
**CHILD-REARING PRACTICES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AS PREDICTORS
OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES IN SOKOTO METROPOLIS**

YAHAYA, Fatima¹

UMAR, Ibrahim²

DANMALI, Sanusi Sani³

¹Department of Educational Foundations
School of Education and General Studies
Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto

²Department of Business Education
School of Vocational and Technical Education
Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto

³Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology
School of Education and General Studies
Federal College of Education, Gidan Madi, Sokoto

Corresponding author's email: fatima88.fy@gmail.com

Abstract

The family is a vital social institution that influenced children's cognitive, emotional, and academic development. In Nigeria, changing family structures, particularly rising divorce rates, widowhood, and economic instability, increased the prevalence of single-parent homes, exposing children to educational disadvantages. In Sokoto Metropolis, these challenges are compounded by pervasive poverty and weak community-based support systems. Although studies have explored family background variables in relation to academic outcomes, few have examined the combined influence of child-rearing practices and socio-economic status (SES) within single-parent homes in Northern Nigeria. The paper investigated the relationship between child-rearing practices, SES, and academic performance among senior secondary students from single-parent homes in Sokoto Metropolis. Correlational research design was adopted, involving 346 Senior Secondary II students purposively chosen from 21 purposively selected public schools. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-developed questionnaire on parenting practices and SES, alongside performance tests in English and Mathematics. Data analysis, conducted using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis at a 0.05 significance level, revealed significant negative relationships between child-rearing practices of single parents (by death $r = -0.487$; by divorce $r = -0.499$) and academic performance. Similarly, SES of single parents (by death $r = -0.343$; by divorce $r = -0.387$) correlated negatively with

academic outcomes. Notably, child-rearing practices of divorced parents emerged as the strongest predictor of student performance. The study recommended targeted psychosocial support, welfare interventions, and parent education programs to enhance academic outcomes for children in single-parent homes.

Keywords: Child-rearing practice, socio-economic, single-parent, home, academic performance

Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of social, economic, and cultural advancement for both individuals and societies. Academic performance, commonly used as a benchmark for educational success, results from a complex interaction of personal, familial, school-related, and societal factors. Among these, family structure and socio-economic background stand out as crucial determinants of student achievement (Ajila & Olutola, 2007; Eamon, 2005). Globally, the family serves as the first and most influential agent of socialization, shaping children's cognitive, emotional, and moral growth. Parental involvement, socio-economic status (SES), and child-rearing practices strongly influence students' motivation and scholastic outcomes (Baumrind, 1991; Jeynes, 2002). These effects are particularly pronounced in societies grappling with economic hardship, such as Nigeria, where poverty, unemployment, and social instability have disrupted traditional family systems (Jere, 2004).

In Nigeria, shifting family dynamics, marked by rising divorce, widowhood, and single parenthood, have led to a growing number of students being raised in single-parent households. This trend carries significant consequences for educational outcomes. Research shows that children in single-parent families, especially those headed by mothers, often face financial constraints, increased domestic responsibilities, and emotional challenges, all of which hinder academic performance (Ichado, 1998; Eamon, 2005).

Academic performance, as a central indicator of educational achievement, is deeply shaped by the social and economic environment in which children are raised. In Nigeria, increasing

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attention has been directed toward the impact of family structure, particularly single parenthood, on students' success. Factors such as access to resources, parental support, and consistent supervision play pivotal roles in determining learning outcomes.

The situation in Sokoto Metropolis is particularly concerning. Rising failure rates in external examinations like WAEC and NECO have sparked widespread debate. While much of the blame has been placed on schools, the critical influence of home environments is often overlooked. With divorce and widowhood on the rise, many students in the region are growing up in single-parent households that lack the financial and emotional resources necessary for academic success.

Socio-economic status, often measured through parental education, occupation, and income, shapes students' access to quality learning materials, extracurricular opportunities, and a supportive home environment (Eamon, 2005). In Sokoto, widespread poverty and the weakening of extended family networks have further exacerbated these challenges, limiting the support available to widowed or divorced parents (Mezieobi & Jude, 2007).

This context underscores the need to examine how socio-economic status and parenting practices collectively affect the academic achievement of students from single-parent homes. Such insights are essential for developing targeted interventions and shaping educational policies that respond to the realities of vulnerable populations. This study investigates how child-rearing practices and socio-economic conditions in single-parent households influence the academic performance of senior secondary students, drawing on Piaget's cognitive development theory, Erikson's psychosocial development model, and the CIPP evaluation model, which all emphasize the interplay between family environment and cognitive-behavioral development.

Statement of the Problem

The decline in students' performance in external examinations such as WAEC and NECO has become a growing concern in Nigeria. This challenge is evident in Sokoto Metropolis, where failure rates in key subjects like English and Mathematics remain alarmingly high. For example,

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WAEC recorded failure rates of 59% in 2009, 60% in 2010, and 67% in 2011, while NECO reported 23%, 32%, and 52% in the same years (WAEC, 2009–2011). Although much attention is directed at school-related issues, such as teacher competence and inadequate learning materials, insufficient consideration is given to the influence of family background on students' academic outcomes.

Children from single-parent homes face unique difficulties that often compromise their educational attainment. The absence of one parent—whether due to death or divorce—commonly results in reduced household income, limited parental supervision, and heightened emotional stress (Jeynes, 2002). Evidence suggests that such students are more likely to struggle academically, exhibit irregular school attendance, and experience lower self-esteem compared to peers from two-parent families (Eamon, 2005; Ichado, 1998).

Socio-economic status further compounds these difficulties. Parents with limited financial resources often struggle to provide educational materials, tutoring, or a conducive home environment. In some cases, children are forced to contribute to family income, reducing the time and energy they can devote to their studies (Jere, 2004; Bulus, 2006). In Sokoto Metropolis, high rates of poverty, widowhood, and marital breakdown have placed additional pressure on families, contributing to absenteeism and declining examination results.

Despite the scale of the problem, few empirical studies in Northern Nigeria, and particularly in Sokoto Metropolis, have examined the combined effects of parenting practices and socio-economic status on student performance. Existing research often focuses on urban centers in southern Nigeria or considers these variables separately. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how parenting practices and socio-economic background influence the academic achievement of senior secondary students from single-parent households in Sokoto Metropolis. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educational counselors. Such knowledge will be vital in designing

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interventions tailored to the needs of students from single-parent homes, ultimately supporting improved academic performance and educational outcomes.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between child-rearing practices of single-parent homes (due to death or divorce) and students' academic performance.
2. To determine the influence of the socio-economic status of single parents (widowed or divorced) on students' academic performance.
3. To identify which of the examined variables serve as stronger predictors of academic performance.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between the child-rearing practices of widowed single-parent homes and students' academic performance?
2. What is the relationship between the child-rearing practices of divorced single-parent homes and students' academic performance?
3. How does the socio-economic status of widowed single parents influence students' academic performance?
4. How does the socio-economic status of divorced single parents influence students' academic performance?
5. Which among child-rearing practices and socio-economic status of single-parent homes is the stronger predictor of students' academic performance?

Research Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between the child-rearing practices of widowed single-parent homes and students' academic performance.

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H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between the child-rearing practices of divorced single-parent homes and students' academic performance.

H₀₃: The socio-economic status of widowed single parents has no significant influence on students' academic performance.

H₀₄: The socio-economic status of divorced single parents has no significant influence on students' academic performance.

H₀₅: None of the variables child-rearing practices or socio-economic status significantly predicts students' academic performance.

Literature Review

Concept of Child-Rearing Practices and Academic Performance

Child-rearing practices refer to the patterns of behaviour, discipline strategies, and emotional support that parents employ in raising their children. Baumrind (1991) classified these into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles, with authoritative parenting often associated with the highest levels of academic achievement due to its balanced mix of warmth, responsiveness, and control.

In recent studies, Abe Hiko et al. (2023) examined the influence of single parenting on students' academic outcomes in South Africa and reported that inconsistent child-rearing practices, often resulting from the absence of one parent, contribute to academic underachievement. Similar findings were reported by Akinyemi et al. (2025) in Ekiti State, Nigeria, where children from single-parent homes performed significantly lower in language proficiency assessments compared to those from two-parent homes. These studies affirm that child-rearing practices, particularly when disrupted by parental absence, affect academic motivation, concentration, and emotional stability key determinants of school success.

Lasisi et al. (2023) also emphasized that parenting styles, especially in single-parent settings, often fluctuate between neglectful and overly permissive, thereby denying students the structured support necessary for academic progress.

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Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Educational Outcomes

Socio-economic status, a composite of parental income, education, and occupation, shapes children's academic opportunities by influencing their access to educational materials, quality of schooling, and home learning environments (Nja et al., 2022). In Nigeria, children from low-SES backgrounds often lack basic school resources, private tutoring opportunities, and emotional support, which collectively hinder academic achievement (Egbule, 2024).

Umeji (2024) documented how the implications of single motherhood and its associated financial challenges negatively impact primary school children's academic performance in Anambra State. Similarly, Olowabi and Garutsa (2024) found that the socio-economic limitations faced by unmarried mothers directly affect children's nutritional well-being, concentration in class, and ability to participate in extracurricular activities.

These recent studies corroborate earlier findings by Eamon (2005) and Ajila and Olutola (2007), reinforcing the conclusion that socio-economic adversity remains a consistent and potent predictor of poor academic outcomes, particularly within single-parent homes.

Combined Influence of Parenting Practices and Socio-Economic Status

The interplay between parenting style and socio-economic conditions has been shown to produce cumulative effects on children's academic performance. Abe Hiko et al. (2023) concluded that while low SES independently affects educational outcomes, the adverse effect is magnified when combined with erratic or neglectful parenting practices. Akinyemi et al. (2025) found that students from divorced single-parent families, irrespective of their parents' socio-economic status, exhibited lower academic performance due to emotional instability and inconsistent discipline. This suggests that while material resources are vital, the quality of parenting remains a more critical determinant of academic success, particularly in emotionally fragile single-parent homes.

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Lasisi et al. (2023) similarly reported that divorced and widowed single parents in Sokoto State often struggle to balance economic responsibilities with effective parenting, which negatively impacts children's school engagement and performance, especially in core subjects like Mathematics and English.

Theoretical Framework

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory (1968) provides a useful lens for interpreting how family dynamics shape a child's socio-emotional and cognitive development. Erikson posited that children need consistent social and emotional support from parents to develop trust, autonomy, and industry – all critical for academic engagement. The absence of one parent can disrupt this developmental process, leading to academic difficulties (Harder, 2002).

Stufflebeam's CIPP Evaluation Model (1971) highlights the importance of context, input, process, and product in educational outcomes. Applied here, the model underscores how home context (family structure and SES) and parental inputs (child-rearing practices) affect educational processes and, ultimately, student academic performance. Recent applications of this framework by Nja et al. (2022) affirm its relevance in assessing how socio-economic disparities and family environments mediate academic outcomes in African settings.

Summary of Literature and Gap Identification

Existing studies consistently indicate that both child-rearing practices and socio-economic status significantly affect students' academic outcomes. While considerable research has been conducted in Southern Nigeria and South Africa (Abe Hiko et al., 2023; Umeji, 2024), there remains a paucity of empirical studies in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto Metropolis, addressing the combined effects of these variables on academic performance in senior secondary schools. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by empirically examining the relationships between child-rearing practices, socio-economic status, and academic performance among students from single-parent homes in Sokoto Metropolis, thereby contributing to both theory and practice in educational psychology and school counselling.

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Methodology

The survey employed a correlational research design to investigate the relationships between child-rearing practices, socio-economic status, and academic performance among senior secondary school students from single-parent homes in Sokoto Metropolis. The design was suitable for identifying associations between multiple independent variables and a dependent variable without manipulating any factors. The population for the study comprised all Senior Secondary II (SSII) students in public senior secondary schools within the metropolis, totalling 1,270 students according to official records from the Sokoto State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (2019). A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 346 students drawn specifically from widowed and divorced single-parent homes. The sample size was determined using the Research Advisor (2006) sample size table, ensuring adequate representation of both widowed (154 students) and divorced (192 students) categories for comparative analysis.

Two researcher-developed instruments were utilised for data collection. The Child-Rearing Practices and Socio-Economic Status Questionnaire (CRP-SESQ) was divided into two sections, capturing demographic information and assessing parenting practices and socio-economic status on a 4-point Likert scale. Academic performance was measured using students' cumulative third-term results in English and Mathematics obtained from official school records, providing standardised indicators of achievement. The CRP-SESQ underwent content and face validation by three educational experts, and a pilot test with 30 students yielded a high Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.81. Ethical approvals were obtained from relevant authorities, and data collection was conducted over four weeks by the researcher and two trained assistants. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics and inferential statistics including Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis to test five hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance, using SPSS version 23.0.

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Results and Findings

This section presents the results of the data analysis conducted to examine the relationships between child-rearing practices, socio-economic status, and academic performance among senior secondary school students from single-parent homes in Sokoto Metropolis. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied, including the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	201	58.1%
Female	145	41.9%
Total	346	100%

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents based on gender. Out of the total sample of 346 senior secondary school students, 201 (58.1%) were male, while 145 (41.9%) were female. This indicates a higher representation of male students in the study population. While the gender imbalance might reflect enrollment patterns in the sampled schools, it is important to note that this distribution was accounted for during data analysis, ensuring the validity of correlational and regression results across both genders.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Study Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Child-Rearing Practices of Single Parent (by death)	154	1.88	0.418
Child-Rearing Practices of Single Parent (by divorce)	192	2.78	0.429
Socio-Economic Status of Single Parent (by death)	154	2.34	0.322
Socio-Economic Status of Single Parent (by divorce)	192	3.81	0.452
Academic Performance	346	15.22	5.12

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This table summarizes the descriptive statistics for the key study variables. The mean score for child-rearing practices of single parents by death is 1.88 (SD = 0.418), while that of divorced single parents is notably higher at 2.78 (SD = 0.429), suggesting that the parenting experience and style might differ significantly between widowed and divorced homes. Socio-economic status also varies, with divorced parents reporting a higher mean SES (3.81, SD = 0.452) compared to widowed parents (2.34, SD = 0.322). The overall mean academic performance of the students was 15.22 (SD = 5.12). The standard deviations indicate moderate variability in academic performance across the sample, which is appropriate for correlational and regression analyses.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 1

Variables	N	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
CRP (by death) & Academic Performance	346	-0.487	0.000	H ₀ Rejected

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.487$, $p < 0.001$) between the child-rearing practices of widowed single parents and students' academic performance. This means that as the effectiveness or consistency of child-rearing practices decreases in widowed homes, students' academic performance tends to decline. This finding supports the assertion that the absence of one parent through death can destabilize home routines and academic support systems.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis for Hypothesis 2

Variables	N	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
CRP (by divorce) & Academic Performance	346	-0.499	0.000	H ₀ Rejected

The correlation between child-rearing practices of divorced single parents and academic performance was also significant and negative ($r = -0.499$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates a moderately strong inverse relationship: students in divorced single-parent homes tend to perform

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worse academically when child-rearing practices are poor or inconsistent. The correlation is slightly stronger than that found in Table 3, suggesting that the effects of divorce-related child-rearing challenges on academic outcomes might be more severe than those associated with widowhood.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis for Hypotheses 3 and 4

Variables	N	r-Cal	p-Value	Decision
SES (by death) & Academic Performance	346	-0.343	0.000	H ₀ Rejected
SES (by divorce) & Academic Performance	346	-0.387	0.000	H ₀ Rejected

Both correlations were statistically significant and negative, with socio-economic status of single parents by death showing a moderate inverse relationship ($r = -0.343$, $p < 0.001$) and socio-economic status by divorce yielding a slightly stronger negative relationship ($r = -0.387$, $p < 0.001$) with students' academic performance. These findings suggest that lower socio-economic status whether resulting from widowhood or divorce is associated with reduced academic achievement among senior secondary school students, likely due to limited access to learning materials, school fees, and academic supervision.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis for Hypothesis 5

Predictor Variables	B	t	p-Value
CRP (by death)	-0.487	-9.89	0.000
CRP (by divorce)	0.401	6.387	0.000
SES (by death)	0.033	0.51	0.611
SES (by divorce)	0.293	3.99	0.000

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.080$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.070$, $F(4, 343) = 5.802$, $p < 0.05$

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The multiple regression analysis examined the predictive power of the four independent variables on students' academic performance. The model was statistically significant ($F = 5.802$, $p < 0.05$) but accounted for only 8% ($R^2 = 0.080$) of the variance in academic performance, suggesting that other factors not included in the study also contribute to students' academic outcomes.

Among the predictors, child-rearing practices of divorced parents ($\beta = 0.401$, $t = 6.387$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as the strongest and most significant predictor of academic performance, followed by socio-economic status of divorced parents ($\beta = 0.293$, $t = 3.99$, $p < 0.001$). Interestingly, the socio-economic status of widowed parents ($\beta = 0.033$, $p = 0.611$) was not a significant predictor, indicating that while economic hardship may affect students in widowed homes, it is less influential compared to child-rearing practices and SES in divorced homes. This result highlights that parenting style and emotional stability in divorced single-parent homes play a more critical role in students' academic success than financial resources alone.

Discussions of Findings

The study confirmed that child-rearing practices and socio-economic status significantly affect students' academic performance in Sokoto Metropolis. The negative correlation between child-rearing practices of single parents (by death) and academic performance aligns with previous research by Dornbusch et al. (in Abubakar, 2013), who reported that the absence of a father figure disrupts effective parenting, negatively impacting children's educational attainment.

Similarly, the finding that child-rearing practices of single parents (by divorce) relate negatively to academic performance corroborates results by Tabassum (2009), Salau (2015), and Yusuf et al. (2009). These studies emphasised the destabilising effects of divorce on family cohesion and emotional support, resulting in poor academic performance among children.

The socio-economic status of single parents, both widowed and divorced, also showed significant negative relationships with academic performance, reflecting findings from Eamon (2005), Blacksher (2002), and Ghaemi & Yazdanpanah (2014). These studies suggest that lower

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SES limits access to educational resources, conducive learning environments, and extracurricular opportunities, leading to poorer academic outcomes.

Multiple regression analysis indicated that the child-rearing practices of divorced parents had a more substantial predictive power on students' academic performance compared to socio-economic factors. This is consistent with Salau (2015) and Tabassum (2009), who argued that the psychological and emotional instability associated with parental separation affects children's academic engagement and motivation.

Collectively, these findings affirm the relevance of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, which underscores the influence of familial socialisation on a child's cognitive and emotional growth (Harder, 2002). They also support Stufflebeam's CIPP model by illustrating how contextual and input factors (like parenting style and SES) significantly shape educational outcomes.

Conclusion

The study set out to investigate the relationships between child-rearing practices, socio-economic status (SES), and academic performance among senior secondary school students from single-parent homes in Sokoto Metropolis, Nigeria. The conclusions drawn from the findings are organised in alignment with the five research objectives.

Firstly, the study revealed a significant negative relationship between the child-rearing practices of widowed single parents and the academic performance of students. Children raised by widowed parents often experience diminished academic support, limited supervision, and psychological distress resulting from the loss of a parent, all of which adversely affect their academic engagement and school outcomes.

Secondly, a significant negative relationship was established between the child-rearing practices of divorced single parents and students' academic performance. The emotional instability,

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disrupted family structure, and inconsistent parental involvement associated with divorce were identified as factors contributing to lower academic achievement among these students.

Thirdly, the study found that the socio-economic status of widowed single parents significantly influences the academic performance of their children. Limited financial resources among widowed parents reduce their ability to provide necessary educational materials, ensure a conducive home learning environment, and offer essential academic support services. This economic deprivation consequently undermines students' learning outcomes.

Fourthly, a significant negative relationship was observed between the socio-economic status of divorced single parents and students' academic performance. The financial hardship often accompanying marital dissolution restricts parents' capacity to adequately support their children's educational needs, contributing to poor school attendance, lack of learning materials, and academic disengagement.

Lastly, when examining the combined effects of the studied variables, child-rearing practices of divorced parents emerged as the most significant predictor of students' academic performance, surpassing the influence of socio-economic status. This outcome highlights that, beyond material resources, emotional and social stability within the home environment plays a critical role in determining students' academic success.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Educational counsellors should develop and implement targeted psycho-social support programs for students from widowed single-parent homes. These programs should address grief, emotional distress, and promote academic resilience through structured counselling and mentoring services.

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2. Widowed single parents should be sensitized through community-based outreach, religious organizations, and school engagement programs on the importance of sustained, consistent involvement in their children's education, irrespective of prevailing financial or emotional challenges.
3. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), school management boards, and community-based organizations should collaborate to organize regular parental engagement workshops specifically targeting divorced single parents. These workshops should focus on promoting responsible, consistent, and supportive child-rearing practices that positively impact children's academic performance.
4. Government social welfare departments should integrate family counseling, parenting education, and psycho-social support services into community education initiatives, with particular emphasis on supporting students from divorced homes to stabilize their family and academic environments.
5. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), donor agencies, and government welfare programs should provide educational grants, scholarships, school feeding programs, and provision of essential learning materials to students from economically disadvantaged widowed single-parent homes in Sokoto Metropolis.
6. Widowed parents should be encouraged and supported to participate in cooperative societies, women's economic empowerment programs, and vocational skills acquisition initiatives to improve household income and enhance their capacity to support their children's schooling needs.
7. Policy-makers and educational authorities should expand and strengthen social protection schemes and educational welfare policies to specifically cover children from financially disadvantaged, divorced single-parent homes, ensuring their academic needs are adequately met.

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8. Divorced single parents should be encouraged to mobilise the support of extended family members, community elders, and informal support groups to establish stable, emotionally supportive, and learning-conducive home environments for their children.
9. School managements and education boards should prioritise the establishment of school-based psychological support units and counselling services to address the socio-emotional and academic needs of students from divorced homes.
10. Single parents, particularly those divorced, should be regularly counselled and educated on the critical importance of providing stable, nurturing, and disciplined home environments, emphasising that emotional security and positive parenting practices are vital predictors of academic achievement, irrespective of socio-economic limitations.

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