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Comparative Profiles of Problem Behaviors in Children from Single Versus Dual Parent Families

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ABSTRACT This study uses a cross comparative two group random survey design on a sample of 300 children in age group of 6-18 years hailing from an equal number of single and dual parent family homes to examine their reported prevalence of problem behaviors in related to certain socio-demographic child as well as parent characteristics. Based on a considered choice after review of related literature on available tools or procedures for assessment of problem behaviors in children, the school-age version of 'Child Behavior Check List' (CBCL) was used in this study. Results show that, on the whole, children from dual parent family homes have fewer behavior problems than those from single parent households. Within the single parent group, children from single father households have greater propensity for problem behaviors than those from homes of single mothers. In relation to associated variables, more girls than boys and more rural over urban children are reported as having additional problem behaviors within the studied sample of single parent households in the present study. The results are discussed along with its implications for deeper analysis as well as utility towards planning parent training and home enrichment programs for the mounting population of single parent families in our country.

INTRODUCTION

Irrespective of their impacts, single-parent families across the world in today's society have their share of daily struggles and long-term disadvantages (Amato 1994). The issues of expensive day care, shortage of quality time with children, balancing between work and home duties, and linked economic struggles are among the seemingly endless problems that single parent families need to resolve (Dunifon et al. 2005).

Research on single parenting in India is scanty (Bharat 1986). About 8 % of families in the general population of our country are identified as having lone parents (D'Cruz and Bharat 2001; Census of India 2001) as against 27% of similar families for the United States during 2010; and, around 16% being the comparable mean for such families as per worldwide statistics (Leman 2005; Gulati 1995; Ahuja and Stinson 1993). The figures show a slight preponderance for single parent homes in urban than rural settings in the country. While the debate on ever increasing numbers of single parent homes continue, it would be worthwhile to explore if, indeed, children from such families really have more emotional and problem behaviors. Some western studies have noted greater problem behaviors in children from families with unmarried mothers, or it being more for boys than girls (Ackerman et al. 2001). Karst (2000) attributes this greater prevalence to limited supervision, strained financial resources, social isolation, and fewer coping supplies compared with parents in traditional two parent families. Also, youth from single parent families appear to be more susceptible to peer pressure and more likely to make decisions without consulting a parent (Griffin et al. 2000).

A related study found higher percentage of psychiatric disorders like depressive, anxiety and mood disorders or alcoholism in single mothers (Cairney et al. 2006). Being raised in such homes double the risk for children to develop emotional-behavior problems. Both, such children as well as their parents showed lower ego functioning, self esteem, less empathy, greater aggression, fighting and vandalism, less tolerance for negative behaviors, and more likelihood to display non-age appropriate behaviors (Hollist and Mcbroom 2006; Knoester and Hayne 2005; Walker and Hennig 1997).

While the tirade against single parent homes continues, some researchers view this phenomenon as new age upcoming reality. All that it requires is new alignments, family resource reallocations or re-adjustments. On the basis of

interviews with single parents, and with adolescents living with single parents, the newer theory of the structure and functioning of single-parent homes propose the premise that the two-parent household maintains a hierarchy—an echelon structure—that the one-parent household can forgo. The absence of hierarchy permits the single parent who works full time to share managerial responsibility for the household with the children. The consequences for the children is fostering of an early maturity, greater intimacies and nurturing tendencies (Weiss 1979). The bulk of the evidence favors that the single parent home by itself is not the culprit. It is the poverty associated with it, conflict ridden milieu, power struggles, faulty communication patterns or enhanced expressed emotions that determine the nature or extent of emotional-behavioral problems in children irrespective of their being part of single or dual parent homes (Raschke and Raschke 1979). Xing (2004) compared children from single-mother adoptive families against dual-parent adoptive families for internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors as measured by Child Behavior Checklist. No group difference was found between adoptees from the two types of families on either the internalizing or externalizing problem scale. Overall, there was no evidence that single parenting is a risk factor for the Chinese adoptees' adjustment.

Parenting and Problem Behaviors

Interest in parenting and behavior problems in children is widely acknowledged. The blooming phenomenon of single parenting makes the study of problem behaviors in its children an avid area for concern requiring deeper investigation. Key questions confronting researchers include whether the prevalence of problem behaviors are indeed greater in single parent families as compared to dual parent traditional families? If so, whether rural single parent families show preponderance of problem behaviors in their children compared to their counterparts from urban family backgrounds or is it the other way round? Further, there are unanswered questions related to whether families handled by single fathers or single mothers take the higher toll of being burdened by the presence of problem behaviors in their children? Does the status of single parenting itself become a fertile ground for breeding emotional-problem behaviors in their children? Or are there some factors other than single or dual parenting, such as, poverty, available support systems, communication patterns, supervision, norm or power dynamics in the family that further the presence or absence of problem behaviors in their children? Many of these questions remain unanswered in the Indian context (Shah 1998; Sinha 1984); thereby, throwing an excellent opportunity as well as justification for aspiring researchers to delve deep into this subject matter based on perspectives across culture (Bilgé and Kaufman 1983).

Aims and Objectives

It is the aim of this study

- to examine the prevalence of problem behaviors in children from single parent as against a comparable sample of children from dual parent family backgrounds as also in relation to socio-demographic child characteristics like their age, gender, type of schooling, class of study, or area of residence as well as parent characteristics like their age, education, occupation, or income respectively; and,
- to attempt a preliminary domain wise analysis of the nature, extent and characteristics of problem behaviors in children hailing from single as against a comparable sample of children from dual parent family backgrounds.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study uses a cross comparative two group random survey design. The key variables targeted in this investigation are: 'single parent', 'dual parent', 'rural', 'urban', and 'problem behavior'.

(a) Operational Definitions

Single or solo parent, in this study, refers to a 'father or mother who cares for one or more children without physical assistance of the other biological parent in the home' (Hanson et al. 1995). This family condition is identified and demarcated for this study irrespective of the reason for such a situation, viz., by choice, divorce, desertion, or death. Although permissible by

official definitions, in this sample, there was no reported or included instance of single parenthood owing to adoption, artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood, or due to military deployment, child abuse, child neglect, or due to an unmarried woman or teenage girl becoming pregnant by a short relationship (Barnes 1992). The living and parenting arrangements of single parents can be diverse. It may be in households with family, other adults or alone in home. The single parent has to undertake most of the day to day responsibilities for raising the child or children. Sometimes, a distinction is made between a 'primary care giver' as 'mother' and 'secondary care giver' as 'father' (Lampkin-Hunter 2010).

Dual parenthood, on the other hand, refers to the familial situation or condition of having, both, father-mother alive and nurturing the child as biological blood relations often with or without the conjunction of siblings of the index child. The term 'rural' as defined in this study refers to geographical areas or locations identified as such by virtue of their low density of population, greater amount of the land being devoted to cultivation or agriculture and administered by local village governance. This contrasts 'urban' by the population in a city, larger towns, or metropolis and administered by a municipality or corporation (Lal 1989; Kolenda 1987).

Emotional-problem behaviors, in this study, refer to negative, undesirable, maladaptive, or challenging although observable and measurable actions of people which may be deemed as age or situation inappropriate, unproductive, interfering in their learning of new behaviors, harmful to self or others, occurring in magnitude sufficient to cause stress to others (Venkatesan 2004). Typical categories of such behaviors seen in children include those which are 'violent and destructive', 'self injurious', 'odd', 'antisocial', 'repetitive', or which involve throwing 'temper tantrums', 'misbehavior with others', 'anxieties or fears', 'hyperactivity and rebellion' (Peshawaria and Venkatesan 1992a). Of course, there cannot be a single universal classification of these categories. Nonetheless, behaviorists insist that all behaviors are learned as a function of the utility, benefits or contingencies they secure for an individual either immediately before or after the occurrence of such behaviors. In holding so, the behaviorists enunciate a specialized form of behavior assessment of overt observable-measurable actions as precursor to planning behaviorally based intervention programs for the affected individual or groups of such individuals (Peshawaria and Venkatesan 1992b).

(b) Sample

The overall sample for this study covered 300 children (Age range: 6-18 years; Mean: 13.56; SD: 2.64) hailing from single parent (N: 150) and dual parent (N: 150) family backgrounds with equal representation for boys and girls and/or rural-urban residential backgrounds (N: 150). In terms of age levels, the sample was stratified into children below or equal to 10 years (N: 45), those between 11-13 years (N: 50), then between 14-15 years (N: 153), and those equal to or above 16 years (N: 52) representing classes below or equal to four (N: 43), 5-8 (N: 97), 9-10 (N: 123), and 11-12 (N: 37). The children were drawn from, both, government (N: 134) as well as private schools (N: 166).

(c) Tools

Problem behavior assessment protocols/procedures typically involve use of psychometrically valid and standard tools to appraise, both, skill/positive as well as negative/problem behaviors. Some well known western tools for assessment of problem behaviors are: Walker Problem Behavior Identification Checklist (Walker 1983), Aberrant Behavior Checklist (Aman et al. 1985a, 1985b), Behavior Disturbance Scale (Leudar et al. 1987), Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (Boggs et al. 1990), Behavior Rating Profile (Brown and Hammill 1990), Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay and Peterson 1993), Checklist of Challenging Behavior (Harris et al. 1994), Conner's Rating Scale (Connors 1997), Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach and Rescorla 2000; 2001), Behavior Assessment System for Children (Reynolds and Kamphaus 2004), Burks Behavior Rating Scale (Burks 2007), etc. A few examples of problem behavior assessment scales developed for use in our country are: Behavior Disorder Checklist (Mishra 1976), Problem Behavior Checklist (Arya et al. 1990), Behavior Assessment Scale for Children with Mental Retardation, Part B (Peshawaria and Venkatesan 1992a), or its revised version (Venkatesan 2011), etc. Most of these tools use

parent/teacher ratings or estimations of problem behaviors in their children with an acceptable measure of congruence between such respondents (Glaser et al. 1997; Peshawaria et al. 1990, 1988).

Despite the many available options on procedures or formats for problem behavior screening, along with their relative merits and demerits, a considered choice was made on this study to gather data about prevalence of problem behaviors on the target sample by individualized administration of 'Child Behavior Check List' (CBCL) based on the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (Achenbach and Edelbrock 1983; Achenbach and Rescorla 2000, 2001). This tool is essentially a parent/teacher-report questionnaire on which a given child is identified and rated on various behavioral-emotional problems. There are two versions of this checklist. The 'preschool' version is used for children aged 18 months to 5 years; and, the 'school-age' version is for children aged 6 to 18 years. The checklists consist of a number of observable and measurable statements about the child's maladaptive or problem behavior, such as, 'Acts too young for his/her age'. Responses are recorded on a Likert scale, viz., 0: Not True; 1: Somewhat or Sometimes True; or 2: Very True or Often True. The preschool checklist contains 100 items and the school-age checklist contains 113 questions (excluding seven sub items of an item number 57). The maximum score possible on this instrument for a given child assuming the presence of all the listed problem behaviors is 226 and the minimum is zero.

Similar questions are grouped into a number of syndromes. Their scores are summed to produce a score for that syndrome. A total score from all items is also derived for every assessed child. For each syndrome, problem scale and the total score, tables are given that determine whether the score represents normal, borderline, or clinical behavior. These categorizations are based on quartiles from a normative sample. The syndrome conditions measured on this tool are: Social Withdrawal, Somatic Complaints, Anxiety and Depression, Destructive Behavior, Social Problems, Thought Problems, Attention Problems, Aggressive Behavior, and Delinquent Behaviors.

A specific constellation of these syndromes can be further summed together as internalizing and/or externalizing problems. Internalizing problems include syndrome conditions like anxious, depressive, and over controlled and externalizing problems include syndromes like aggressive, hyperactive, noncompliant, and under controlled behaviors. Shorter or abridged versions of the CBCL are also available, such as, the 24-item measure (Achenbach and Edelbrock 1983) and 'Revised Behavior Problem Checklist' (Quay and Peterson 1993) although their administration and scoring procedures are different from their mother checklist. Cronbachs alpha coefficient for the CBCL is reported as 0.88 and for the high-risk sample was 0.76 indicating a high reliability for both samples. For the present study, data tabulation and analysis is intentionally restricted to total scores all items as derived for every assessed child and the overall sample of children in relation to their groups and/or sub groups thereby leaving the analysis of scores or results pertaining to each syndrome and scale (internalizing and/or externalizing problems) analysis for a separate and ensuing research paper in due course of time.

(d) Procedure

Following an informed consent, and after ensuing the practices like confidentiality, autonomy, human rights, beneficence, non-exploitation, accountability and transparency as enshrined by the official document of the 'Ethics Committee' (Venkatesan 2009), each participant of this study underwent individual assessment by invoking parents as the respondents for this study. During the testing or data collection, care and caution was exercised to ensure that the affected child/children were not around while the investigator interviewed the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For convenience of reporting, the results are arranged under the following sub-headings:

- Overall
- Single Parenting
- Dual Parenting
- Single vis-à-vis Dual Parenting
- Domain Analysis

(a) Overall

For the overall sample (N: 300), the grand mean CBCL score is measured to be 97.6 (SD:

23.2) which serves as reference band for comparison with other sub sample groups. In relation to gender variable, the boys (N: 154; Mean: 94.7; SD: 23.4; T: 74) score lower than girls (N: 146 Mean: 101.0; SD: 22.6; T: 75) which are, both, composite scores interpreted as falling under the 'normal range' for the respective gender groups according to the norms provided in the official manual. These differences on the overall CBCL scores in terms of gender variable are found to be statistically significant (t: 2.3698; df: 298; SE: 2.66; p: 0.018; S). With respect to different age groups, the mean CBCL scores vary according to different strata of age groups, that is, below or equal to 10 years (N: 45; Mean: 91.8; SD: 22.3; T: 75), between 11-13 years (N: 50; Mean: 101.0; SD: 25.7; T: 74), between 14-15 years (N: 153; Mean: 98.4; SD: 22.5; T: 75) and those equal to or above 16 years (N: 52; Mean: 96.9; SD: 23.2; T: 75). These differences are found to be statistically insignificant (F: 1.378; p: 0.250; NS) (Table 1).

Table 1: Profile distribution of problem behaviors in terms of child characteristics

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Probability*
Overall	300	97.6	23.2	
Gender				
Boys	154	94.7	23.4	T: 2.37; df: 298;
Girls	146	101.0	22.6	SE: 2.66; P: 0.018; S
Age				
<=10	45	91.8	22.3	
11 – 13	50	101.0	25.7	F: 1.38; P: 0.250; NS
14-15	153	98.4	22.5	
16+	52	96.9	23.2	
School				
Government	134	95.2	23.9	T:1.60; df: 298;
Private	166	99.5	22.5	SE: 2.69; P: 0.111; NS
Class				
<= 4	43	92.8	22.3	
5 – 8	97	99.1	24.8	F: 1.26; P: 0.288; NS
9 - 10	123	96.7	21.8	
11-12	37	102.0	23.9	
Residence				
Rural	150	98.2	25.2	T: 0.49; df: 298;
Urban	150	96.9	21.0	SE: 2.68; P: 0.628; NS

This is corroborated by the corresponding grade or class levels of the children below or equal to grade four (N: 43; Mean: 92.8; SD: 22.3; T: 75), those between grades 5-8 (N: 97; Mean: 99.1; SD: 24.8; T: 74), between grades 9-10 (N: 123; Mean: 96.7; SD: 21.8; T: 75), and those between 11-12 (N: 37; Mean: 102.0; SD: 23.9; T: 74) with no statistically significant differences (F: 1.261; p: 0.288; NS) (Table 1).

The distribution of overall CBCL scores in relation to type of school affiliation of the children being either government (N: 134; Mean: 95.2; SD: 23.9; T: 74), or private (N: 166; Mean: 99.5; SD: 22.5; T: 75) reveals no statistically significant differences (t: 1.6004; df: 298; SE: 2.69; p: 0.111; NS). Likewise, there are no statistically significant differences in the frequency and severity of problem behaviors reported between children from rural (N: 150; Mean: 98.2; SD: 25.2; T: 72) and urban (N: 150; Mean: 96.9; SD: 21.0; T: 72) residential backgrounds (t: 0.4854; df: 298; SE: 2.68; p: 0.628; NS) (Table 1).

(b) Single Parent Families

While the analysis on frequency and severity of reported problem behaviors in children for the overall sample in this study, as shown above, does not bring about statistically significant differences except in relation to gender, the same is true for the trends of reported problem behaviors in children within single parent families. As shown in Table 2, none of the single parent characteristics like their gender (t: 1.3937; df: 148; SE: 1.44; p: 0.166; NS), paternal age (t: 0.4288; df: 59; SE: 2.33; p: 0.670; NS), maternal age (t: 0.5346; df: 87; SE: 1.87; p: 0.594; NS), paternal education (F: 0.332; p: 0.805; NS), maternal education (F: 0.604; p: 0.615; NS), paternal occupation (F: 0.196; p: 0.898; NS), maternal occupation (F: 1.054; p: 0.376; NS), paternal income (F: 0.171; p: 0.843; NS), and maternal income (F: 1.149; p: 0.322; NS) respectively. Statistically significant differences emerge for frequency and severity of reported problem behaviors in children within the single parent families only with respect to rural (N: 75; Mean: 120.0; SD: 9.8; T: 72) and urban (N: 75; Mean: 116.0; SD: 6.70; T: 72) family backgrounds (t: 2.918; df: 148; SE: 1.37; p: 0.004; HS) (Table 2).

Single parent families are at a higher risk of poverty than couple families (Grown and Valodia 2010). On an average, single mothers have poorer health than couple mothers. Among the factors that have been implicated to influence how children develop in single parent families are parent's age, education, occupation, family income, family support network, etc. Popular opinion also holds that single parenting enhances the risk for child abuse and domestic

Table 2: Profile distribution of problem behaviors from single parent family backgrounds in terms of parent characteristics

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Probability*
Gender				
Single father	61	119.0	9.1	T: 1.39; df: 148;
Single mother	89	117.0	8.3	SE: 1.44; P: 0.166; NS
Father Age				
<45	30	120.0	8.9	T: 0.43; df: 59;
45+	31	119.0	9.3	SE: 2.33; P: 0.670; NS
Mother Age				
<35	30	116.0	7.8	T: 0.54; df: 87;
35+	59	117.0	8.6	SE: 1.87; P: 0.594; NS
Fathers Education				
NIL	3	123.0	4.6	
Primary	12	119.0	11.0	F: 0.33; P: 0.803; NS
High	29	120.0	9.2	
Pre-university	17	118.0	8.3	
Mothers Education				
NIL	12	117.0	10.0	
Primary	17	121.0	9.1	
High	27	119.0	8.9	F: 0.60; P: 0.615; NS
Pre-university	5	122.0	8.0	
Fathers Occupation				
NIL	38	119.0	10.0	
Daily wager	6	120.0	8.3	F: 0.20; P: 0.898; NS
Employed	11	119.0	7.2	
Business	6	122.0	8.1	
Mothers Occupation				
NIL	22	120.0	7.5	
Daily wager	24	120.0	10.6	
Employed	13	118.0	7.6	F: 1.05; P: 0.376; NS
Business	2	109.0	12.7	
Father Income				
Low (<Rs. 3K)	34	120.0	9.1	
Middle (Rs. 4-6K)	20	119.0	9.3	F: 0.17; P: 0.843; NS
High (>Rs. 6K)	7	118.0	9.5	
Mother Income				
Low (<Rs. 3K)	42	116.0	8.6	
Middle (Rs. 4-6K)	34	117.0	7.4	F: 1.15; P: 0.322; NS
High (>Rs. 6K)	13	120.0	9.6	
Residence				
Rural	75	120.0	9.8	T:2.92; df: 148;
Urban	75	116.0	6.7	SE: 1.37; P: 0.004; HS

violence (Gelles 1989) decreased physical activity (Lindquist et al. 1999), school drop outs, stagnation, frequent absenteeism, truancy, teen age pregnancy, lower levels of educational achievement, getting into drug abuse, delinquency, or acts of sexual misconduct (Thomas et al. 1996). Some studies have indeed supported this view with empirical evidence (Buvinic and Gupta 1997; Cheung and Ching Liu 1997). But, others have argued against the stigma of single parenting with it several myths, misconceptions, stereotypes, half-truths and prejudices. Although not unequivocal, after controlling other associated variables like income, the weight of evidence (as also in this present study) does not appear to support a view that sole parents is a major cause of societal ills or that they are doing irreparable damage to their children (Jackson 1999; Saddler and Barbour 1997; Hetherington and Arasteh 1988).

(c) Dual Parent Families

Results indicate that within the dual parent family background, the analysis on frequency and severity of reported problem behaviors in children for the overall sample in this study, does not show any statistically significant differences with respect to any or all the studied parent characteristics (Table 3) including their paternal age (t: 0.6755; df: 148; SE: 2.21; p: 0.4992; NS), maternal age (t: 1.2628; df: 148; SE: 2.38; p: 0.2087; NS), paternal education (F: 0.901; p: 0.442; NS), maternal education (F: 0.384; p: 0.765; NS), paternal occupation (F: 0.610; p: 0.656; NS), maternal occupation (F: 1.141; p: 0.340; NS), paternal income (F: 1.124; p: 0.328; NS), maternal income (F: 0.584; p: 0.561; NS), rural-urban family backgrounds (t: 9227; df: 148; SE: 2.17; p: 0.358; NS) respectively.

(d) Comparative Analysis Between Single vis-à-vis Dual Parent Families

For the studied family backgrounds, the results reveal a trend towards higher extensity and intensity of problem behaviors in children from single parent households, especially those headed by single fathers (N: 61; Mean: 119.0; SD: 9.1) followed by those led by single mothers (N: 89; Mean: 117.0; SD: 8.3) and least in children from dual parent homes (N: 150; Mean: 77.3; SD: 13.3). These differences are statistically significant (F: 489.617; p: 0.001). This trend is replicated for single and dual parent families from, both, rural (F: 280.004; p: 0.001) as well as urban (F: 234.721; p: 0.001) family backgrounds.

Additionally, in relation to gender, girls from single parent families headed by fathers (N: 32; Mean: 120.0; SD: 7.8) appear to have the greatest incidence of problem behaviors followed by boys from single parent families headed by fathers (N: 29; Mean: 118.0; SD: 10.3), boys from single parent families headed by mothers (N: 38; Mean: 117.0; SD: 8.4) and lowest in girls

Table 3: Profile distribution of problem behaviors from dual parent family backgrounds in terms of parent characteristics

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Probability*
Residence				
Rural	75	76.3	14.6	T: 0.92; df: 148;
Urban	75	78.3	11.8	SE: 2.17; P: 0.358; NS
Father Age				
<45	61	79.0	12.9	T:0.68; df: 148;
45+	89	77.5	13.6	SE: 2.21; P: 0.4992; NS
Mother Age				
<35	44	79.4	13.6	T:1.26; df: 148;
35+	106	76.4	13.1	SE: 2.38; P: 0.2087; NS
Fathers Education				
NIL	18	75.1	13.9	
Primary	34	78.5	14.8	
High	65	76.0	13.4	F: 0.90; P: 0.442; NS
Pre-university	33	79.9	10.2	
Mothers Education				
NIL	31	77.3	13.8	
Primary	63	76.1	13.8	
High	43	78.9	13.0	F: 0.38; P: 0.765; NS
Pre-university	13	77.9	10.9	
Fathers Occupation				
NIL	24	77.5	14.2	
Daily Wager	43	77.7	13.6	
Employed	31	78.4	11.6	F: 0.61; P: 0.656; NS
Business	19	72.9	14.2	
4?	33	78.1	13.4	
Mothers Occupation				
NIL	59	74.6	14.4	
Daily Wager	64	79.0	12.7	
Employed	13	81.0	10.8	F: 1.14; P: 0.340; NS
Business	4	76.3	11.8	
4?	10	77.5	12.1	
Father Income				
Low (<Rs. 3K)	71	76.9	14.1	
Middle (Rs. 4-6K)	59	76.4	13.0	F: 1.12; P: 0.328; NS
High (>Rs. 6K)	20	81.4	10.6	
Mother Income				
Low (<Rs. 3K)	132	76.9	13.7	
Middle (Rs. 4-6K)	14	80.4	9.6	F: 0.58; P: 0.561; NS
High (>Rs. 6K)	4	80.8	5.3	

from single parent families headed by mothers (N: 51; Mean: 116.0; SD: 8.3) respectively. Thus, single fathers have the children with more problem behaviors than single mothers irrespective of whether they are boys (F: 218.775; p: 0.001) or girls (F: 259.953; p: 0.001) (Table 4). Cookston (1999) also observed parental supervision to be lowest for single-father homes, it was slightly higher in single-mother homes, and was highest in intact families-which they attributed as the factor to explain more problem behaviors in such households rather than the mere condition that they are single parent homes. As many single-parent households are female-headed, their economic burden is much greater than that of a single-father family. This issue results from the fact that single women typically do not earn the same income as a single man. Thus, it is argued that there is a consequent economic struggle not experienced in the single-father household (Reynolds 2008).

Table 4: Comparative profile distribution of problem behaviors from single and dual parent family backgrounds in terms of parent characteristics

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Probability*
Gender				
Single father	61	119.0	9.1	
Single mother	89	117.0	8.3	F: 489.62; P: 0.000; VHS
Dual parents	150	77.3	13.3	
Residence-Rural				
Single father	32	116.0	6.4	
Single mother	43	115.0	6.9	F: 280.00; P: 0.000; VHS
Dual parents	75	78.3	11.8	
Residence-Urban				
Single father	29	123.0	10.2	
Single mother	46	118.0	9.2	F: 234.72; P: 0.000; VHS
Dual parents	75	76.3	14.6	
Boys				
Single father	29	118.0	10.3	
Single mother	38	117.0	8.4	F: 218.78; P: 0.000; VHS
Dual parents	87	77.1	13.5	
Girls				
Single father	32	120.0	7.8	
Single mother	51	116.0	8.3	F: 259.85; P: 0.000; VHS
Dual parents	63	77.6	13.0	

These findings (Table 4) are in line with several similar investigations carried out in the west implicating single parenting itself as fertile ground for fostering problem behaviors in its children (Cheung and Ching Liu 1997; Thomas et al. 1996; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). However, there are others who refute this contention. What is argued is that it is not the phenomenon of single parenting alone or by itself that fosters indiscipline in its children. Rather, it may be associated factors like poverty (Reynolds 2008), the lack of parent supervision (Cookston 1999), anomalous communication patterns in inter-generational relationships (Hill

Table 5: Domain analysis on distribution of problem behaviors from single and dual parent family backgrounds

Domains	*Items*	*Single parent (N: 150)*		*Dual parent (N: 150)*		*Probability*
		Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	
Anxious-depressed	13	15.65	3.31	9.79	3.08	T: 15.87; df: 298; SE: 0.37; P: 0.0001
Withdrawn-depressed	8	8.45	2.13	4.74	2.14	T: 15.05; df: 298; SE: 0.25; P: 0.0001
Somatic complaints	4	9.36	2.85	5.75	2.24	T: 12.20; df: 298; SE: 0.30; P: 0.0001
Social problems	11	10.30	2.75	7.31	2.51	T: 9.84; df: 298; SE: 0.30; P: 0.0001
Thought problems	15	8.74	2.62	7.25	2.45	T: 5.09; df: 298; SE: 0.29; P: 0.0001
Attention problems	10	28.29	4.55	16.81	4.31	T: 22.43; df: 298; SE: 0.51; P: 0.0001
Rule breaking behavior	17	11.93	2.76	7.23	2.82	T: 14.59; df: 298; SE: 0.32; P: 0.0001
Aggressive behavior	18	18.87	3.98	12.03	4.06	T: 14.69; df: 298; SE: 0.46; P: 0.0001
Other problems	17	16.51	3.09	10.54	3.05	T: 16.84; df: 298; SE: 0.36; P: 0.0001
Overall	113	125.11	10.41	81.46	15.29	T: 28.90; df: 298; SE: 1.51; P: 0.0001

1986), or other factors which may be the root cause of the observed indiscipline in these children.

(e) Domain Analysis

Even though as stated earlier, it is not the intention of this paper to delve deep into syndrome/sub-scale analysis of the trends (which is deferred for a separate and subsequent paper), a perfunctory analysis (Table 5) shows statistically significant differences between children from single and dual parent family backgrounds across all the domains on the CBCL. However, admittedly, it requires deeper probes, probably even an attempt through use of multivariate statistics to derive more effective inferences along those lines (Table 5).

CONCLUSION

In sum, the results of the study indicates that, on the whole, children from dual parent family backgrounds have significantly fewer behavior problems than their counterpart from single parent households. The greatest disadvantage appears to be for children hailing from single parent homes headed by fathers than even mothers alone. In terms of the child's gender, girls emerge as more problematic than even boys of their age in the single parent homes and children from rural households have greater issues than even their urban counterparts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the understanding that anomalies in the family functioning with respect to faulty communication patterns, power struggles or distribution, norm implementation, conflict ridden milieu, or enhanced expressed emotions are determinants for the nature or extent of emotional-behavioral problems in children irrespective of their being part of single or dual parent homes; attempts need to be expedited for undertaking parent group training programs with varying levels or measures of success for improvements in parenting skills and decrement in problem-emotional behaviors. Likewise, the findings of this study suggest the need for planning or activities like family life education, parent training and home enrichment programs for the mounting population of single parent families even in our country.

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