

Psychological Impact of Empowerment Programs on Single Mothers in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Eldoret Presbytery, Kenya

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Abstract

Single mothers in Kenya, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas like Eldoret, face severe socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, unemployment and high cost of living coupled with significant psycho-social pressure, including marginalization and stigma. This dual burden frequently results in heightened psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression and low self-efficacy. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) is a key provider of community support, implementing various empowerment programs to offer financial, social, and spiritual aid through its local Presbyteries. However, the psychological impact and effectiveness of these specific PCEA empowerment initiatives on the self-efficacy and overall mental well-being of single mothers in the Eldoret Presbytery remain critically under-documented. This knowledge gap affects the church's ability to refine interventions, allocate resources effectively and advocate for complementary services. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the psychological impacts of PCEA empowerment programs on single mothers in Eldoret Presbytery, Kenya. This research was grounded on Feminist Theory. The study utilized mixed-methods approach, adopting a convergent parallel design. The target population comprised single mothers, evangelists, and pastors affiliated with PCEA Eldoret Presbytery. A total of 160 participants were included, consisting of 150 single mothers selected through a census approach and 10 pastors and evangelists purposively chosen for their direct involvement in empowerment programs. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using SPSS (descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation) and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that PCEA's empowerment initiatives enhance single mothers' psychological and socio-economic well-being, with significant improvements in self-esteem, resilience, coping capacity and access to social networks. Financial empowerment, particularly through microfinance and vocational training, complemented psychological benefits by reducing stress linked to economic insecurity. However, significant gaps remain, as some participants reported inconsistent access to counseling services, limited professional mental health support, and insufficient inclusivity in program design. Correlation analysis

confirmed a strong positive relationship between psychological empowerment and overall empowerment outcomes ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the central role of mental health in sustaining broader empowerment. The study concludes that empowerment programs run by PCEA have a measurable positive psychological impact on single mothers, but their effectiveness is constrained by resource limitations and inconsistent service delivery. It recommends strengthening mental health support, professional counseling and inclusive program structures to enhance resilience and sustainable empowerment among single mothers.

Keywords: Single mothers, psychological empowerment, Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), faith-based organizations, Eldoret Presbytery, mental health

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Introduction

Single motherhood has become a widespread global demographic phenomenon, driven by evolving social norms and urbanization (Jain & Mahmoodi, 2022). Despite its increasing prevalence, single mothers universally encounter heightened challenges. Global studies consistently document that the dual burden of being the sole breadwinner and primary caregiver leads to severe socioeconomic hurdles, including financial insecurity and resource scarcity, which in turn generate chronic stress and psychological distress (Sihag, 2025; Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024). Consequently, single mothers globally face a significantly higher risk of anxiety,

depression, and social isolation compared to their partnered counterparts (Vo & Canty, 2023). However, access to strong social and informal support networks is a recognized protective factor that helps mitigate these risks, enhancing well-being and reducing parenting stress, particularly among low-income mothers (Radey et al., 2018).

In Africa, these global challenges are intensified by socio-cultural pressures. Single motherhood, especially from non-marital births or divorce, is often stigmatized under patriarchal norms that idealize two-parent households (Feuerbacher, 2019; Richter & Morrell, 2008). Studies from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and

Ethiopia report that single mothers face social ostracism, heightened household adversity, and psychological strain manifesting in feelings of helplessness and irritability (Callaghan et al., 2021; Teshome, 2024; Maponga, 2022). Weak state social protection compels single mothers to rely heavily on informal networks, fostering resilience but also creating overstretched self-reliance.

Kenya reflects similar patterns, where single motherhood is widespread and increasing. National data show that women head about one-third of households, with female-headed families concentrated in urban centers (KDHS, 2022; KNBS, 2022). Single mothers in Kenya often face poverty, food insecurity, and exclusion from formal social support systems (Omwoyo, 2023). Rapid urbanization in towns like Eldoret, a commercial hub of the North Rift, intensifies these pressures as high living costs combine with weakened kinship structures (Clark et al., 2024). Empirical studies reveal that single mothers are nearly twice as likely to experience psychological distress compared to married peers, a condition linked to lack of paternal support and fragile social networks (Clark et al., 2021). In fact, Ngigi (2017) found that Kenyan women have a 60% likelihood of becoming single parents before age 45, due to either non-marital births or marital dissolution. Broader drivers include poverty, migration, and shifting family values that normalize singlehood (Mbithi, 2019).

In response to this pervasive need, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) play a significant and integral role in providing social protection and community services in Kenya (Njagi, 2017). The Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), known for its commitment to holistic ministry, implements extensive community development, health and educational programs (Mwindi, Kagema &

Kithinji, 2024). Through its structures, such as the Women's Guild in the Eldoret Presbytery, the church runs targeted empowerment programs that include welfare groups, counseling, vocational training, and microfinance support. Research on FBO-led initiatives across Africa shows that such programs can provide crucial psychosocial and livelihood support, strengthening coping capacities and resilience (Amoah et al., 2022). Specifically, microfinance components have been shown to improve financial literacy, asset accumulation, and household decision-making power (Lim & Karlan, 2016; Mwawana, 2011). This evident knowledge gap limits the PCEA's ability to refine, scale, and advocate for its programs effectively. Without empirical data, the church cannot determine which elements of its empowerment model are most successful in promoting psychological resilience. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the psychological impact of empowerment programs for single mothers in the PCEA Eldoret Presbytery, Kenya.

Theoretical framework

The study is guided by Marxist Feminism, a critical theoretical framework developed from the broader Marxist tradition and articulated by scholars like Dr. Maxine Baca Zinn (Nunag-Hicks, 2015). This perspective examines the subordination of women through the lens of capitalism, class relations, and economic power. It asserts that gender inequality is not a natural condition but a socially constructed system that fundamentally serves capitalist interests. According to this critique, capitalism benefits from women's unpaid domestic labor and reproductive roles by sustaining itself with a reserve of cheap labor and ensuring the reproduction of the workforce (Ferguson, 2017). By keeping women in subordinate

positions both within the household and the labor market, the system perpetuates their economic marginalization.

A key feature of Marxist feminism is its intersectional analysis of how gender oppression overlaps with other forms of social inequality, including class, race, and sexuality (Neitz, 2018). This approach acknowledges that oppression is not uniform; for example, single mothers from working-class or marginalized racial groups often face compounded struggles balancing low-paying jobs with unpaid domestic responsibilities and systemic prejudice. Given this structural critique, Marxist feminists argue that meaningful liberation for women requires the dismantling of the capitalist system itself, rather than relying solely on superficial reforms like equal pay. While reforms are important, true emancipation requires a radical restructuring of economic and social relations to eliminate the system's dependence on women's unpaid and underpaid work (Ferguson, 2017). This analysis continues to evolve by incorporating global and postcolonial perspectives, addressing issues like the exploitation of women in global supply chains and the feminization of poverty worldwide. Applying Marxist Feminist theory to this study allows for a critical evaluation of the structural and institutional factors that affect single mothers in the PCEA Eldoret Presbytery.

This framework is key because it challenges societal expectations that tie a woman's worth and financial well-being to her marital status, advocating instead for economic independence, individual agency, and autonomy (Neitz, 2018; Winkler, 2020). It critiques the notion that marriage is a prerequisite for financial stability and highlights the importance of dismantling economic dependencies (Ferguson, 2017).

Empirical Review

A critical aspect of the church's role in psychological empowerment is the sense of community it provides. Studies have demonstrated that churches function as communities where single mothers can find mutual support, share experiences, and access emotional resources. Brodsky (2000) asserts that church communities are vital for single mothers, offering them a network of individuals who understand their struggles. Being part of such a community can significantly reduce feelings of isolation and stress, which are commonly experienced by single mothers. This social network also offers opportunities for single mothers to engage in peer counseling, attend group therapy sessions, and participate in church-led empowerment programs, which help them develop coping mechanisms for managing the challenges of single parenthood (Ngigi, 2017).

The church is key in reducing stress and promoting effective coping mechanisms for single mothers. Religious involvement has been linked to lower levels of psychological distress, as it provides single mothers with the tools to manage life's challenges more effectively. Masters, Emerson and Hooker, (2022) argue that religious practices, including prayer, meditation, and participation in church activities, are associated with reduced stress levels and enhanced emotional regulation. Furthermore, churches often provide specific programs designed to help single mothers develop better coping strategies. For example, support groups and counseling services can help single mothers process their emotions, learn stress management techniques, and build resilience against future adversities.

In a Nigerian review, Amuche (2021) discusses how societal stigma

against single motherhood in Africa can lead to psychological distress. The study asserts that the church has a biblical mandate to go beyond spiritual guidance and address these psychological burdens through practical assistance and education. It emphasizes that a failure to do so can contribute to the very challenges such as low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness that single mothers face.

A study in Lusaka, Zambia, found that a pervasive stigma against single parents is a major challenge, even within the church community (Mubanga & Kasongo, 2023). This stigma often leads to feelings of insecurity and exclusion, which are significant psychological barriers. The study recommended that churches use their family life departments to sensitize members and provide counseling to foster a more accommodating and psychologically supportive environment for single mothers and their children.

Similarly, a South African study by Makbuhele (2015) found that single parents are often “stigmatized, victimized, and sidelined” within the church. The research argues that these negative perceptions, rooted in conservative Christian values, can exacerbate feelings of isolation and frustration. The study concluded with a call for the church to practice unconditional acceptance and to develop ministries that are more sensitive to the psychological needs of single mothers. Suwardani and Yasintha (2019) found that single mothers often rely on religion to cope with stress, though evidence on its effectiveness remains mixed. No prior research has quantitatively synthesized findings on religious coping and psychological adjustment specifically for single mothers. This study addresses that gap by examining the efficacy of situation-specific religious coping strategies in helping single mothers manage stress.

In Kenya Kubai, (2023) noted that churches frequently engage in social outreach and community development initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable populations, including single mothers. Some churches provide financial assistance, food aid, educational scholarships, and vocational training programs to help single mothers improve their economic stability and provide for their families. Additionally, church-based microfinance initiatives and savings groups offer opportunities for single mothers to access financial resources and build sustainable livelihoods (Kubai, 2023). Churches in Kenya often advocate for social justice, gender equality, and the rights of marginalized groups, including single mothers. Through advocacy campaigns, community mobilization efforts, and partnerships with government agencies and NGOs, churches work to address systemic issues such as poverty, gender-based violence, and discrimination that impact single mothers. Through empowering single mothers to advocate for their rights and access resources, churches contribute to their psychological well-being and social inclusion.

Several empirical studies from Kenya highlight the church's complex role in the psychological empowerment of single mothers, serving as both a source of support and, at times, a contributor to feelings of stigma and exclusion. The church's influence on a single mother's psychological well-being is multifaceted, stemming from the community it provides, the leadership it offers, and its capacity to address or exacerbate social stigma. A key aspect of psychological empowerment is the provision of a supportive community that fosters resilience. According to Ngigi (2017), the emotional and social support provided by fellow church members helps single mothers build resilience and cope with their struggles. This finding is echoed by

Ekitala (2018) in his study of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in Eldoret, which noted that the church organizes community support networks that mitigate feelings of isolation and offer crisis intervention and counseling services. These structured platforms for mutual support and guidance provide a safe space for single mothers to address their emotional and psychological challenges, which is foundational to their well-being.

The attitudes and theological stances of church leaders and congregations significantly impact a single mother's psychological state. A study by Kahindi (2018) on Nairobi congregations found that while churches offer spiritual care and counseling, inconsistent inclusion policies and stigma often limit single mothers' full participation. This, in turn, can affect psychological outcomes such as self-efficacy and community integration. Similarly, Katheriya (2020) showed that while Methodist churches offer strong peer solidarity, patriarchal constraints can “dampen voice and visibility” in ministries, negatively impacting a single mother's sense of self-worth. This study found that psychological empowerment increased significantly where clergy framed singleness as compatible with a full and valued Christian identity, demonstrating the profound psychological effect of theological affirmation.

The issue of stigma is a major barrier to genuine psychological empowerment. Kubai (2023), in a study on unmarried single mothers in the Methodist church, found that pastoral attitudes and congregational norms often shape access to leadership and social support. The study links inclusive pastoral care directly with better psychosocial outcomes, emphasizing that a welcoming environment is critical for psychological health. This is further reinforced by Moturi

(2021) in Kisii County, who noted that barriers such as financial strain and stigma lead to reduced participation in church life, creating a vicious cycle of social and psychological isolation. The research by Kiragu et al. (2024) on the Kerith Churches network highlights this by recommending that programs be redesigned with direct input from single mothers and that consistent pastoral advocacy be employed to reduce stigma, which they identify as a key predictor of empowerment. While existing literature highlights the significant psychological role of the church in empowering single mothers, there remains a gap in research focusing on the specific context of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), particularly in Eldoret Presbytery, Kenya. Most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, with limited attention paid to African churches and their unique role in supporting single mothers within specific socio-cultural and economic settings. Furthermore, while emotional and spiritual support has been well-documented, there is limited empirical research on how these psychological interventions specifically address the needs of single mothers in the PCEA church.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, specifically a convergent parallel design, in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The study was conducted in Eldoret Presbytery, located in Uasin Gishu County in the North Rift Region of Kenya. The presbytery comprises eight parishes with multiple congregations, overseen by pastors, evangelists, and church elders,

who play active roles in ministry and administration.

The study targeted single mothers who were members of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in the Eldoret Presbytery, alongside pastors and evangelists who were considered key informants due to their direct involvement in ministering to and supporting single mothers. The total target population was 163 individuals, consisting of 150 single mothers, 6 pastors, and 7 evangelists.

Given the manageable population size, the study purposively selected five parishes out of eight and adopted a census approach to include all 150 single mothers. Census research eliminated sampling error and provided comprehensive coverage of the target group. Additionally, five pastors and five evangelists were purposively selected due to their positions and roles in providing insights into empowerment initiatives. This resulted in a final sample of 160 participants, representing 98% of the target population.

Data collection involved the use of both questionnaires and interview guides. Structured questionnaires with closed- and open-ended questions were administered to single mothers and evangelists. Closed-ended questions produced quantifiable data while open-ended questions captured richer, subjective insights. To enhance accessibility, questionnaires were translated into English, Kiswahili, and local languages. They were distributed in both physical and digital formats, broadening participation and improving inclusivity. Semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data from pastors, providing both structured responses and opportunities for detailed exploration of participants' views and experiences. Interviews were conducted in person where possible, while phone calls and

online platforms such as Google Meet were used to reach participants in distant parishes.

Pilot testing was carried out before the main data collection. A small group equivalent to 10% of the sample, drawn from similar church settings, participated in the pilot to refine and test the reliability of the instruments. Validity of the tools was examined through construct, content, and predictive validity, with reviews from academicians, church leaders, and social science experts ensuring the instruments adequately captured church empowerment dimensions. Reliability was tested through internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha, where coefficients above 0.70 were considered acceptable for data collection (Daud et al., 2018). Trustworthiness of the qualitative strand was achieved through triangulation, prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and reflexivity, which strengthened the credibility, dependability, and authenticity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2014; Birt et al., 2016).

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means summarized the data, while Pearson's correlation was employed to examine the relationship between church empowerment initiatives and the psychological well-being of single mothers. A significance level of 0.05 guided the interpretation of inferential statistics. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended responses were thematically analyzed, focusing on recurrent issues and patterns aligned with the study objectives. Narratives were presented with direct quotations from participants to reflect lived experiences. Ethical standards guided the study at every stage.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographics information was collected from single mothers who participated in the study, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of single mother respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–35 years	60	42.9
	35–60 years	55	39.3
	More than 60 years	25	17.8
Number of Children	1–2 children	70	50.0
	2–4 children	50	35.7
	More than 4 children	20	14.3
Ever Married	Yes	95	67.9
	No	45	32.1
Reason for Parting (among ever married)	Death of spouse	40	42.1
	Divorce	25	26.3
	Separated	15	15.8
	Abandonment	10	10.5
	Other	5	5.3

Source: Research data 2025

The study achieved a 93.3% response rate (140 out of 150 single mothers), allowing for a comprehensive demographic profile of respondents. Age distribution showed that 42.9% were between 18–35 years, 39.3% were 35–60 years, and 17.8% were over 60 years, reflecting diverse life stages and challenges. Regarding family size, half of the respondents (50.0%) had 1–2 children, 35.7% had 2–4 children, and 14.3% had more than four children, indicating varying parenting and economic responsibilities. The main reasons for single parenthood included accidental pregnancy (35.7%), lack of choice (28.6%), abandonment (21.4%), and intentional choice of single motherhood (14.3%). In terms of marital history, 67.9% had ever been married, with separation driven by the death of a spouse (42.1%), divorce (26.3%), separation (15.8%), abandonment (10.5%), and other causes (5.3%). The demographic profile shows that single

mothers in this study have diverse life experiences, with a significant proportion in their prime working years, aligning with studies that link age distribution to socio-economic responsibilities and church participation patterns.

Descriptive Statistics

Empowerment

The study assessed the empowerment of single mothers in Eldoret, North Rift, and Kenya. Responses were categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Uncertain (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5). Results indicated that increased levels of mental health support resulted in reduced stress and improved mental health, 30 respondents (21.4%) strongly agreed, while 45 (32.1%) agreed, indicating that a majority recognized the positive impact of mental health support.

Table 2: Empowerment

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Increased levels of mental health support, resulting in reduced stress and improved mental health	30 (21.4%)	45 (32.1%)	15 (10.7%)	25 (17.9%)	25 (17.9%)
Enhanced social networks and community involvement, leading to better social support and reduced isolation	28 (20.0%)	50 (35.7%)	12 (8.6%)	30 (21.4%)	20 (14.3%)
Access to financial aid, job opportunities, and skills training, resulting in improved financial independence and economic stability	25 (17.9%)	48 (34.3%)	10 (7.1%)	32 (22.9%)	25 (17.9%)
Better access to resources for children's education and health, resulting in improved overall welfare of the children	30 (21.4%)	45 (32.1%)	15 (10.7%)	30 (21.4%)	20 (14.3%)
Development and utilization of effective coping strategies to manage the socio-economic challenges of single motherhood	27 (19.3%)	43 (30.7%)	18 (12.9%)	30 (21.4%)	22 (15.7%)

Source: Research data 2025

However, 25 respondents (17.9%) disagreed, and another 25 (17.9%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that a notable proportion felt that mental health support remained inadequate. Fifteen respondents (10.7%) remained uncertain.

On enhanced social networks and community involvement leading to better social support and reduced isolation, 28 respondents (20.0%) strongly agreed, and 50 (35.7%) agreed, highlighting that many participants acknowledged the role of social networks in reducing isolation. However, 30 respondents (21.4%) disagreed, and 20 (14.3%) strongly disagreed, indicating that some did not perceive significant benefits. Twelve respondents (8.6%) remained uncertain.

Regarding access to financial aid, job opportunities, and skills training resulting in improved financial independence and economic stability, 25 respondents (17.9%) strongly agreed,

and 48 (34.3%) agreed, showing that a significant number believed the church contributed to economic empowerment. However, 32 respondents (22.9%) disagreed, and 25 (17.9%) strongly disagreed, suggesting concerns about limited access to economic support. Ten respondents (7.1%) were uncertain.

In terms of better access to resources for children's education and health, leading to improved overall welfare of the children, 30 respondents (21.4%) strongly agreed, and 45 (32.1%) agreed, demonstrating that many participants felt the church played a role in improving children's welfare. However, 30 respondents (21.4%) disagreed, and 20 (14.3%) strongly disagreed; indicating that some participants felt more needed to be done. Fifteen respondents (10.7%) remained uncertain.

Finally, regarding the development and utilization of effective

copied strategies to manage the socio-economic challenges of single motherhood, 27 respondents (19.3%) strongly agreed, and 43 (30.7%) agreed, showing that many participants acknowledged the church's role in helping single mothers build resilience. However, 30 respondents (21.4%) disagreed, and 22 (15.7%) strongly disagreed, highlighting that some felt unsupported. Eighteen respondents (12.9%) were uncertain.

Psychological Empowerment of the Church

The objective aimed to assess the psychological impact of the Presbytery Church in the empowerment of single mothers in Eldoret, North Rift, Kenya. Responses were categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Uncertain (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5). The findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Psychological empowerment of the church

Statements	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
The church provides emotional support to single mothers	25 17.9%	50 35.7%	10 7.1%	35 25.0%	20 14.3%
The church offers counseling services for single mothers	22 15.7%	48 34.3%	15 10.7%	30 21.4%	25 17.9%
Participation in church activities positively impacts the mental well-being of single mothers	28 20.0%	45 32.1%	12 8.6%	30 21.4%	25 17.9%
The church provides a sense of belonging and community for single mothers	30 21.4%	40 28.6%	14 10.0%	35 25.0%	21 15.0%
The church encourages resilience and hope among single mothers	26 18.6%	46 32.9%	15 10.7%	30 21.4%	23 16.4%

Source: Research data 2025

Regarding emotional support provided by the church to single mothers, 25 respondents (17.9%) strongly agreed, while 50 (35.7%) agreed, indicating that a majority of participants acknowledged the church's role in offering emotional support. However, 35 respondents (25.0%) disagreed, and 20 (14.3%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that some felt the support was insufficient. A small portion, 10 respondents (7.1%), remained uncertain. On whether the church offered counseling services for single mothers, 22 respondents (15.7%) strongly agreed and 48 (34.3%) agreed, showing that many

participants believed counseling services were available. However, 30 respondents (21.4%) disagreed, and 25 (17.9%) strongly disagreed, reflecting concerns about accessibility or effectiveness of these services. Fifteen respondents (10.7%) were uncertain.

Regarding the impact of church participation on the mental well-being of single mothers, 28 respondents (20.0%) strongly agreed and 45 (32.1%) agreed, signifying that a significant number believed church involvement contributed positively to mental health. However, 30 respondents (21.4%) disagreed, and 25

(17.9%) strongly disagreed, indicating that some participants did not perceive a clear benefit. A total of 12 respondents (8.6%) were uncertain.

In terms of whether the church provided a sense of belonging and community for single mothers, 30 respondents (21.4%) strongly agreed, and 40 (28.6%) agreed, highlighting that many participants felt welcomed and integrated. However, 35 respondents (25.0%) disagreed, and 21 (15.0%) strongly disagreed, showing that a considerable number did not feel fully included. Fourteen respondents (10.0%) remained uncertain.

Finally, concerning whether the church encouraged resilience and hope

among single mothers, 26 respondents (18.6%) strongly agreed, and 46 (32.9%) agreed, suggesting that many participants recognized the church's role in fostering hope. However, 30 respondents (21.4%) disagreed, and 23 (16.4%) strongly disagreed, indicating that some participants did not perceive significant encouragement from the church. A total of 15 respondents (10.7%) were uncertain.

Evangelist Perception on psychological Empowerment of the Church

Table 4 present the church's contribution to the psychological empowerment of single mothers from the perspective of the evangelists.

Table 4: Evangelists view on psychological empowerment of the church

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The church provides emotional support to single mothers	3 42.9%	2 28.6%	2 28.6%	0 0%	0 0%
The church offers counseling services for single mothers	2 28.6%	3 42.9%	2 28.6%	0 0%	0 0%
Participation in church activities positively impacts mental well-being	4 57.1%	2 28.6%	1 14.3%	0 0%	0 0%
The church provides a sense of belonging and community	3 42.9%	3 42.9%	1 14.3%	0 0%	0 0%
The church encourages resilience and hope among single mothers	4 57.1%	2 28.6%	1 14.3%	0 0%	0 0%

Source: Research data 2025

Responses on the psychological empowerment of single mothers reflected a generally positive outlook, though there were areas of uncertainty. Three respondents (42.9%) strongly agreed that the church provided emotional support, two (28.6%) agreed, and two (28.6%) were uncertain. Counseling services received mixed feedback, with two respondents

(28.6%) strongly agreeing, three (42.9%) agreeing, and two (28.6%) uncertain. No respondents disagreed, suggesting that while services exist, they may not be consistently accessible. Participation in church activities was seen as beneficial for mental well-being, with four respondents (57.1%) strongly agreeing, two (28.6%) agreeing, and one (14.3%) uncertain.

Most respondents felt a sense of belonging through church involvement, with three (42.9%) strongly agreeing, three (42.9%) agreeing, and one (14.3%) uncertain. Finally, regarding resilience and hope, four respondents (57.1%) strongly agreed, two (28.6%) agreed, and one (14.3%) was uncertain. These results indicate that while churches generally provide psychological support, there is a need for more consistent and professional counseling services.

Pastors Perception on Psychological Empowerment

Pastor 1, provides access to free counseling with trained Christian therapists. "Many single mothers suffer from anxiety, so we teach mindfulness and scripture-based affirmations to rebuild their self-worth," he explained. Parishes supports single mothers through the support group. "We discuss topics like forgiveness, fear, and parenting stress. We also provide referrals to professional counselors for severe cases like trauma or depression," said Pastor 2. Pastor 3 described their workshops on stress management using biblical principles. "For example, we teach them to „cast their

burdens on God" (Psalm 55:22) through journaling and prayer," he noted.

Pastor 4, highlighted the need for their partnership with a local NGO to offer free mental health check-ups. "Additionally, we train church leaders to identify signs of depression and intervene early," he shared. Normalizes mental health discussions from the pulpit. "Single mothers are encouraged to speak openly without judgment. We also have a „Prayer & Therapy" hybrid session twice a month," explained Pastor 5. He emphasized the effectiveness of peer counseling. "Single mothers who have healed mentor newer members, creating a safe space for sharing struggles and solutions," he described.

Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Overall Empowerment of Single Mothers

To investigate the relationship between psychological empowerment efforts of the Presbytery Church and the overall empowerment of single mothers in Eldoret, North Rift, Kenya, a Pearson correlation test was conducted. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Pearson correlation between psychological empowerment and overall empowerment

Variables	PE	OE
Psychological Empowerment (PE)	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)		
N	150	
Overall Empowerment (OE)	.701**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N	150	150

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research data 2025

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.701$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a strong positive relationship between

psychological empowerment and overall empowerment. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) which proposed that psychological

empowerment by the Presbytery Church does not significantly influence the overall empowerment of single mothers, is rejected. This finding confirms that psychological empowerment plays a key role in boosting the overall empowerment of single mothers in Eldoret, North Rift, Kenya. These findings are supported by international evidence showing that religious participation can enhance mental well-being through emotional support, reframing of life challenges, and the development of adaptive coping mechanisms (Sisay, 2024). African studies echo these findings, noting that stigma and exclusion within church settings can harm self-esteem and sense of belonging (Mubanga & Kasongo, 2023; Makbuhele, 2015).

Kenyan evidence shows that churches can both support and hinder psychological empowerment. Positive impacts occur when clergy actively promote inclusion, provide counseling services, and create safe support networks (Ngigi, 2017; Ekitala, 2018; Kahindi, 2018). On the other hand, inconsistent acceptance policies, patriarchal restrictions, and persistent stigma limit participation and reduce psychological gains (Kathanya, 2020; Kubai, 2023; Kirago et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The findings confirm that the empowerment programs of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) have a tangible, positive psychological impact on single mothers in the Eldoret Presbytery. A strong relationship exists between the psychological support provided by the church and the overall empowerment of these women, demonstrating that emotional resilience and a sense of belonging are crucial for their holistic well-being. A majority of single mothers reported benefits such as

improved mental health, enhanced social networks, and stronger coping strategies. However, a significant minority of participants also indicated that the support, particularly in terms of financial aid and a consistent sense of community, remains inconsistent or inadequate. This suggests that while the PCEA is effectively fostering psychological resilience, there is a critical need to strengthen the material and social aspects of its programs to ensure all single mothers in the community receive comprehensive and dependable support.

Recommendation

Churches should provide accessible psychological support through trained counselors or partnerships with licensed therapists to address emotional, stress, and mental health challenges. Programs could include weekly counseling sessions, “Prayer & Therapy” hybrid meetings, or trauma-informed workshops that teach coping strategies rooted in faith. Pastors and church leaders should also receive training to identify signs of depression, anxiety, or burnout among single mothers, ensuring timely referrals and holistic care.

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