



## **UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OPINIONS REGARDING SINGLE PARENTHOOD IN TURKEY<sup>1</sup>**

**Sevda Aslan\***

*University of Kırıkkale, Turkey*

### *Abstract*

*In this study, it is aimed to determine university students opinions regarding single parenthood. The study group consisted of 322 1th-4th year students studying at Kafkas University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, State Conservatory, Ahi Evran University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Gazi University Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Technology, Atılım University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Eskisehir Osmangazi University Faculty of Divinity in Spring 2014-2015 academic year. There were 166 female students and 156 male students who participated in the study. In this study, University Students' Views Regarding Single Parenthood. Single Parenthood Form were developed by the researcher in order to determine the views of university students. The study is a descriptive type of study. These forms consisted of 10 open ended questions related to the students' views about single parenthood. The answers given to the 10 open ended questions in the form were combined and gathered under common headers. The study is a descriptive type of study. The results of this study find that the opinions of university students regarding single parenthood include, the family consists of parents and children and the death of mother or father and monthly income of the family.*

**Keywords:** university students; single parenthood; student views

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Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to:

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\* PhD, University of Kırıkkale, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Psychological Counselling and Guidance Department. Ankara Road 7.km. 71450 Yahşihan/Kırıkkale, Turkey. Phone:+90 505 791 2371 Fax: +90 318 357 2487 E-mail: [sevda.aslan@gmail.com](mailto:sevda.aslan@gmail.com); [sevda.aslan@kku.edu.tr](mailto:sevda.aslan@kku.edu.tr)

## **Introduction**

Single parent families are those in which the mother or the father shoulders the responsibility for parenthood and child care on her or his own. Single parent families most commonly result following divorce or death, or in line with the preferences of one of the parents. Difficulties related to finances, social life, parenthood, child care, household duties and the allocation of time are among the major problems faced by single parent families (Aydiner Boylu & Oztop, 2013).

In a review of studies conducted on single parenthood, Feyzioglu and Kuscuoglu's (2011) study, mothers reported that when they first became single parents, they were deeply anxious about bringing up their children on their own. Another major source of their anxiety was the financial and social problems they faced as single parents. These mothers indicated that when they face a problem, they have no one to turn to, either to solve it or even discuss it with, which makes them feel lonely and isolated. Once the single parent family is established, the relationship between the child and the single parent with whom they are living usually improves. Mothers who do not live with their children establish a more regular relationship with their children compared with fathers in the same situation. The reluctance of a parent to continue communication also weakens the motivation of the child to communicate, especially among male children. Sometimes children refuse to meet with their father because of the physical or emotional violence he may have used against their mother. Many single mothers and fathers state that they experience economic difficulties as single parents. The inability to afford increasing school expenses, inability to afford tutoring services, inability to take a family vacation and inability to afford their children's wishes and aspirations are the most common child-related economic difficulties. In a study on single parent families, Ozturk and Aydiner Boylu (2013) found that financial problems experienced by single parent families showed significant variations according to the level of education of the single parent and monthly income of the family, whereas life satisfaction significantly varied by the level of education of the single parent, monthly income of the family, and the number of people living in the household. Another finding of the study is that financial difficulties are associated with lower levels of life satisfaction.

## **Objective**

In conclusion, a family comprising both parents and the children is the most basic unit of society. Different dynamics would be at play in single father or single mother families, with repercussions for society at large. In this light, this study aims to identify the opinions of university students regarding single parenthood.

## **Method**

The studies aiming to define a situation, which already exists or existed in the past, are studies designed according to scanning model (Karasar, 2003). In this study, an existing situation was analysed since the study aims to determine the views of university students on single parenthood. Therefore, this study is a patterned research designed according to scanning model.

### *Participants*

In this study, it is aimed to determine the views of university students regarding single parenthood. The study group consisted of 322 1th-4th year students studying at Kafkas University Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, State Conservatory, Ahi Evran University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Gazi University Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Technology, Atılım University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Eskisehir Osmangazi University Faculty of Divinity in Spring 2014-2015 academic year. The number of female students participating in the study was 166 (51.55%) and the number of male students participating in the study was 156 (48.45%).

### *Research instrument*

“University Students’ Views Regarding Single Parenthood” was developed in order to determine the views of university students single parenthood. These forms consist of ten open ended questions to determine their views about single parenthood.

*The analysis of the data*

The answers given to the ten open ended questions in the form were combined and gathered under common headings. Frequencies and percentages calculated.

**Results***Results regarding university students' perception of single parenthood*

In this section, you can see the frequency and percentage distributions according to the answers given to the items in the "University Students' Views Regarding Single Parenthood".

Table 1. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding family concept

Opinions	n	%
The family consists of parents and children	211	65.53
The family consists of parents, children, grandmother and grandfather	62	19.25
The family consists of mother and children	28	8.70
The family consists of father and children	21	6.52

As seen in Table 1, 66% of the students mentioned "the family consists of parents and children" as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 7% of the students mentioned "the family consists of father and children" as the least important characteristics.

Table 2. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding functions of the family

Opinions	n	%
Sharing feelings	122	37.89
To meet the basic needs for survival and to meet the basic needs for trust	76	23.60
Cooperation	71	22.05
Acceptance of individual differences	53	16.46

As seen in Table 2, 38% of the students mentioned "sharing feelings" as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 17% of the students

mentioned “acceptance of individual differences” as the least important characteristics.

Table 3. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding comes to mind about single parenthood

Opinions	n	%
Death	150	46.58
Divorce	99	30.75
Preference result	73	22.67

As seen in Table 3, 47% of the students mentioned “death” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 23% of the students mentioned “preference result” as the least important characteristics.

Table 4. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding single parenthood family cause of occurrence

Opinions	n	%
The death of mother or father	149	46.27
Divorce	96	29.81
Long time absence of the mother or the father	39	12.11
Permanent absence of the mother or father	38	11.81

As seen in Table 4, 46% of the students mentioned “The death of mother or father” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 12% of the students mentioned “permanent absence of the mother or father” as the least important characteristics.

Table 5. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding single parenthood family’s cause

Opinions	n	%
Divorce	136	42.24
Death	94	29.19
Migration / war / case of necessity	62	19.25
Separate living	30	9.32

As seen in Table 5, 42% of the students mentioned “divorce” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 9% of the students mentioned “separate living” as the least important characteristics.

Table 6. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding family divorce cause

Opinions	n	%
Violence to spouse	98	30.43
Without ready for marriage made	92	28.57
Social - cultural conflicts	67	20.81
Spiritual mismatch	65	20.19

As seen in Table 6, 30% of the students mentioned “violence to spouse” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 20% of the students mentioned “spiritual mismatch” as the least important characteristics.

Table 7. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding influence of divorce on children

Opinions	n	%
Development of personality	122	37.89
Approaching to marriage bias	77	23.91
Excessive attachment to parent	76	23.60
Disruption in the formation of sexual identity	47	14.60

As seen in Table 7, 38% of the students mentioned “development of personality” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 15% of the students mentioned “disruption in the formation of sexual identity” as the least important characteristics.

Table 8. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding single parenthood family’s problems

Opinions	n	%
Social life	120	37.27
Economic deficiency	91	28.26
Childcare	69	21.43
Time use	42	13.04

As seen in Table 8, 37% of the students mentioned “social life” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 13% of the students mentioned “time use” as the least important characteristics.

Table 9. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding single parenthood families living the financial challenges

Opinions	n	%
Monthly income of the family	141	43.79
The number of people living in the family	69	21.43
The education level of the parents	58	18.01
Parent's gender/age	54	16.77

As seen in Table 9, 44% of the students mentioned “monthly income of the family” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 17% of the students mentioned “parent’s gender/age” as the least important characteristics.

Table 10. Distribution of frequencies and percentages of student opinions regarding factors associated with income of single parenthood families

Opinions	n	%
Academic success	126	39.13
Social relations	83	25.78
Psychological adjustment	57	17.70
Correct behavior	53	16.46
Self concept	3	0.93

As seen in Table 10, 39% of the students mentioned “academic success” as the most important personal characteristics, whereas 0.9% of the students mentioned “self concept” as the least important characteristics.

### *Discussion*

The list of reasons for resorting to single parenthood as listed according to the opinions of university students are as follows, according to priority: The family consists of parents and children (211), death (150), the death of mother or father (149), monthly income of the family (141), divorce (136), academic success (126), sharing feelings (122), development of personality (122), social life (120), and violence to spouse (98). Feyzioglu and Kuscuoğlu (2011) report that single mothers face financial difficulties and social problems. On the other hand, the relationship between the child and the single parent improves. In addition, children may refuse to meet with their fathers because of violence against their mothers. In their study on single parent families, Ozturk and Aydiner Boylu (2013) found that financial difficulties varied significantly

according to the level of education of the single parent and the monthly income of the family. In this sense, the results found by Feyzioglu and Kuscuoglu (2011) and Ozturk and Aydiner Boylu (2013) are consistent with the findings of this study, where the opinions among university students that monthly income of the family, divorce, academic success, sharing feelings, development of personality, social life, and violence to spouse are factors.

### **Conclusions**

As a result, student opinions in terms of single parenthood, namely ; the family consists of parents and children, the death of mother or father, monthly income of the family, divorce, academic success, sharing feelings, development of personality, social life, and violence to spouse. Single parenthood, whether by divorce, death or choice, affects personality development, social life, sharing of feelings and academic achievement. University students with single parent families should be supported to minimize the negative effects of single parenthood and to contribute to society. The research is limited by the study group that is being studied in this research. Future studies should be performed with different study groups, which will contribute to the literature and help assess whether the results of the present study were valid.

Some recommendations for future studies are as follows:

1. To minimize the negative effects of single parenthood, guidance services in schools should provide psychosocial support to students from single parent families, as well as their single mothers or single fathers.
2. Psychological counseling should be provided for children with single parent families to contribute to their personality development and social life.
3. The views of parents regarding single parenthood can be sought to determine whether they will support the findings of this study or not.

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