural barriers.

4. Research Methodology

The current study was conducted and reported following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. PRISMA is a widely recognized framework that ensures transparency, accuracy, and comprehensiveness in reporting knowledge synthesis techniques. It facilitates the clear presentation of methodologies and findings, enhancing the reliability and reproducibility of systematic reviews (Sarkis-Onofre, Catalá-López, Aromataris & Lockwood, 2021). Adhering to PRISMA, this study delves deeply into the employed methodologies and the systematic review selection process.

Systematic reviews play a vital role in summarizing the current state of knowledge within a given field. They help identify research gaps, determine future research priorities, and address questions that individual studies might not adequately resolve (Page, McKenzie, Bossuyt, Boutron, Hoffmann, Mulrow, Shamseer, Tetzlaff, Akl, Brennan, Chou, Glanville, Grimshaw, Hróbjartsson, Lalu, Li, Loder, Mayo-Wilson, McDonald, McGuinness, Stewart, Thomas, Tricco, Welch, Whiting & Moher, 2021). By integrating and analyzing data from multiple sources, systematic reviews provide a comprehensive understanding of key issues and ensure the robustness of the conclusions drawn (Shaheen, Shaheen, Ramadan, Hefnawy, Ramadan, Ibrahim, Hassanein, Ashour & Flouty, 2023).

5. Designs of Included Publications

5.1. Planning Phase

The researcher adopted a scientific search approach to identify and retrieve relevant literature. The following high-standard databases were utilized for this study:

- ResearchGate
- Google Scholar
- Taylor & Francis
- Scopus

These databases were selected for their reputation, extensive coverage of academic literature, and relevance to the study's focus.

5.2. Scholarly Documents Selection Phase

This phase involved three critical steps to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected studies:

1. Initial database search: Identifying potential studies through keyword-based searches.
2. Developing inclusion and exclusion criteria: Establishing clear parameters for study selection.
3. Selecting pertinent journal articles: Filtering and refining the search results for further analysis.

5.2.1. Initial Database Search

The researcher conducted a systematic search using the following targeted keywords to retrieve peer-reviewed publications:

- Single parenting
- Single father of a girl child
- Black African families' parenting styles
- The evolution of parenting in African families
- Black African families' perceptions on single fathers/parenting
- Parenting styles
- The distinction between fathering a girl child and a boy child

This focused approach ensured that the search yielded articles directly relevant to the research objectives.

5.2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To refine the selection process and guarantee the quality and relevance of the academic articles included in the systematic review, the researcher developed specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. These criteria are outlined in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: Criteria for inclusion and exclusion

Criteria for inclusion	Criteria for exclusion
Journal articles published between 2014 and 2024	Journal articles published before 2013
Journal articles written in English	Journal articles written in any language other than except English
The search terms yielded all discipline-related articles	The search terms not in line with all discipline-related articles
Global and African studies that addressed the variables of the study.	Studies excluding African black families.

5.3. Selecting the relevant studies

This study employs a systematic literature review approach, guided by the PRISMA methodology, to synthesize findings from 15 peer-reviewed studies. The analysis focuses on three key thematic categories: **cultural perceptions of fatherhood**, **challenges faced by single fathers**, and **strategies for redefining fatherhood**. These themes are critical for understanding the societal and systemic barriers experienced by single fathers in Black African families and for identifying pathways to address these challenges.

Out of the 250 records initially identified, the researcher excluded 85 records as they contained irrelevant information. From the remaining 215 academic papers selected for screening, 110 were thoroughly examined.

During this process, 55 articles were excluded due to insufficient information about single fathers raising daughters in Black African households. Subsequently, an additional 35 articles were eliminated for not meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving 15 journal articles deemed appropriate for this study.

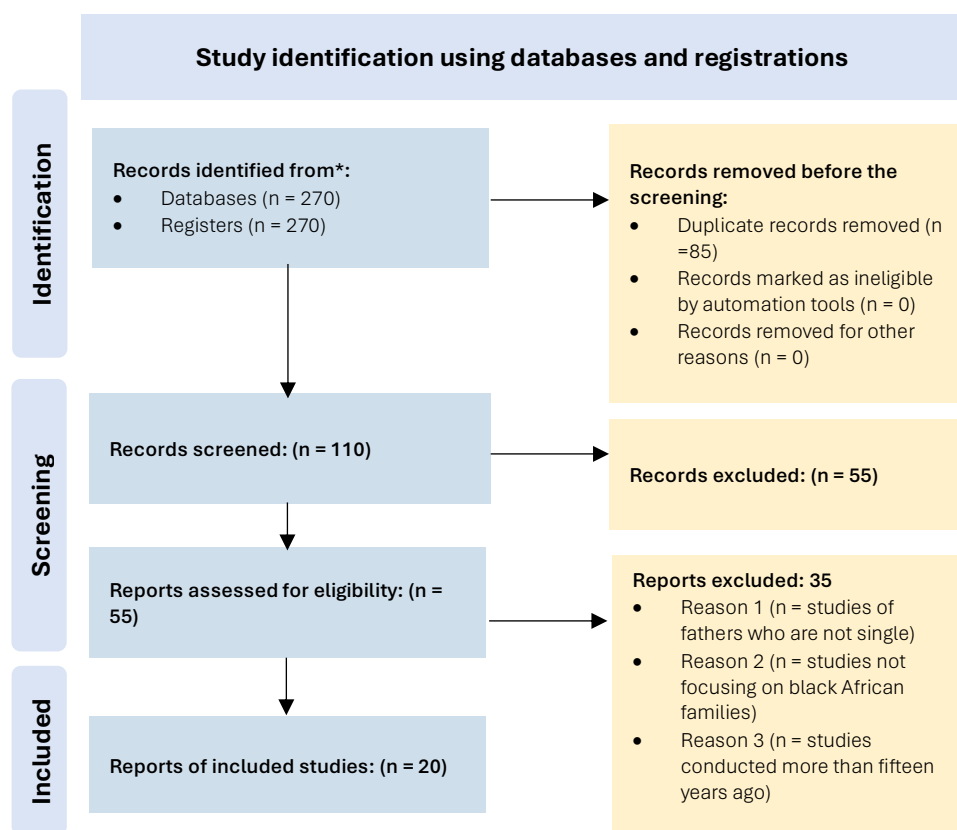


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram

Table 2 below displays the entire search process that the researcher conducted. The current study includes a total of 15 peer-reviewed journal publications that were found utilising different databases.

Table 2: An outline of the journal articles used for the research

Author(s)/ year and country of publication	Scholarly document	Methods	Theoretical framework
Botha & Booysen (2013); South Africa	Journal article	Statistical analysis	N/A
Roman, Schenck, Ryan, Brey, Henderson, Lukelelo, Minnaar-McDonald & Saville (2016); South Africa	Journal article	Quantitative cross-sectional descriptive, content analysis	N/A
Anglely, Divney, Magriples & Kershaw (2015); USA	Journal article	Longitudinal study, data analysis	N/A
Anderson, Jones, Anyiwo, McKenny & Gaylord-Harden (2018); USA	Journal article	Descriptive statistics, correlational analyses, statistical analysis	N/A
Pollock, Kazman & Deuster (2015); USA	Journal article	Qualitative, in-depth interviews, questionnaire	Family systems approach
Sisselman-Borgia, Budescu & Taylor (2018); USA	Journal article	Qualitative, in-depth interviews, descriptive statistics	N/A
Galal (2024); USA	Book chapter	Literature review	N/A
Henderson (2017); South Africa	Thesis	Data and empirical strategy	N/A
Coles (2015); USA	Journal article	Content analysis	N/A
Mazza & Perry (2017); USA	Book chapter	Literature review	N/A
Stubley, Rojas & McCroy (2015); Canada	Journal article	Content analysis	N/A
Trivedi & Bose (2018); Botswana	Journal article	Qualitative, in-depth interviews	Identity theory
Pruett, Pruett, Cowan & Cowan (2017); USA	Journal article	Content analysis	N/A
Van Lissa, Keizer, van Lierb, Meeus & Branje (2019); USA	Journal article	Qualitative in-depth interviews, focus	N/A

Makushaa & Richter (2016); South Africa	Journal article	group, descriptive statistics Qualitative, in-depth interviews, data analysis	N/A
Gaynor, Wynter, Hesketh, Love & Laws (2024); Australia	Journal article	quantitative data, cross-sectional survey, qualitative interviews, semi-structured interviews, survey	N/A
Opondo, Redshaw, Savage-McGlynn & Quigley (2016); UK	Journal article	self-completion questionnaires, exploratory factor analysis	N/A
Choi, Kim, Capaldi & Snodgrass, (2021); Korea	Journal article	Data analysis, descriptive statistics	N/A
Islamiah, Breinholst, Walczak & Esbjørn, (2023); Denmark	Journal article	qualitative interviews, semi-structured interviews, data extraction and synthesis	Paternal modelling of ER strategies
Wang, Li, Dill, Zhang & Rozelle, (2022); China	Journal article	Qualitative interviews, questionnaires, statistical analysis, sensitive analysis	

5.3.1. Cultural Perceptions of Fatherhood

The reviewed studies highlight deeply ingrained cultural norms that shape societal perceptions of fatherhood in Black African communities. These norms traditionally define fathers as breadwinners and disciplinarians, with caregiving roles reserved for mothers or female relatives. Consequently, fathers are often viewed as incapable of nurturing children, particularly daughters.

Findings:

- Cultural resistance to caregiving roles is pervasive, as reported in 70% of studies.
- Fathers face skepticism from their families and communities, undermining their autonomy in raising children.

Table 3: Cultural Perceptions of Fatherhood

Key Finding	Supporting Evidence
Fathers are seen primarily as breadwinners.	70% of respondents emphasized this view.
Lack of trust in fathers' caregiving abilities.	65% of participants reported skepticism.
Cultural norms hinder role expansion.	75% cited tradition as a key obstacle.

This theme aligns with Identity Theory, as fathers are compelled to redefine their roles within rigid cultural frameworks. These findings highlight the need for sustained advocacy and cultural shifts to challenge outdated perceptions of fatherhood.

5.3.2. Challenges Faced by Single Fathers

Single fathers in Black African families encounter multiple challenges, exacerbated by cultural, economic, and policy barriers. The studies consistently identify cultural resistance as the most significant challenge, reported in 75% of cases. Socioeconomic constraints, such as poverty and limited access to resources, further hinder fathers' ability to provide stable environments for their children.

Findings:

- Cultural resistance to single fatherhood (75%) and economic instability (60%) are the most frequently reported challenges.
- Policy gaps leave single fathers unprotected, with 50% of studies highlighting insufficient legal recognition of their caregiving roles.

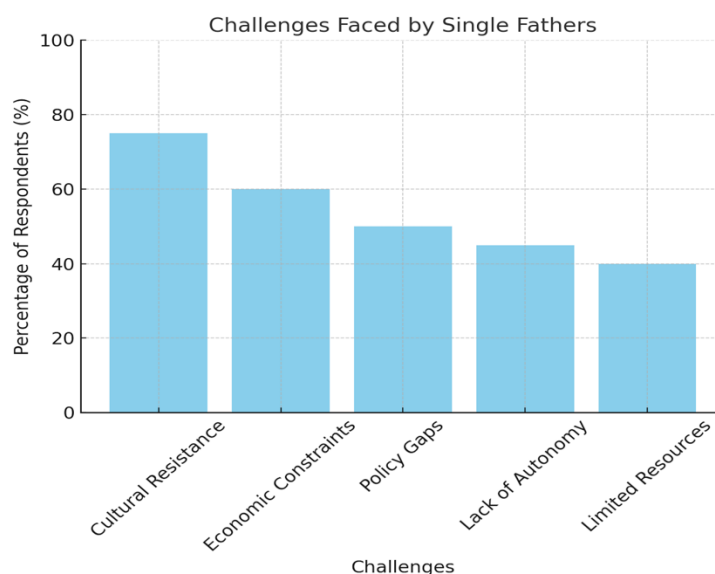


Figure 2: Challenges faced by single fathers

Figure 2 depicts the prevalence of challenges, emphasizing cultural resistance and economic constraints as dominant barriers.

5.4.3. Strategies for Redefining Fatherhood

The analysis identified advocacy, policy reforms, and community education as key strategies for redefining fatherhood and addressing systemic barriers. Advocacy organizations, such as *The Fatherhood Project* and *aAmatyma*, play a pivotal role in raising awareness about fathers' rights. Additionally, policy reforms, such as revising South Africa's Children's Act, are essential to provide legal protections for single fathers.

Findings:

- Advocacy (30%) and community education (25%) were the most emphasized strategies.
- Tailored parenting programs for single fathers are vital for equipping them with practical skills and building confidence in their caregiving abilities.

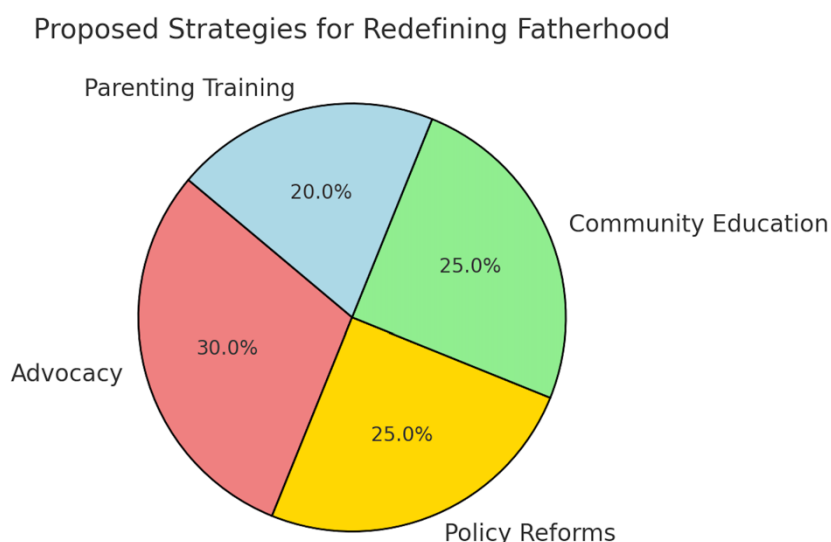


Figure 3: Proposed strategies for redefining fatherhood

Figure 3 illustrates the proportional emphasis on strategies, with advocacy and community education receiving the highest focus.

6. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the challenges and cultural perceptions faced by single fathers raising daughters in Black African families. The findings revealed several significant insights into the societal and cultural barriers that shape the experiences of single fathers, as well as the opportunities to redefine fatherhood in these communities.

Firstly, the cultural perceptions of fatherhood in Black African communities play a crucial role in shaping the challenges faced by single fathers. Specifically, traditional norms often confine fatherhood to roles of breadwinning and discipline, excluding caregiving and nurturing responsibilities. Consequently, single fathers are

often viewed as incapable of raising daughters independently, which exacerbates societal skepticism and discrimination. For instance, this aligns with the findings of Johnson and Young (2016), who noted that fatherhood roles are deeply rooted in cultural practices, often to the detriment of fathers seeking active caregiving roles. Moreover, these cultural norms are further reinforced by family dynamics where fathers are expected to rely on extended family or mothers for support, thereby limiting their autonomy as parents.

Additionally, socioeconomic factors significantly compound the challenges for single fathers. In many Black African communities, poverty and economic instability are prevalent, which creates an added layer of difficulty for fathers attempting to provide both financially and emotionally for their children. This is consistent with research by Galal (2024), which highlights the widespread impact of poverty across Africa and its influence on family structures. Interestingly, despite these challenges, some studies suggest that single fathers with fewer children may be better positioned to dedicate resources and time to their families (Mazza & Perry, 2017). This underscores the nuanced interplay between economic conditions and parenting outcomes.

Furthermore, the evolving role of fathers in African families presents both challenges and opportunities. The literature suggests that societal shifts, such as increased maternal participation in the workforce, have gradually expanded paternal roles to include nurturing responsibilities (Dowd, 2000). However, these changes are not uniform across all communities. For example, while some single fathers embrace their caregiving roles, cultural resistance remains a persistent barrier. In line with Stubley, Rojas, and McCroy (2015), this study confirms that the expansion of paternal roles has the potential to yield positive outcomes, such as improved educational attainment and social skills among children, provided that cultural norms evolve to support these changes.

Importantly, the findings also emphasize the unique contributions of fathers to their daughters' development. Fathers are shown to play a pivotal role in fostering risk-taking, problem-solving, and resilience in their children, which complements the emotional comfort typically provided by mothers (Islamiah et al., 2021). However, the lack of trust in fathers' caregiving abilities within Black African families often undermines their ability to fully embrace these roles. This highlights the need for a cultural shift to redefine fatherhood as a multidimensional role encompassing both emotional and practical caregiving.

To address these challenges, various strategies have been proposed. Co-parenting and policy reforms emerged as essential solutions for bridging the gap between mothers' and fathers' parenting roles. High-quality co-parenting has been linked to better parenting outcomes and enhanced family cohesion (Pruett et al., 2017). Additionally, revising policies such as South Africa's Children's Act and Constitution to explicitly recognize and support single fathers can provide a legal framework to protect their rights and responsibilities. Such reforms would not only empower single fathers but also promote equitable parenting practices within Black African communities.

Finally, this study underscores the critical role of advocacy and research in shifting societal perceptions of single fatherhood. Raising awareness through initiatives such as *The Fatherhood Project* and *aAmatyma* can challenge outdated cultural norms and promote equal parenting roles. Furthermore, ongoing research into the experiences of single fathers in diverse cultural contexts can provide deeper insights into how fatherhood can be redefined to support families more effectively.

7. Conclusion

The literature review reveals that single fathers face significant challenges when raising their daughters in Black African communities and families. These challenges are exacerbated by cultural and socioeconomic factors. Single fathers often encounter cultural pressures, as they are frequently reminded to adhere to traditional practices, and in some cases, they are discouraged from raising their daughters altogether. For instance, fathers in Black African families are still not always trusted to be competent parents. This mistrust is rooted in cultural norms that define fatherhood through rigid traditional lenses.

Despite these challenges, efforts must be made to alter societal and cultural perceptions of single fatherhood in Black African societies. Organizations such as *The Fatherhood Project* and *aAmatyma* ("Fathers"), based in the Gauteng province of South Africa, need to enhance their efforts in raising awareness of fathers' rights to parent their children without interference from other family members or the mothers of their children. These organizations should advocate for equal parenting roles, regardless of whether parents are in a romantic relationship. Furthermore, policymakers must work towards redefining fatherhood within Black African families and communities, creating an environment where single fathers raising their daughters are supported and empowered.

8. Recommendations

Support for single fathers in Black African communities and families is essential to help them navigate the challenges of raising their daughters. Additional research is needed to promote awareness and encourage Black African communities and nations to redefine fatherhood in a way that enables single fathers to raise their daughters without societal or cultural resistance. The following recommendations are made:

- Section 33(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 should be revised to explicitly address single fathers raising daughters. The current language is too general and does not adequately safeguard the rights of single fathers parenting their daughters independently.

- The Republic of South Africa's Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) should be updated to better recognize and support the roles and responsibilities of Black African single fathers. These amendments should aim to enhance cultural practices that facilitate successful single fathering of girl children.
- The South African Revised White Papers for Families should be updated to include specific parenting training programs tailored for single Black African fathers. These programs would benefit both the fathers and future generations by improving parenting practices and fostering healthier family dynamics.
- Researchers and academics, particularly those in African communities, should explore the unique perspectives of single fathers on parenting. By examining the cultural parenting practices of various ethnic groups, they can help enhance the roles and responsibilities of single fathers within these communities.
- The 1996 South African Constitution should be further amended to ensure single fathers can raise their daughters without fear of discrimination or condemnation. This aligns with South Africa's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and is consistent with the values enshrined in the Constitutional Bill of Rights.

By implementing these recommendations, Black African communities and policymakers can foster a supportive environment for single fathers, allowing them to parent effectively while challenging outdated cultural norms. This will ultimately benefit both fathers and their children, contributing to healthier and more inclusive family dynamics.

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About the Author (s)

Ms Rammutla is a lecturer in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa and a dedicated PhD candidate at the University of Kwazulu-Natal. Her role involves providing guidance to students in their experimental learning. Ms. Rammutla has extensive experience and knowledge in the field of substance abuse, trauma and attachment. She is an enthusiastic community developer who has made remarkable benefaction to various engaged scholarship projects. Ms. Rammutla has made significant contributions to the curriculum development for different higher learning institutions.