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SINGLE PARENTING AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN KARU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

by

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Abstract

Children raised in single-parent homes in Karu Local Government Area often spend long hours without adult supervision, yet the specific bearing of single parenting on juvenile delinquency in the area has received little empirical attention. The objective of the study was to determine the effect of single parenting on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, combining a structured questionnaire with in-depth interviews. A sample size of 442 was determined with Bill's (2004) formula for unknown populations, and children aged 18 years and below were selected through multi-stage sampling, while 20 interview participants were selected purposively. Of the questionnaires administered, 421 were retrieved and valid for analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using frequency, percentage and multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The results showed that single parenting significantly affected juvenile delinquency ($R = 0.768$, $R^2 = 0.590$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.582$, $F = 175.216$, $p < 0.05$), with living with a single parent recording the strongest contribution, followed by time spent outside the home, adult supervision after school and decision-making guidance. Interview accounts linked these patterns to reduced supervision, emotional strain, economic pressure and heavy reliance on peers. The study concludes that single parenting has a significant effect on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area. The study recommends that the social welfare office of Karu Local Government Area should work with schools and community leaders to run supervised after-school programmes for children from single-parent homes.

Keywords: single parenting, juvenile delinquency, adult supervision, Karu Local Government Area.

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency remains a serious and widespread social problem in many societies and the family is usually the first place scholars look when they try to explain why some young people break the law while others do not. The term refers to the involvement of minors in behaviours that violate the legal, social or moral codes of a society, ranging from truancy and vandalism to theft, assault and substance abuse. Jacob (2020) describes it as a pattern of unlawful behaviour among minors driven by peer pressure, family instability and lack of access to education and mentorship, while Daniel (2021) traces it to the meeting of individual predispositions such as impulsivity and aggression with external pressures such as economic hardship. Building on these two views, this study conceptualises juvenile delinquency as violent behaviour, property

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offences, truancy and substance abuse among children aged 18 years and below in Karu Local Government Area.

Single parenting refers to a household arrangement in which one parent raises a child without the day-to-day involvement of the other, whether this follows parental separation, the death of a partner or birth to a single parent (Kroese et al., 2021). In this study, it is conceptualised through six indicators, namely living with a single parent, guidance on good choices, adult supervision after school, coping with stress, time spent outside the home and decision-making guidance. These indicators point to the way single parenting may be related to juvenile delinquency. Where one parent carries the duties of earning and caring alone, there is less time to check a child's movements after school, to talk through choices or to notice early signs of stress. Children in such homes may then spend more time outside the home and turn to friends for advice, which raises their exposure to truancy, theft, fighting and drug use. The reverse is also plausible, since a single parent who keeps close contact with a child and draws on relatives for help may protect that child as well as two parents would.

The link between single parenting and juvenile delinquency has been reported across regions, although its strength differs from one society to another. Saladino et al. (2021) reviewed studies from several countries and traced a recurring cycle in which troubled family relations, substance abuse and offending feed into one another during adolescence. In the United States, 25.1% of children under 18 years lived with one parent in 2023 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Using data on 1,523 American adolescents from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, Hong and Lee (2025) found that the move into a single-parent family significantly predicted increased delinquent behaviour, largely because such moves were followed by frequent changes of residence. A similar pattern appears in Europe, where Kroese et al. (2021) showed in a Dutch panel study that growing up with only one biological parent before the age of 12 raised the likelihood of adolescent crime. In Asia, Bu (2022) linked the declining stability of Chinese families to juvenile offending and observed that children who lose contact with one or both parents may become irritable and even violent. African studies point the same way. Onsando et al. (2021) studied 68 male juveniles at the Kamiti Youth Correction and Training Centre in Kenya and found that two-parent homes carried the least risk of delinquency, whereas homes where parents were absent carried the greatest risk. In Nigeria, the family carries much of the burden of guiding children because formal welfare services for young people are thinly spread. Folorunsho et al. (2024) therefore concluded that Nigerian children raised by single parents may be vulnerable to delinquency, although they cautioned that this is not true of every single-parent home.

Karu Local Government Area gives this question local weight. No official rate of juvenile delinquency has been published for the area, yet the signs of risk are visible in its busiest communities. In August 2021, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency raided drug joints in Masaka, Kara, Ruwa Ruwa and Uke, where at least 41 suspects were arrested with 65.25 kg of cannabis, codeine syrup, tramadol and other drugs (Daily Trust, 2021). Four years later, another suspect was arrested at Abacha Park in Mararaba with 79,040 pills of tramadol and diazepam (Nigerian Tribune, 2025). Although these arrests involved adults, they show how easily drugs reach the streets where children in Karu spend their free hours. The risk is likely to be sharper in single-parent homes, where one parent who works long hours may leave children with little adult supervision after school. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the effect of single parenting on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State.

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Statement of the Problem

Karu Local Government Area lies on the boundary between Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory, and many of its residents work in Abuja while their families live in Karu, where housing is cheaper. For a parent raising children alone, the daily journey to work and the pressure to earn may mean leaving home early and returning late, so children are left with little adult oversight for much of the day. Amos (2020) found that juveniles from single-parent households in Ibadan were 1.8 times more likely to engage in substance use than those from two-parent homes, and Ogugua (2022) reported that single parenting accounted for 21% of the variance in adolescent substance abuse behaviour in Enugu metropolis. Both studies, however, drew their samples from schools in southern cities and treated substance use as the only measure of delinquency, which is narrower than juvenile delinquency as a whole. It remains unclear, therefore, how single parenting affects juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. It is this gap that the present study addresses.

Research Question

What is the effect of single parenting on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State?

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to determine the effect of single parenting on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State.

Research Hypothesis

H_0: Single parenting has no significant effect on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area.

H_1: Single parenting has a significant effect on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area.

Literature Review

Amos (2020) carried out a study on single parenting and substance use among juveniles in Ibadan, Nigeria, using a cross-sectional survey of 420 secondary school students, and found through logistic regression that juveniles from single-parent households were 1.8 times more likely to engage in substance use than those from two-parent homes, with alcohol use at 34%. The study linked this pattern to gaps in supervision and peer pressure, although its focus on urban schools left the experience of out-of-school juveniles unexplored. In a related study, Alao (2021) assessed family structure and adolescent drug behaviour among 360 in-school youths in Ilorin, Kwara State, and found a significant relationship between single parenting and substance abuse ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.05$), with emotional neglect identified as a key pathway. Its reliance on self-reported data, however, may have affected reliability.

Anwuluorah (2020) examined parental marital status and juvenile substance abuse among 300 public secondary school students in Awka, Anambra State, and found that 29% of juveniles from single-parent families reported regular cannabis use compared with 14% from intact families ($\chi^2 = 11.62$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, Ogugua (2022) studied household structure and adolescent substance behaviour among 410 adolescents in Enugu metropolis and found that single parenting

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accounted for 21% of the variance in substance abuse behaviour ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.05$), though the study treated single parents as one group without separating widowed from separated parents.

Patricia (2023) assessed maternal single parenting and juvenile drug use among 280 juveniles in Calabar, Cross River State, through a mixed-method design and found higher mean substance use scores among juveniles from maternal single homes ($M = 3.2$) than among those from other homes ($M = 2.1$, $t = 4.38$, $p < 0.05$). Turning to fathers, Asike (2021) tracked 250 adolescents in Makurdi, Benue State, over 2 years and found that substance use among those from father-absent homes rose from 18% to 37% ($F = 6.21$, $p < 0.05$).

Closer to the question of control, Agulanna (2020) found in a case-control study of 200 juveniles in Owerri, Imo State, that single parenting raised the odds of substance use ($OR = 2.3$, $p < 0.01$), while Christopher (2024) reported from a survey of 500 respondents in Lagos Mainland that weak parental monitoring significantly predicted substance abuse (path coefficient = 0.52). Taken together, these studies point to a consistent link between single parenting and risky behaviour among Nigerian adolescents, with weak supervision appearing repeatedly as the route. Most of them, however, measured delinquency through substance use alone and drew their samples from schools. This article addresses a question that remains comparatively unexamined: how living with a single parent, guidance on good choices, adult supervision after school, coping with stress, time spent outside the home and decision-making guidance relate to juvenile delinquency among in-school and out-of-school children in Karu Local Government Area.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the Family Systems Theory. Originally developed by Bowen (1978) and expanded by Kerr and Bowen (1988), the theory views the family as an emotional unit in which members are so closely connected that a change in one part of the system is felt by all the others. Concepts such as differentiation of self, triangles and the family projection process explain how tension within the household passes from parents to children, and how children may respond with anxiety, withdrawal or acting out when the family loses its balance.

The theory has weaknesses that matter for a study of this kind. It was built largely on clinical work with Western, middle-class families and pays limited attention to the extended family networks common in Nigerian households, where grandparents, aunts and older siblings often take up the duties of a missing parent. Its concepts are also hard to measure directly, so the link between family emotional processes and a specific delinquent act is usually inferred rather than observed. The theory says little about poverty and the wider community, both of which may push a child towards delinquency regardless of how the family functions.

The theory is however applicable to this study because it holds that the absence of one parent alters roles, communication and control within the whole family system. In a single-parent home in Karu, the remaining parent often takes on both earning and caring, so supervision after school, guidance on choices and attention to a child's stress become thinner. The theory would therefore predict that where single parenting weakens supervision and guidance, juvenile delinquency rises, a prediction the present article tests directly within Karu Local Government Area.

Method

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design that combined quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The design made it possible to collect data from respondents at a

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single point in time and to measure statistically how single parenting relates to juvenile delinquency, while in-depth interviews drew out the everyday experiences behind the figures. The study was conducted in Karu Local Government Area, one of the 13 Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State, which lies on the boundary between Nasarawa State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, and serves as a residential area for many people who work in Abuja but prefer more affordable or less congested surroundings.

Participants

The population of the study comprised children aged 18 years and below residing in Karu Local Government Area, drawn from intact, divorced, separated and single-parent households and from both in-school and out-of-school children. Parents and caregivers, social workers, child protection officers, teachers, community leaders, youth leaders and women leaders in the Local Government Area were also engaged through interviews to supply supporting data.

Sample Technique and Size

Because the total number of children aged 18 years and below in Karu Local Government Area is not known, the sample size was determined using Bill's (2004) formula for infinite or unknown populations.

Formula for sample size calculation:
n

Where:

n = sample size
Z = z-value (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)
p = estimated population proportion (0.5)
q = 1 − p (0.5)
e = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values into the formula:
n =

n =

n = 384
To account for non-response, wrongly filled questionnaires and missing data, the sample size was increased by 15%:
15% of 384 = (15/100) × 384 = 57.6 ≈ 58
384 + 58 = 442
Therefore, the sample size required was 442.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used. In the first stage, Karu Local Government Area was clustered into its 11 council wards, namely Aso/Kodape, Agada/Bagaji, Karshi I, Karshi II, Kafin Shanu/Betti, Tattara/Kondoro, Gitata, Gurku/Kabusu, Uke, Panda/Kare and Karu, and 7 wards were selected through the fishbowl method, in which the names of all 11 wards were placed in a container and drawn one at a time without replacement. In the second stage, the sample was allocated to each selected ward in proportion to its observed size within the Local Government Area, so that bigger wards contributed more respondents, as shown in Table 1.

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Table 1: Sampling Distribution of Respondents

S/No	Political Ward	Allocated Sample Size
1	Karu	90
2	Uke	79
3	Karshi I	68
4	Gitata	64
5	Gurku/Kabusu	61
6	Panda/Kare	52
7	Aso/Kodape	28
	Total	**442**

Source: Author's Computation, 2025

In the third stage, communities were selected through simple random sampling from an official list of recognised communities in each ward, with a proportional number drawn where a ward had many communities. In the fourth stage, households were selected through systematic sampling, with every 4th household chosen after a random start from enumeration lists obtained from community leaders and local administrative records. Within each selected household, one eligible respondent was chosen by balloting where more than one was present, and the questionnaire was administered face to face after informed consent had been obtained.

For the qualitative aspect, 20 participants made up of parents, teachers, school administrators, guidance counsellors, social workers, social welfare officers, religious leaders, youth development officers and community youth leaders were selected through purposive sampling on account of their direct engagement with children and young people in the area, and took part in in-depth interviews.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire together with an in-depth interview guide. The section of the questionnaire used in this article measures single parenting through six items: whether the respondent lives with only one parent, who talks to the respondent most about making good choices, how often an adult checks the respondent's activities after school, what the respondent usually does when stressed, where most free time is spent and who guides important decisions.

The instruments were subjected to face and content validity through review by the supervisor and senior lecturers in the Department of Social Work, Federal University of Lafia, whose comments helped refine the clarity and relevance of the items. For reliability, the questionnaire was pilot tested and returned a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, which indicates good internal consistency. Quantitative data were coded and analysed with SPSS version 27 using frequencies, percentages and multiple regression analysis, while the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically.

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Ethical Considerations

An introduction letter was obtained from the Department of Social Work and presented to the Ministry of Education, Nasarawa State, to obtain ethical clearance for the study. Informed consent was secured from all participants, with permission obtained from parents or guardians for respondents who were minors. Personal identifiers were removed from the data and confidentiality was maintained throughout.

Results/Findings

A total of 461 questionnaires were administered to respondents across Karu Local Government Area, of which 421 were correctly completed and retrieved for analysis, a response rate of 91.3%. The remaining copies were set aside because of missing pages, incomplete responses or wrong entries.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	10–13	96	22.8
	14–16	181	43.0
	17–19	144	34.2
Sex	Male	214	50.8
	Female	207	49.2
School Level	JSS	148	35.2
	SS1–SS2	167	39.7
	SS3	106	25.2
Household Type	Both parents	154	36.6
	Single parent	203	48.2
	Guardian	64	15.2
Community	Auta Balefi	112	26.6
	Mararaba	134	31.8
	New Karu	97	23.0
	Others	78	18.5
Religion	Christianity	241	57.2
	Islam	161	38.2
	Other	19	4.5
Number of Siblings	1–2	113	26.8
	3–4	189	44.9
	5 and above	119	28.3

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 shows that respondents aged 14 to 16 years formed the largest age group at 43.0%, followed by those aged 17 to 19 years at 34.2% and those aged 10 to 13 years at 22.8%. Males accounted for 50.8% of the sample against 49.2% female, a near balance that reduces the risk of gender bias in later findings. Respondents in SS1 to SS2 formed the largest school level at 39.7%. On household type, 48.2% lived with a single parent, 36.6% with both parents and 15.2% with guardians, so nearly half of the sample came from the family form this study focuses on. Mararaba recorded the highest share of respondents at 31.8%, Christianity was the dominant religion at 57.2% and respondents with 3 to 4 siblings formed the largest group at 44.9%.

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Table 3: Distribution of Respondents' Views on Single Parenting and Juvenile Delinquency

Statement	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you live with only one parent?	Yes	164	39.0
	No	257	61.0
Who talks to you most about making good choices?	Parent	176	41.8
	Teacher	143	34.0
	Friends	102	24.2
How often does an adult check your activities after school?	Always	139	33.0
	Sometimes	167	39.7
	Hardly ever	115	27.3
When you feel stressed, what do you usually do?	Rest/sleep	152	36.1
	Talk to someone	137	32.5
	Go out with friends	132	31.4
Where do you spend most of your free time?	At home	181	43.0
	At school/lesson	133	31.6
	Outside with friends	107	25.4
Who guides you when making important decisions?	Parent/guardian	158	37.5
	Sibling/relative	132	31.4
	Friends	131	31.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows that 164 respondents (39.0%) lived with only one parent, while 257 (61.0%) lived with both parents or guardians. Parents were the main source of advice on good choices at 41.8%, but teachers (34.0%) and friends (24.2%) together accounted for more than half of the responses. Only 33.0% of respondents said an adult always checked their activities after school, while 27.3% were hardly ever checked. When stressed, 36.1% rested or slept, 32.5% talked to someone and 31.4% went out with friends. Most free time was spent at home (43.0%), although 25.4% spent it outside with friends. On important decisions, 37.5% relied on a parent or guardian, while 31.4% turned to a sibling or relative and 31.1% to friends. The pattern indicates that adult supervision and guidance were thin for a large share of respondents, with friends and relatives filling much of the space that parents would ordinarily occupy.

Test of Hypothesis

H_0: Single parenting has no significant effect on juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.768[a]	0.590	0.582	0.663

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a. Predictors: (Constant), Living with single parent, Guidance on good choices, Adult supervision after school, Coping with stress, Time spent outside home, Decision-making guidance

Table 5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	462.115	6	77.019	175.216	0.000
Residual	320.876	414	0.775		
Total	783.000	420			

Dependent Variable: Juvenile delinquency

Table 6: Summary Result of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.230	0.168		7.321	0.000
Living with single parent	0.215	0.034	0.221	6.324	0.0013
Guidance on good choices	0.188	0.031	0.193	6.065	0.0021
Adult supervision after school	0.202	0.032	0.208	6.313	0.0018
Coping with stress	0.176	0.030	0.180	5.867	0.0025
Time spent outside home	0.207	0.034	0.212	6.088	0.0017
Decision-making guidance	0.199	0.031	0.205	6.419	0.0014

Source: Author's Computation, 2025

To determine whether single parenting significantly affects juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using the six single-parenting indicators. The model summary in Table 4 produced a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.768, indicating a strong positive relationship between single parenting and juvenile delinquency. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.590, meaning that 59.0% of the variation in juvenile delinquency was explained by the six predictors jointly, while the adjusted R^2 stood at 0.582 and the standard error of the estimate was 0.663. The ANOVA in Table 5 returned an F-value of 175.216 at a significance level of 0.000, which shows that the model as a whole was statistically significant.

The coefficients in Table 6 showed that living with a single parent carried the strongest weight ($\beta = 0.221$, $t = 6.324$, $p = 0.0013$), followed by time spent outside the home ($\beta = 0.212$, $t = 6.088$, $p = 0.0017$), adult supervision after school ($\beta = 0.208$, $t = 6.313$, $p = 0.0018$) and decision-making guidance ($\beta = 0.205$, $t = 6.419$, $p = 0.0014$). Guidance on good choices ($\beta = 0.193$, $t = 6.065$, $p = 0.0021$) and coping with stress ($\beta = 0.180$, $t = 5.867$, $p = 0.0025$) also reached statistical significance. Given that the significance value of 0.000 fell below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis was rejected. Single parenting therefore significantly affects juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. To extend the quantitative findings, in-depth interviews were conducted with participants in Karu Local Government Area to explore how single parenting relates to juvenile behaviour. The accounts below illustrate the pathways participants described.

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One respondent explained that being raised by a single parent often means that one adult handles many responsibilities at once. In such situations, juveniles may not receive enough supervision or guidance. I have observed that some young people spend more time outside the home without proper monitoring. This increases their exposure to peers who may influence them negatively. Without close parental attention, adolescents may adopt risky behaviours as a way of coping with stress or fitting in. The issue is not deliberate neglect, but the pressure single parents face in balancing work and parenting **(IDI 16, Male, Civil Servant, 46 years, 2025).**
The account points to the weight of responsibility that falls on one adult in a single-parent home and how this thins the supervision available to adolescents. The participant traces a clear path from reduced monitoring to more time with peers and then to risky behaviour, while noting that the problem lies in the pressure on the parent rather than in deliberate neglect. The response therefore supports the study objective by showing that single parenting contributes to juvenile delinquency through reduced supervision and limited parental availability.

Another participant stated that from my experience as a teacher, students from single-parent households sometimes lack consistent guidance after school hours. Because the parent is often busy working, juveniles may be left on their own for long periods. During this time, peers become their main influence. I have noticed that some adolescents make poor decisions because no adult is present to guide or correct them. This lack of supervision makes them vulnerable to risky behaviours, especially when they seek acceptance from friends **(IDI 17, Female, Secondary School Teacher, 37 years, 2025).**
The teacher's account moves the discussion to the hours after school, when work keeps many single parents away from home. The observation that peers become the main influence during these hours lines up with the significant weight recorded for adult supervision after school and time spent outside the home in the regression model. The account links single parenting to juvenile delinquency through weakened supervision and greater dependence on peers.

A further respondent explained that single parenting can create emotional gaps for children, especially when they miss the presence of one parent. Some adolescents feel lonely or unsupported, which affects their behaviour. I have interacted with youths who admitted that emotional stress pushed them toward unhealthy coping strategies. When guidance is limited, juveniles may rely on peers for advice, even when such advice is harmful. Emotional instability combined with peer pressure increases their vulnerability to risky behaviours **(IDI 18, Male, Youth Development Officer, 33 years, 2025).**
This account shows that the influence of single parenting reaches beyond supervision into the emotional lives of juveniles. In the participant's view, loneliness and emotional strain push some adolescents towards unhealthy coping and towards peers whose advice may be harmful, a pattern consistent with the significant contribution of coping with stress in the regression analysis.

Another participant explained that many single parents struggle financially, which affects the level of care and supervision they can provide. I have observed that economic stress often forces parents to work long hours, leaving juveniles unsupervised. During these periods, adolescents may roam freely and interact with negative influences. The absence of structured routines and guidance increases their exposure to risky behaviours. Financial hardship, therefore, indirectly contributes to juvenile vulnerability in single-parent households **(IDI 19, Female, Social Worker, 44 years, 2025).**
The participant introduces economic pressure as the force behind reduced supervision, since single parents who struggle financially must work long hours. This suggests that single parenting

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may affect juvenile delinquency through economic strain as much as through family structure, with routine and guidance becoming harder to keep within the home.

A community youth leader stated that in the community, juveniles from single-parent homes are often influenced by their immediate environment. Without strong parental monitoring, they may easily follow peers who engage in risky activities. I have noticed that such adolescents spend more time outside the home, especially in unsupervised locations. Over time, these environments shape their attitudes and behaviours. Single parenting, therefore, increases the need for community support to guide juveniles toward positive choices **(IDI 20, Male, Community Youth Leader, 49 years, 2025).**
This account widens the discussion to the community, showing that limited monitoring at home leaves juveniles more exposed to unsupervised places where risky activities are common. It ties the influence of single parenting to conditions outside the household and to the need for community support.

Across the five accounts, single parenting appeared as reduced supervision after school, emotional strain, economic pressure and heavy reliance on peers. Participants consistently linked these conditions to risky behaviour among juveniles, a pattern that mirrors the significant coefficients recorded for supervision, time spent outside the home and decision-making guidance in the quantitative data and confirms single parenting as a significant contributor to juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area.

Discussions

The study examined single parenting and juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area. The study found that single parenting significantly affects juvenile delinquency, with living with a single parent, time spent outside the home and adult supervision after school carrying the greatest weight. This suggests that the risk lies less in the family form itself than in the thinner supervision that often comes with it, since interview participants described homes where one parent manages many duties and adolescents receive limited guidance after school. This finding is in line with Silva (2021), who reported that reduced parental presence increased vulnerability among young people, and with Amos (2020), who linked the higher substance use of juveniles from single-parent homes in Ibadan to gaps in supervision.

The study also found that guidance on decision making and on good choices contributed significantly to juvenile delinquency, and participants described how peers gradually replace parents as reference figures when parental availability is limited. Table 3 showed that friends and relatives together guided 62.5% of respondents on important decisions. This finding agrees with Veeira (2020), who observed that weak parental guidance increases reliance on peer norms among adolescents, and with Onoh (2024), who noted that fragmented guidance from several sources increases behavioural uncertainty among young people.

Adult supervision after school and the use of free time point to the same problem. Participants described adolescents spending long hours unsupervised outside the home, which opens room for experimentation and peer influence. This is consistent with Cadmus (2022), who found that unsupervised time strongly predicts adolescent engagement in risky behaviour, and with Ikeako (2021), who found that unstructured leisure time increases adolescent risk exposure. Coping with stress, though the weakest of the six indicators, was still significant, and interview accounts of

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loneliness and emotional gaps support Owoaje's (2023) observation that emotional vulnerability within non-traditional households increases susceptibility to unhealthy coping practices.

These findings agree with the assumptions of the Family Systems Theory, which holds that the absence of one parent alters roles, communication and control throughout the family system. The significant weight of the supervision and guidance items bears out the theory's claim that strain within the household passes on to children, while the role played by relatives and community members in the interview accounts introduces a mild qualification: in Karu, the family system extends beyond the nuclear household, and the gaps left by an absent parent are sometimes filled, though not always consistently, by others.

Conclusion

This study has shown that single parenting, expressed through living with a single parent, guidance on good choices, adult supervision after school, coping with stress, time spent outside the home and decision-making guidance, significantly affects juvenile delinquency in Karu Local Government Area, Nasarawa State. Living with a single parent, time spent outside the home and adult supervision after school carried the greatest statistical weight, indicating that the amount of adult oversight a child receives matters as much as the structure of the household. Interview participants reinforced this pattern, describing long working hours, economic strain, emotional gaps and reliance on peers as the channels through which single parenting reaches juvenile behaviour. The study therefore establishes that single parenting contributes to juvenile delinquency in Karu mainly through reduced supervision and guidance rather than through deliberate neglect by parents.

Recommendation

Based on the finding that living with a single parent, time spent outside the home and adult supervision after school carried the greatest weight in explaining juvenile delinquency, the study recommends that the social welfare office of Karu Local Government Area, working with school authorities and community leaders, run supervised after-school programmes for children from single-parent homes, such as homework clubs and sports activities held in schools or community centres until parents return from work. Single parents should also be linked with relatives or trusted neighbours who can check on their children during working hours.

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