

Problems of single mothers in adult education



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The rates of single parenthood have been increasing in the last two to three decades a fact that could be attributed to the increased divorce rates as well as people's changed lifestyles. All in all, the number of single mothers is always higher than that of single fathers. Single mothers face more challenges as opposed to their counterparts the single fathers in bringing up of their children. Raising a child or children single handedly in the modern times is a very difficult task both financially as well as psychologically.

There are various reasons as to why single mothers gain such identity. Some are single as a result of the death of a spouse, divorce, by choice or due to early and unwanted pregnancies which is common among teenagers. Single parents strive to make ends meet by enrolling in community based colleges as well as other facilities that offer adult education which include high schools and universities. The major challenges facing single mothers in their pursuit for adult education are economical, time and emotional or psychological. (Anna. J, 2005).

Some lack the finances to pay for their education and even when they acquire the funds balancing school, work and home single handedly is a major challenge. Single mothers have a higher probability of suffering from stress and depression as they try to offer their children decent lifestyles. This paper focuses on the major challenges facing single mothers in adult education although their general problems will be highlighted. Single parenthood is a societal problem due to the fact that they have minimal resources to bring up their children.

Increased rates of single parent families' raises much concern as single parenthood is associated with poverty which has a national impact. (Anna J, 2005). A 1999 research established that the rate single parents subjected to poverty was 34% higher than that of two parent families. Single mothers also tend to have food insecurity which implies that they lack quality as well as quantity food thus compromising on their health. (Nord M and Andrews M. 2003). Single mothers are forced to work in more than two jobs to make ends meet. In the current times where the costs of living have escalated to unimaginable levels they are forced to work extremely hard to provide food, clothing and shelter for their children. Those with no family support face the music as the burden is extremely heavy. The situation is worse especially to those restricted from working due to the fact that child care services are expensive hence unaffordable and they may be forced to leave the younger children with their older siblings as they seek for casual jobs. (Kinnear K, 1999).

At times the older siblings follow their mothers to supplement on their incomes. The lack of finances see their children drop from school especially when placing food on the table is on itself a very difficult task let alone paying school fees. Health care is also a great problem for the single mothers as most of them lack health insurance and have to rely on the expensive ' out of pocket' approach to cover for their health care needs. Many single mothers have a college diploma, a fact that deters them from accessing better paying jobs that would see them improve their standards of living. To attain a well paying job in the high competitive job market it is imperative to have quality education which is possible through the various <https://assignbuster.com/problems-of-single-mothers-in-adult-education/>

adult education programs. There are several organizations that offer loans to single mothers to pursue their academic dreams although their effectiveness in terms of coverage is compromised due to the lack of information or knowledge by some single mothers.

Again, the need to work does not cease with the provision of a school loan, in any case it triggers the desire to work harder. The largest proportion of low income earners in the US is comprised of single mother's and this could best explain their inability to easily provide basic needs for their families. A research established that most single parents face housing problems. Some may be constrained to live in shelters, with relatives or even under the bridges. The low paying jobs have no or minimal benefits as can be bore witness by a research carried out in New York City in 2005 which established that more single mothers worked in the low paying jobs and had minimal support.

(Jones D, 2006). The situation is not any different in other states across the US. These mothers were also faced with other challenges and over 80% of the single women in employment lacked employment based health benefits both for themselves as well as their children. (Shulman B, 2003).

Approximately 38% of those with employment based cover lacked Medicaid, Family Health Plus as well as Child Health Plus benefits and this still creates barriers in their accessing health care services.

The employment based cover is not comprehensive necessitating the use of the ' out of pocket approach' which is difficult for people with low wages. Over a third of the single mothers revealed that they had to forfeit health

care services due to the lack of affordability. Economical constraints that hinder accessibility to quality and timely health care services can to some extent compromise on their academic excellence. It is also a source of emotional instability which has a negative effect on education. (Shulman B, 2003).

The working conditions where most single mothers work are also hostile or unpleasant and overworking is a norm. Over half of these places do not offer a day off or a sick off and some risk losing their jobs to stay with a sick child. They are also denied paid vacation and this restrains them from taking a break from work as a day without work is a day without food on the table. In such forms of employment single mothers may be forced to stop working to pursue their educational goals and this worsens their financial conditions. (Shulman B, 2003).

Single parent's financial problems are higher due to the lack of government assistance programs. Without appropriate child support enforcement programs to ensure that the fathers also take part in the upbringing of their children the single mothers have a bigger burden. The government also fails in the provision of other benefits such as subsidized school fees for the children from single parents and more so the single mothers. A combination of the minimal benefits in their work place, from the government and their inadequate human capital spells doom for the single mothers. (Shulman B, 2003). Due to their financial problems single mothers are more likely to live in unfavorable neighborhoods where housing is cheaper.

These regions tend to be overcrowded, have higher crime rates, run down housing, inadequate community based services, broken families, have higher isolation, alienation and health problems. Language may also be an issue in such regions with higher populations of people from the minority races. These conditions do not favor effective adult education. (Anna J, 2005).

Another challenge facing single mothers is timing and consequently effective parenting. (Quinn P and Allen K, 1989). As they move from one job to the next and to schools they lack the time to nurture their children effectively and the cases of teenage pregnancies and drug abuse will tend to be higher among the children of single parents as opposed to those in two parents families. Children from single mothers are more likely to suffer from mental problems or disorders, a factor that can be blamed on the tough financial problems that they face as well as their parent's poor parenting. Economic difficulties are responsible for their parent's struggles which compromise on their parenting skills leaving them depressed.

The children's mental health complications or conditions may affect their academic performance and if this is not checked it could cement the vicious circle of poverty in such families. (Anna J, 2005). When their children are facing problems the parents will also be affected and this could have an impact on their education. The low wage paying jobs do not favor effective child care. They lack flexibility and the constantly changing schedules and the overtime and night shift programs are a common occurrence. (Shulman B, 2003).

The minimal or no on job training also ensures that single mothers whose proportion is the largest in the low wage job market retain the same wages for long. The conditions in the low wage paying jobs are also emotionally degrading as they have surveillance cameras as well as time clocks to monitor the workers. Some also inspect the workers before they leave the premises to ensure that they do not steal any items. All these degrading acts could jeopardize their self respect, dignity and esteem.

(Shulman B, 2003). Working single mothers face discrimination in the male dominated society. At times they have to work in the traditional women roles which are characterized by low wages and even when they work in similar positions as men they tend to earn less. The prevailing social support programs are ineffective and inefficient and movement from reliance on welfare to work is not rewarding for the single mothers. The low wages earned and the elimination of benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid leave the single mothers worse off than they were when unemployed. The wages of single parents though slightly above the minimal wages are very low to allow them lead decent lifestyles.

(Jones D, 2006). There is need for the provision of social support programs both at the state as well as the societal levels to ensure that single mothers' plight is changed. The government support programs that have been put in place are ineffective in the sense that they do not cater for the populations they ought to cover. Few single mothers have subsidized child care services to allow them work or study effectively. The government can intervene by raising the minimal wages so that the general standards of living are raised.

Though considered an effective approach, the law makers have made this a distant reality or dream.

Another approach suggested to resolving the single mother's plight is the adoption of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a form of tax credit for the single mothers leaving them with a higher disposable income to cater for their needs as well as those of their children. This approach would encourage single mothers to work as their work would be rewarded amicably.

Employment would be more attractive unlike the current situation where working mothers lead miserable lives. (Jones D, 2006). Reducing the number of single mothers is possible at the state level especially by reducing the number of adolescent pregnancies. In this respect the federal state since 1996 welfare reforms rewards the states that have low rates of adolescent pregnancies.

The federal government intervention is also evident in the tax credit for the married to encourage two parent families. It can also assist through financing of community based programs especially those that promote fatherhood, marriages as well as effective resolution of conflicts at the family level to pave way for reduced divorce rates thus instilling or embracing the marriage culture. Making the divorce process difficult can also ensure that people stick to their marriages and bring their families up in decent lifestyles. When the consequences of divorce are dire or when the process is cumbersome people may tend to explore other options like making their marriages work unlike it would be the case if the divorce process is easy. (Jones D, 2006). Financial assistance would allow the single mothers realize

their academic dreams and also place them at a better position in the highly competitive job market.

(College Scholarships. org, 2008). Provision of health care benefits would also allow them have more money at their disposable to meet the basic needs. Reducing their taxes would also be a way to assist them provide for their children. Higher incomes will see them afford decent housing; quality health care and education both for themselves as well as for their children and the chances for a vicious circle of poverty would be eliminated.

The government also needs to intervene in providing for them subsidized housing to lighten their burden. However, it is also important that strict regulations be put in place to ensure that both parents take responsibilities in the upbringing of their children. The provision of basic education for those with communication problems especially women of color would be appropriate to allow them access places in the job market. It would also ensure that they stand a better chance in attaining adult education that will ensure their acquisition of skills needed in the market.

It is important that single mothers join single mothers support programs that will empower them in the tough job of bringing up their children while pursuing their academic goals or objectives. In these groups they will share their experiences and acquire new skills of how to tackle certain issues as they arise. The challenges of being in school and working in more than one job will be easier when one has a mentor or someone who has been through it before. This way the rate at which they suffer from depression and other

psychological problems that will have a negative impact on their education will be minimal.