

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

ثنائية أم عازبة – طفل: ديناميات التأقلم والمرونة النفسية كآليات لتحقيق التكيف الإيجابي.

Souad BENDJEDIDI^{1*}

¹ Laboratory of Psychological and Social Studies , Mohamed Kheider
University of Biskra-(Algeria) souad.bendjedidi@univ-biskra.dz

Received Date:30/11/2025

Acceptance Date:06/05/2026

Abstract

A single mother's decision to keep or give up her child is a life-altering choice with profound psychological and social consequences for both the mother and the child; it places her within a complex social context that requires a high degree of adaptability to sustain the stability of the mother-child relationship. This article addresses the psychological and social challenges faced by single mothers and their children, and explores how coping mechanisms and psychological resilience contribute to managing stress and achieving a more positive outcome for both, by highlighting the pivotal role of psychological and social support and internal psychological resources. Methodologically, the study adopted a conceptual-analytical approach based on a review of the scientific literature on single motherhood, coping mechanisms, and psychological resilience.

Keywords: Single mother; Child born outside marriage; Positive adaptation; Psychological coping; Psychological resilience

ملخص:

يعد قرار الأم العازبة بالاحتفاظ بطفلها أو التخلي عنه خيارا مصيريا تترتب عليه تبعات نفسية واجتماعية عميقة لكل من الأم والطفل؛ إذ يضعها ضمن سياق اجتماعي معقد يتطلب مستوى عاليا من التكيف لدعم استقرار العلاقة الأمومية. وتتناول هذه المقالة التحديات النفسية والاجتماعية التي تواجهها الأم العازبة وطفلها، وتستكشف الكيفية التي تسهم بها آليات التأقلم والمرونة النفسية في إدارة الضغوط وتحقيق تكيف إيجابي لكليهما، وذلك من خلال تسليط الضوء على الدور المحوري للدعم النفسي والاجتماعي والموارد النفسية الداخلية. كما تناقش الدراسة الآثار المحتملة للوصمة الاجتماعية والصعوبات المختلفة التي قد تواجه الأم العازبة، ومدى انعكاسها على جودة حياتها وعلى نمو طفلها النفسي والاجتماعي. ومن الناحية المنهجية، اعتمدت الدراسة تصميمًا تحليليًا مفاهيميًا يستند إلى مراجعة الأدبيات العلمية المتعلقة بالأمومة العازبة، وآليات التأقلم، والمرونة النفسية.

كلمات مفتاحية: أم عازبة؛ طفل خارج إطار الزواج؛ تكيف إيجابي؛ تأقلم نفسي؛ مرونة نفسية.

* Corresponding author.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, societies, including Algerian society, have undergone profound social and cultural transformations that have reshaped multiple dimensions of family structures, social relationships, and prevailing value systems. These transformations, combined with economic and media-related factors, have contributed to the emergence of new family patterns. Among the most prominent of these are single-parent families, in which the mother assumes primary responsibility for care, socialisation, and child development. Although this family model remains relatively limited in prevalence, it poses important psychological and social questions for both mother and child, particularly in relation to coping, adaptation, and resilience.

In Algerian society, where the family continues to serve as the core of values and a primary source of social cohesion, the situation of single mothers is associated with complex social, legal, psychological, and educational dimensions. This group may experience social pressures, including stigma and exclusion, which can affect their well-being and placing their children at potential challenges related to development and social integration.

Single motherhood should be approached as a multifaceted phenomenon, shaped by diverse circumstances. These circumstances may include socio-economic factors, personal experiences, and broader cultural contexts. The topic of single motherhood has been examined as a sensitive social issue within culturally and religiously structured contexts. Within this framework, social norms may influence perceptions and attitudes toward single mothers. Consequently, a single mother may face various forms of marginalization and stigmatization (Blirdouh, 2020, p. 76)

Regardless of the underlying causes, this situation involves children whose developmental experiences may differ from those in two-parent families. The decision to retain or relinquish the child is influenced by social and contextual factors. A mother who raises her child independently will raise them in a social and psychological environment that may differ from that of children in two-parent households. Such children may encounter challenges related to a sense of belonging, identity formation, and understanding their role within the family and society, especially in contexts where stigma is present. Conversely, the mother–child relationship may also represent a source of support and stability, thereby fostering coping capacities, enhancing the child’s ability to face future challenges, and supporting adaptive outcomes.

Despite existing research on family change and child development, there remains limited research in the Algerian and broader Arab context that specifically examines the relationship between single mothers and their children through the lens of coping and psychological resilience. Accordingly,

this article aims to explore the relationship between single mothers and their children by focusing on psychological and social challenges, with particular emphasis on the role of coping mechanisms and psychological resilience in achieving positive adaptation. This study adopts an analytical approach, in order to identify factors that contribute to adaptive outcomes. Accordingly, the article addresses the following research questions: How does the status of a single mother affect the dynamics of her relationship with her child? And how do coping mechanisms and psychological resilience contribute to achieving positive adaptation for both the mother and the child?

This study adopts a conceptual research design aimed at exploring the relationship between single mothers and their children in light of coping mechanisms and psychological resilience. Unlike experimental studies relying on human samples, this study is based on an analysis of the psychological and sociological literature on single motherhood, with a focus on Algerian studies (2009–2024) and global models in the field of psychological resilience.

2.Methodology

This study adopts a conceptual research design aimed at exploring the relationship between single mothers and their children in light of coping mechanisms and psychological resilience. Unlike experimental studies relying on human samples, this study is based on an analysis of the psychological and sociological literature on single motherhood, with a focus on Algerian studies (2009–2024) and global models in the field of psychological resilience.

The scope of the study includes a purposeful selection of relevant literature, focusing on the central theoretical concepts derived from these studies. In the second phase, these findings are systematically linked to the components of the family resilience model (Taylor & Conger, 2017), particularly social support and internal psychological resources. The third phase consists of a conceptual synthesis aimed at formulating an explanatory pathway that clarifies the transition from social and psychological stressors to the achievement of positive adaptation in both the mother and the child.

3.Conceptual Framework

The study of single motherhood requires precise conceptual and linguistic framing, particularly when analyzed across diverse cultural contexts. The terminology used to address this phenomenon reflects varying value and

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

social systems, especially when transitioning between different cultural settings.

3.1.The Single Mother and Child Dyad: Conceptual and Reality

3.1.1. Single Mother

Addressing this topic requires a linguistic and conceptual investigation into the term itself, as terminology is never neutral and reflects the value systems within which it is produced. The Arabic designation “الأم العازية” is a literal translation of the French *les mères célibataires* or the English *single mother*, both of which signify the birth of a child outside the institution of marriage. However, an analysis of this designation reveals that its constituent components carry divergent connotations across languages. While Western terms appear neutral and free from implicit judgment, their Arabic equivalent is heavily charged with cultural attitudes and evaluative implications. This is due to the fact that the expression combines the concepts of motherhood and singlehood, both of which are laden with deep socio-cultural significance (Abdelly & Abdelly., 2021, p. 28)

In Western psychological and social literature, a single mother is defined as a woman who raises her child alone without the presence of a permanent partner. Le Petit Larousse (1998) defines her as ‘an unmarried woman who raises her child on her own’ (Kouider & Kadri, 2022, p. 234) In the Arab context, however, the term carries a different meaning rooted in religious and cultural frameworks. A ‘single mother’ refers to a woman who becomes pregnant without a legally recognized marriage, and her child is commonly labeled an ‘illegitimate child’. Such a woman is often someone who has never been married (Melouh, 2022, p. 366) According to Chouial (1994), as cited in Bouzar & Ja’lab (2018, p. 102) a single mother is a woman who becomes pregnant without a legal marriage contract and decides to keep her child after birth, typically lacking a clear legal or social status. Belkadi and Farahi (2022, p. 89) add that she often faces profound difficulties in establishing her child’s filiation due to social rejection and the ambiguity of the legal framework.

From an analytical perspective, it is observed that the definition of this concept is inherently tied to the nature and culture of the society. In Western societies, the term refers to a woman who assumes sole responsibility for her newborn, performing all roles for their upbringing while enjoying full legal and social rights without social disapproval. In contrast, in Arab societies, including Algeria, the social reality often views this situation through a lens of strict rejection. When a woman experiences motherhood outside the established customary and legal rituals that govern marital traditions, she is

often perceived as having deviated from socio-religious norms, exposing her to severe consequences (Ben Khalifa, 2005, p. 234)

It is essential to distinguish between the "family diversity" model in Western literature and the "atypical social situation" perspective in Islamic societies. Based on this difference, the situation of single mothers in our society can be understood as the product of a complex and interwoven set of circumstances. It represents the intersection of psychological, familial, social, and economic influences. This situation may arise in contexts characterized by a lack of sexual education, weak family socialization, and severe socio-economic pressures, which may lead some individuals to substance abuse, prostitution, or other non-normative behaviours, alongside conscious and unconscious psychological dynamics related to attachment and emotional experiences.

Single mothers, due to their socially fragile position, face high levels of psychological stress, including anxiety, diminished feelings of security, emotional instability, and guilt stemming from social stigma. Many experience a painful internal conflict between relinquishing their child or retaining them and confronting the challenges of life alone (Kouider & Kadri, 2022, p. 240). While this situation inevitably affects the quality of the mother-child relationship, these challenges do not necessarily determine a negative outcome. A mother can develop positive coping capacities and psychological resilience that enable her to establish a healthy, adaptive relationship with her child, protecting them from marginalization and future maladjustment.

3.1.2.The Child

In the context of single motherhood, a child born outside the marital framework is often defined through both legal and religious lenses. From a traditional jurisprudential perspective, such a child may be identified as being born of an extra-marital relationship. Al-Zuhayli defines this category as a child whose lineage is established through the maternal line due to the absence of a legally recognized marriage contract (Al-Zyouidi, S. M, 2022, p. 7) In most cases, while the mother's identity is established, the father remains legally unidentified or absent. Consequently, this child often enters a social environment that struggles to recognize their status, as marriage remains the primary legitimate framework for family formation in the collective consciousness (YETTOU & BENSEYOUB, 2024, p. 381)

In Algerian society in particular, this category is viewed through a lens of stigma and moral condemnation. The birth of a child outside the framework of marriage is met with firm rejection from both the community and the family. Mustafa Boutafnouchet captures this societal stance, stating: *"There is no place in the traditional Algerian family for an illegitimate child born of an*

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

unlawful relationship, and there is no place for the mother of such a child either. The child born outside marriage and more precisely the woman are considered guilty and this stains the honor of the family. This disgrace carries severe and long-lasting consequences, tarnishing the offender as well, who is ultimately punished and expelled from both the community and her family.” (Limani, 2025, p. 201).

However, an analytical reading of institutional data reveals a shifting dynamic toward resilience. In response to this profound social rejection, institutional initiatives have emerged to balance social values with the child’s right to family-based care. Findings from the CENEAP study indicate a relative increase in the rate at which single mothers reclaim their children, reaching 16.3% of institutional placements. Despite material and social obstacles, statistics from 2002 show that 38% of these mothers were living with their children, while 26% maintained regular contact. Furthermore, national awareness campaigns led by the Ministry of Solidarity since 2005 have contributed to a gradual rise in the number of children reclaimed by their biological mothers, increasing from 478 in 2005 to 564 in 2007 . (DJENIDI, 2021, p. 177)

From a psychological perspective, these figures represent more than just statistics; they signify "Maternal Resilience" in action. Despite the persistent stigma and the "symbolic punishment" imposed by the social reality, the choice of a mother to keep and raise her child reflects a mobilization of internal strengths. As (Kouider k. , 2023) points out, while these conditions can weaken a mother’s capacity for functional adaptation, the act of reclaiming the child serves as a transformative step toward establishing a new, albeit challenging, developmental trajectory. This resilience is essential to mitigate the potential negative consequences of exclusion and to foster the child's future social and psychological adjustment.

3.2. Dynamics of the Relationship Between the Single Mother and Her Child:

Motherhood remains a pivotal element of female identity and a powerful form of social regulation, where the "natural role" of a woman is often perceived through the lens of childcare within the institution of marriage. (Mishra, Thamminaina, & Mishra, 2021, p. 394) Within this value-laden framework, the status of the single mother emerges as an atypical interactive system. The relationship between the mother and her child develops within a complex psychological and social context, where the mother assumes

multifaceted responsibilities: fulfilling the dual role of both parents while navigating the repercussions of social stigma.

An analytical integration of local research reveals that this relationship is shaped by a profound "Psychological Duality." On one hand, studies by Kadri & Kouider (2022) conducted in Oran indicate that the mother endures a painful internal struggle between her maternal affection and the child serving as a constant reminder of social exclusion. This situation generates intense feelings of frustration and fear of the future (Kouider & Kadri, 2022). From a resilience perspective, this duality represents a primary risk factor; however, the mother's decision to maintain the bond despite these pressures is the first indicator of potential positive adaptation.

Furthermore, Mliouh (2022) provides a psychodynamic reading suggesting that this relationship is often characterized by "emotional substitution." Due to a lack of external containment, the single mother may seek to fill her emotional void through an excessive attachment to her child (Meliouh, 2022, p. 502) While this indicates psychological fragility, it also highlights a critical "protective mechanism" within our framework: the child becomes the central motivation for the mother to mobilize her

Conversely, the impact of this atypical environment on the child must be critically analyzed. Seeb & Bour (2021) reported that children in these settings may exhibit behavioral disturbances, such as aggression or inferiority feelings, stemming from the absence of the father and the weight of social stigma. These findings serve as an empirical justification for the necessity of our proposed conceptual model; they demonstrate that without the intervention of effective coping and social support, the child's developmental trajectory remains vulnerable. Therefore, the quality of the mother-child dyad is not predetermined by the social status itself, but rather by the mother's capacity to transform these stressors into a supportive and resilient relationship.

3.3. The Pathway of Positive Adaptation: Coping and Psychological Resilience in the Single Mother and Her Child

The issue of adaptation for the single mother and her child constitutes a key psychological and social concern, revealing the extent to which the mother is able to confront pressures, cope with social stigma, and restore internal balance within the fragile social context in which she and her child live. In this context, the research highlights that the challenge is not merely psychological but deeply rooted in the legal and social structure. The presence of a child without the father's surname or legally recognized lineage, along with societal rejection, generates psychological and social consequences that negatively affect the child's well-being and psychosocial stability (Abdelgadir Ali Mohamed, et al., 2023, p. 379). This structural vulnerability means that for the

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

mother who chooses to keep her child, this decision represents a confrontation with an entire society, placing her before heightened challenges in psychological adjustment and coping. These challenges ultimately become a dual burden that shapes the nature of her interaction with the child.

The primary challenge faced by the single mother is not motherhood in itself, but rather the responsibility of providing basic care for her child and securing an income. This distinction is crucial as it shifts the focus from biological motherhood to the socio-economic stressors that destabilize the family unit. She often encounters economic, social, and emotional pressures that increase the risk of depression and anxiety, and that influence parenting practices, making children more vulnerable to adjustment problems. According to Taylor and Conger (2017), the high levels of economic hardship experienced by many single mothers have been associated with high levels of depression and anxiety, coercive parenting, and in turn, child maladjustment. Consequently, the single mother who has not abandoned her child faces a multidimensional struggle. Living with a child without family support constitutes a harsh and psychologically and socially exhausting experience. Nevertheless, maternal love and instinct can serve as a powerful motivator that helps her confront life's difficulties. Moreover, living in a supportive environment can protect her from projecting feelings of anger and frustration onto her child or viewing the child as the cause of her suffering. However, it must be noted that the prospects for overcoming the crisis remain limited given the fragility of the social and economic context (Mohdeb, Tadala, & Slimani, 2021, p. 1334)

The literature also indicates that the single mother's assumption of full responsibility for her child in the absence of a partner represents a major risk factor associated with feelings of isolation, emotional distress, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and irritability. She additionally encounters difficulties in accessing high-quality psychological care due to limited childcare services, the stigma associated with seeking help, and restricted access to social-support and training programs (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024, p. 2) This pattern is also reflected in the Algerian context, where empirical studies confirm similar associations. This has been confirmed by the study of Bouzare and Jaâlab (2018), which identified a relationship between single mothers' subjective quality of life and the emergence of postpartum depressive symptoms. The findings showed that low social support, limited economic resources, and weak family cohesion substantially increase levels of depression within this population.

Beyond individual clinical cases, this emotional fragility extends to specific social roles, such as being a student. This suggests that the pressure is not only maternal but also situational and performance-based. Similarly,

the study of (Maliki & Kahoul, 2022). demonstrated that school-enrolled single mothers experience a marked decline in emotional stability and reduced ability to regulate emotions and behaviours, as a result of multiple social, psychological, and familial pressures. Collectively, these studies illustrate that these factors negatively affect their psychological and social adjustment. This body of evidence highlights a key theoretical implication: the lack of systemic containment transforms manageable stress into a chronic state of psychological vulnerability.

This transition from vulnerability to agency is not automatic; it requires a proactive psychological shift. Faced with these complex psychological and social challenges, the single mother is compelled to mobilize her internal psychological resources to confront daily stressors and adapt to them in order to maintain her emotional stability. In this framework, coping serves as a surrogate for external stability; in the absence of adequate social support, psychological coping becomes an essential mechanism for ensuring the continuity of effective maternal functioning and for preventing the negative impact of stress on her relationship with her child. Therefore, this coping process constitutes a dynamic mechanism involving the reorganization of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours in ways that enable adaptation to the new circumstances. Ultimately, it functions as a key protective factor against psychological breakdown and behavioural maladjustment for both the mother and the child.

Understanding this mechanism requires a precise conceptual definition that aligns with the unique pressures of single motherhood. Given the pivotal role that psychological coping plays in the lives of individuals in general, and in the life of the single mother in particular, it may be defined as the cognitive and behavioural effort exerted by the individual to manage stressful situations and to deal with internal or external demands that exceed personal capacities or threaten psychological balance (Ata Allah & Abu Bakr, 2024, p. 11). This definition implies that for single mothers, coping is not a static state but a constant negotiation with their environment. Coping thus reflects the ability to overcome life difficulties through monitoring and regulating stressors. It is a continuous, ongoing process that involves making various decisions, including the adoption of new behaviours (Al-Zahrani & Al-Lwaj, 2022, p. 664). Therefore, the "adaptation" we observe in these mothers is a result of sustained psychological labour rather than a mere instinctive reaction.

This dynamic process leads to a critical theoretical juncture where the quality of adaptation must be evaluated. Accordingly, responses to adversity vary considerably. While some mothers are able to overcome obstacles and demonstrate a capacity to "challenge difficulties," others merely attempt to "cope with a harsh reality." This variation underscores the need to distinguish

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

between the concepts of psychological resilience and coping within the context of single motherhood, as both constitute critical constructs for achieving positive adjustment .Coping with adversity varies among individuals. While coping refers to the efforts made to confront and manage daily stressors, psychological resilience goes beyond this, manifesting as the achievement of positive psychological balance and successful outcomes despite difficulties. This distinction is empirically illustrated in the literature; for instance, Williams (2015), in her study of adolescent single mothers living under harsh conditions of poverty and violence, suggested that the teens' efforts to meet their basic needs demonstrated “survival-focused coping” rather than resilience..This implies that coping can sometimes be a repetitive cycle of survival, whereas resilience requires a structural shift in the individual's psychological economy. Similarly, Keller suggests that while coping refers to specific efforts to manage stressful demands, a successful outcome or adaptation is a critical component of resilience (Caragata, Watters, & Cumming, 2021, p. 2)

This distinction leads to a more integrated perspective where coping and growth are viewed as interconnected. On the other hand, Leipold and Grieve (2009) argued that both coping and development were important for resilience (Cheeseman, , 2010, p. 14). Resilience is not limited to confronting stress; it also encompasses the individual’s capacity to adapt and grow through challenging experiences.

In this context, Caragata, Watters, and Cumming (2021) introduce the concept of “Transformation & Changing the Game,” viewing coping as a type of resilience. This perspective is particularly relevant for single mothers, as it suggests that this perspective can be further extended if coping is also understood as a form of adaptation that results in the production of new outcomes, and not just the management of stress and stressful circumstances. From this perspective, resilience involves a transformative process in which individuals reconstruct their strategies and explore innovative ways to deal with adversity, moving beyond mere “bounce back” toward continuous change and development. This approach underscores the importance of expanding research on psychological resilience, particularly among under-studied populations, such as single mothers (Caragata, Watters, & Cumming, 2021, p. 3)

To operationalize this transformative process, Taylor and Conger (2017) proposed a model highlighting the key elements of psychological resilience among single mothers, namely perceived social support and internal strengths. The strength of this model lies in its recognition of complexity; both of which are positively associated with the well-being of single mothers, including positive mental health, parental competence, and effective coping strategies

(paths c–d). The model also indicates a bidirectional relationship between social support and internal strengths (paths a–b), suggesting that each reinforces the other. Accordingly, enhancing the well-being of single mothers positively contributes to child outcomes (path e), while social support and internal strengths also exert direct effects on the child outcomes (paths g–f). Figure 1 illustrates these reciprocal relationships among the components of the model.

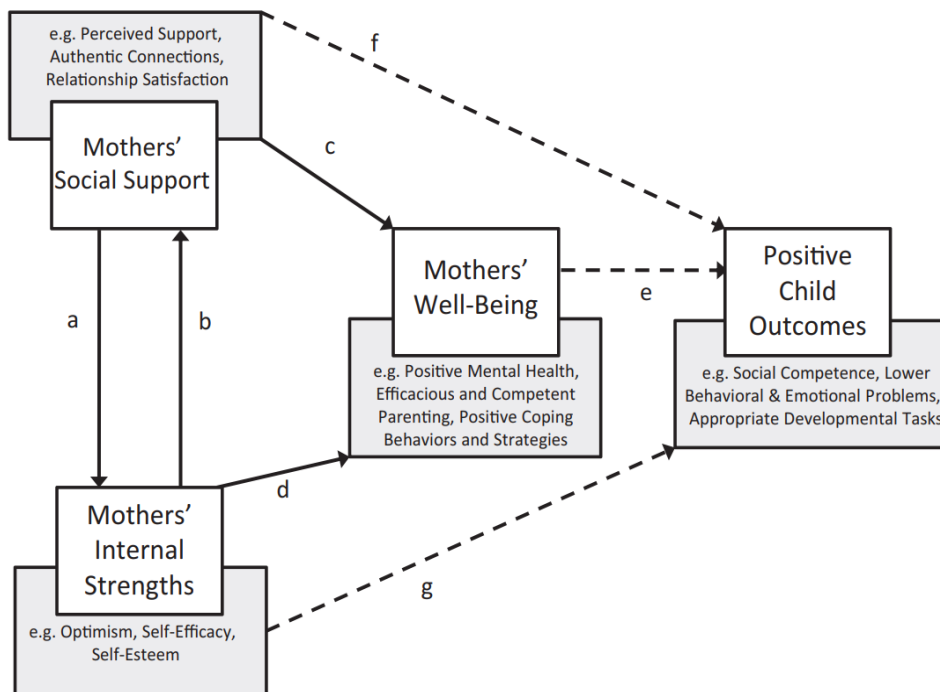


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Psychological Resilience in Single Mothers (Taylor & Conger, 2017, p. 351)

From this model, it can be inferred that psychological resilience in single mothers is not limited to their capacity to cope with stress, but also extends to its indirect influence on their child's adaptation. This transmission occurs through emotional regulation; when a mother possesses sufficient social support and internal strengths such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-confidence she becomes better able to regulate her emotions and respond flexibly to the challenges of motherhood. This emotional stability is reflected in parenting practices characterized by greater understanding and emotional containment, which in turn fosters the child's sense of psychological security and belonging, enhancing their capacity to adapt to the social environment later in life. Consequently, the model demonstrates that psychological resilience in single mothers functions as a dual protective mechanism, safeguarding the mother from the effects of stress while providing the child with a supportive

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

environment that promotes the development of positive coping strategies, contributing to healthy growth despite paternal absence or uncertainty.

Accordingly, the mother serves as the primary model from which the child derives their sense of self and understanding of others. Building on the work of Louchahi (2009), it is clear that the mother's adaptation is the child's reality; when she succeeds in providing feelings of acceptance and belonging, she reduces the likelihood of the child exhibiting deviant behaviors aimed at psychological compensation. The mother empathically positions herself in the child's perspective to respond to their needs; thus, insufficient adaptation by a single mother during this early stage of the child's life may weaken or undermine the child's sense of self. The child does not perceive these deficiencies as maternal shortcomings but rather experiences them as a threat to their personal stability (Louchahi, 2009, p. 106)

Finally, a child's capacity for social adaptation is strongly influenced by the emotional security provided by the mother. Research on psychological resilience confirms that children of single mothers can achieve positive outcomes even under substantial stress, particularly when the mother demonstrates competence and serves as a consistent source of emotional support. Moreover, additional factors that bolster the well-being and parenting effectiveness of single mothers further contribute to these favorable child outcomes. (Taylor & Conger, 2017)

4. Conceptual Findings and Synthesis

As a conceptual study, the findings are derived from a theoretical synthesis and critical integration of existing literature rather than empirical data. Within this framework, several the literature highlights several insights regarding the dynamics of maternal resilience in the context of single motherhood.

A central insight concerns the drawing on the resilience model proposed by Taylor and Conger (2017). Rather than treating resilience as a fixed psychological trait, the literature reviewed suggests that it should be understood as a dynamic and evolving process. This process appears to be initiated in contexts marked by adversity and social pressure, where the decision to retain the child becomes a significant turning point. From this perspective, resilience is gradually reinforced through the interaction between coping strategies and available social resources, rather than emerging as an inherent and stable capacity.

Within this broader understanding, resilience can be conceptualized as operating across two interrelated levels. At the intrapsychic level, internal resources such as optimism and self-efficacy play a protective role by

reducing the internalization of stigma and limiting the development of depressive symptoms. At the relational level, maternal functioning extends beyond the individual to shape the emotional environment of the mother–child relationship. In this sense, the quality of maternal adaptation contributes to the development of secure attachment patterns, which in turn provide the child with a degree of psychological protection against the effects of social exclusion and developmental vulnerability.

What further emerges from the synthesis is the critical role of systemic support. In contexts where institutional and familial support is limited, coping strategies tend to function as a compensatory mechanism, filling the gap left by the absence of external containment. However, the literature also suggests that coping alone remains insufficient for long-term adaptation. A transition toward sustained resilience requires the strengthening of both internal capacities and external support systems, allowing for a more stable and growth-oriented form of psychological adjustment.

5. Discussion

The conceptual findings of this study provide a nuanced understanding of single motherhood beyond a purely crisis-oriented perspective, situating it within a broader socio-cultural and structural context.

A key distinction from Western models lies in the interpretation of family structures. While Western literature often frames single motherhood within a “family diversity” perspective, the present analysis suggests that in the Algerian context, adaptation is shaped by intensified social stigma and symbolic exclusion. This indicates that resilience is not a universal construct, but a culturally embedded and context-dependent process.

In this regard, social stigma functions not only as an external pressure but also as a structural barrier that increases the emotional demands placed on single mothers, requiring sustained self-regulation to maintain psychological and parental stability.

Theoretically, these findings suggest the need to shift psychological support frameworks from focusing on family structure (e.g., absence of the father) toward strengthening maternal resources and resilience as key determinants of child well-being. Overall, the study emphasizes that adaptation outcomes are primarily shaped by the interaction between individual capacities and socio-cultural constraints.

6. Conclusion

This study highlighted the complex socio-psychological nature of single motherhood, emphasizing that it should be understood beyond stigmatizing or

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

exclusionary perspectives. The analysis demonstrated that adaptation in this context depends on both psychological resources and social conditions, particularly coping capacities and resilience processes. The findings underline the importance of moving away from marginalization-based approaches toward comprehensive psychosocial support systems that strengthen maternal coping skills and promote adaptive functioning for both mothers and their children. In particular, enhancing resilience is essential for improving psychological well-being and preventing maladaptive developmental outcomes. Finally, the study suggests that future research should focus on empirically testing intervention models and exploring culturally specific mechanisms of adaptation among single mothers in order to better inform policy and practice.

7. Recommendations

To support the positive adaptation of these families, the following measures are recommended:

- Developing dyadic therapy programs that focus on strengthening the emotional bond and containment between the mother and child, rather than focusing on the mother in isolation.
- Establishing community networks that provide "perceived social support," which acts as a vital mediator for maternal self-efficacy.
- Promoting legal and social reforms that reduce the systemic pressure on children born outside of marriage to lower the baseline of social risk.

References

1. Abdelgadir Ali Mohamed, A., Ahmed Apaker Babiker, E., Mohmoud Godat, S., Moh8ammed Gomaa Doalbet, s. a., Ahmed, A., Hamed Mohamed Ali, M., & AM Ahmed, W. (2023). , Out-of-Wedlock pregnancy among single mothers in Khartoum, Sudan: Sociodemographic characteristics, causes, and consequences. *Sudan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 18(3), 377-390. doi:10.18502/sjms.v18i3.14091
2. Abdelly, H., & Abdelly., W. (2021). Rafd li-zahirat al-ummuhāt al-‘azibat fī dhil al-siyāq al-qanūnī wa al-ijtima‘ī. *Majallat Afaaq lil- ‘Ulum*, 6(1), 27-35.
3. Al-Zahrani, N. H., & Al-Lwaj, S. S. (2022). Fa‘aliyat barnamaj irshadi takamuli fī tanmiya maharat al-ta’aqul al-nafsi lada ‘aynat min mu‘allimat al-tarbiyah al-fikriyah bi-muhafazat Bisha. *Majallat Kulliyat al-Tarbiyah*, 88, 652-724.
4. Al-Zyoudi, S. M, S. A. (2022). Al-wad‘iyyah al-ijtima‘iyah lil-atfal ghayr al-shur‘iyyin. *Al-Majalla al-Ilktruniyah al-Shamilah Mut‘addat al-Takhasusat*, (44), 1-27.
5. Ata Allah, M. M., & Abu Bakr, A. S. (2024). Namdhajat al-‘alaqat al-sababiya bayn maharat al-ta’aqul al-nafsi wa al-daf‘iya al-mihniya wa al-istighraq. *Majallat al-Bahth al- ‘Ilmi fī al-Tarbiyah*, 25(2), 1-54.

6. Belkadi, F., & Farahi, F. (2022). Mafhum al-dhat wa al-tawafuq al-nafsi al-ijtima'i lada al-umm al-'aziba. . *Majallat al-'Ulum al-Insaniyah wa al-Ijtima'iyah*, , 15(1), 86-103.
7. Ben Khalifa, k. (2005). Al-walida al-'aziba fi al-mujtama' al-jaza'iri: Dahiya am mudhniha? *Majallat al-'Ulum al-Insaniyah wa al-Ijtima'iyah*,, 6(13), 231-266.
8. Blirdouh, K. A. (2020). Al-inhiraf al-suluki wa al-tawafuq al-nafsi al-ijtima'i lil-umm al-'aziba. . *Majallat Ansanah lil-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat*, 2(11), 75-89.
9. Bouzar,, Y., & Jaalab, M. A. (2018). Nawyat al-hayah wa iktibaab ma ba'd al-wiladah lada al-ummihat al-'azibat. *Majallat al-'Ulum al-Nafsiyah wa al-Tarbawiyah*, 7(1), 97-111.
10. Caragata, L., Watters, E. C., & Cumming, S. (2021). Changing the game: The continuous adaptation of resilient single mothers. *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services Practice*, 8(1). doi:10.13189/ijrh.2021.080101
11. Cheeseman, , S. (2010). The experience of single mothers: Resilience in their multiple roles. (E. C. Online., Ed.) [Honours thesis, Edith Cowan University]. . Retrieved from https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses_hons/1364
12. Dharani, M. K., & Balamurugan, J. (2024). The psychosocial impact on single mothers' well-being - A literature review. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 13(1). doi:10.4103/jehp.jehp_1045_23
13. DJENIDI, A. R. (2021). Protection de l'enfance et enfants privés de famille en. *L'EUROPE UNIE / UNITED EUROPE*(17), 174-185.
14. Kouider, K. (2023). Mustawa al-salabah al-nafsiyah lil-umm al-'aziba fi al-Jaza'ir: Madinat Wahran anmudhajan. . *Madjallat Herodote lil-'Ulum al-Insaniyah wa al-Ijtima'iyah*,, 7(2), 208-222.
15. Kouider, K., & Kadri, H. (2022). Ay waqi' wa ay masir lil-umm al-'aziba fi al-Jaza'ir? *Majallat Dirasat Nafsiya wa Tarbawiyah*,, 15(1), 231-241.
16. Limani, C. (2025). Al-qiyam al-tashkhisi li-ikhtibar rasm al-shakl al-insani li-Karen Machover fi al-kashf 'an tadni taqdir al-dhat lada al-umm al-'aziba: Dirasat halah. *Majallat 'Ulum al-Insan wa al-Mujtama'*,, 14(2), 198-220
17. Louchahi, F. (2009). . (2009). Dirasat ahlam al-atfal fi dhil al-hirman al-walidi. [*Doctoral dissertation, University of Constantine*].
18. Maliki, R., & Kahoul, C. (2022). Al-ittizan al-infi'ali lada al-ummuhah al-'azibat al-mutadarrisat: Dirasat thalath halat bi-Wilayat Adrar (Al-Jaza'ir) – Al-hala (H. M.) anmudhajan. . *Majallat al-Abhath al-Nafsiyah wa al-Ijtima'iyah al-Jaza'iriyah*, 8(1), 140-123.
19. Meliouh, K. (2022). Qira'ah fi psychodynamics al-umm al-'aziba li-tifliha min khilal al-taqmasat al-walidiyah: Dirasat halah bi-tatbiq ikhtibar tafahum al-mawdu'. . *Majallat 'Ulum al-Insan wa al-Mujtama'*,, 11(1), 455-479.
20. Mishra, P. S., Thamminaina, A., & Mishra, N. (2021). Single mothers: Strategies of family management and support systems in relation to health. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(5), 393-406. Retrieved from <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss5>
21. Mohdeb, R., Tadala, L., & Slimani, M. (2021). La mère célibataire et sa souffrance psychologique dans la société algérienne (Étude de cas). *Revue des sciences humaines*, 8(2), 1327-1338.

The Single Mother–Child Dyad: Coping Dynamics and Psychological Resilience as Mechanisms for Achieving Positive Adaptation.

22. Seeb, A., & Bour, F. (2021). Al-mushkilat al-nafsiyah ‘ind al-tifl ghayr al-shar‘i lil-umm al-‘aziba. *Majallat al-Fikr al-Mutawassitiy.*, 11(2), 517-536.
23. Taylor, Z. E., & Conger, R. D. (2017). Promoting strengths and resilience in single- mother families. *Child Development*, 88(2), 350-358. doi:10.1111/cdev.12741
24. YETTOU, O., & BENSEYOUB, A. (2024). THE SITUATION OF MARGINALIZED WOMEN, SINGLE MOTHERS IN ALGERIA:.. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(4), 377-390.