

**AGENCY FOREGROUNDING AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN SINGLE
PARENTING DISCOURSE IN ENUGU METROPOLIS**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated agency foregrounding and identity construction in single parenting discourse in Enugu metropolis. The study was guided by three objectives, to examine how single parents use language to foreground their agency in everyday discourse, to explore the discursive strategies used to construct and negotiate positive identities in the face of cultural stigma, and analyze how discourse functions in resisting dominant ideologies and stereotypes associated with single parenting. A qualitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with thirty single parents selected through purposive sampling across Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu East. The data were analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis and Narrative Identity Theory, focusing on linguistic features such as pronoun use, transitivity, modality, and narrative structure. The findings revealed that single parents actively foreground their agency by presenting themselves as responsible decision-makers who manage household responsibilities and provide for their children. The study also found that participants strategically construct positive identities by emphasizing resilience, moral responsibility, and competence in response to societal stigma. Furthermore, the findings showed that single parents employ discursive strategies such as narrative reframing and positive self-presentation to resist dominant ideologies and challenge negative stereotypes. The study concluded that discourse serves as a powerful resource through which single parents negotiate identity, assert agency, and reconstruct social meanings. It contributes to existing knowledge by highlighting the role of language in shaping social reality and redefining marginalized identities within the context of single parenthood.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Language constitutes one of the most powerful resources through which human beings create meaning, establish social relationships, and construct social realities. Beyond its basic communicative function, language reflects and reproduces cultural values, belief systems, and social identities, shaping both individual experiences and collective understandings. In societies, where cultural norms and social expectations strongly influence perceptions of family and parenting, language plays a central role in how single parents are judged, supported, or stigmatized.

Through linguistic practices, single parents negotiate their belonging, challenge non-belonging, and redefine their statuses in society. Their words, narratives, and phrases are not only communicative of the everyday realities but also intercede social acknowledgment, claim agency, and build strong identities (Ademodi, 2023). This is especially important considering that single parenting in Enugu is frequently perceived through the prism of moral, gendered, and financial accountability. Through the analysis of language in this respect, the paper identifies how single parents employ discourses to challenge stigma, demonstrate their competence, and re-establish their legitimacy in society, demonstrating that language serves as a manifestation of the social norms as well as a means of personal and social change.

In the case of single parents, language is both a tool of interaction and a tool of control in terms of independent, competent, and resilient lives in a world full of conventional family values (Akinyemi et al., 2025). In non-scholarly language, single parents anticipate their functions as providers, caregivers, and decision-makers and, thus, disrupt the existing stereotypes that single parenting is a sign of dependency, moral failure, or inadequacy (Alaba et al., 2025). Such discursive positioning

enables them to take agency and create other images of themselves as being responsible and capable.

Exploring identity is hence fundamental in comprehending the way individuals challenge stereotypes imposed on them by society to engage in asserting their self-identity. According to Alabede (2021), the identity formation within the group of Nigerian women is influenced by the strongly rooted cultural beliefs and expectations. What is meant by identity, in this sense, is not a fixed or constant attribute, but a dynamic process that is negotiated between the agency of the self and the norms of dominant social practices. This negotiation is especially tricky for single parents because they have to keep on redefining themselves beyond the traditional two-parent family model (Bamberg, 2004).

These processes of self-redefinition may be a source of empowerment or a source of marginalization within the context of Enugu State where family institutions are given the highest priority and strictly regulated. The discussion of how identity is made by discourse therefore provides insight into how single parents uphold dignity, legitimacy, and social identity in limiting cultural conditions. A good place to examine the interactions of discourse, identity construction, and agency in the broad context of expectations in society is therefore single parenting (Amato, 2019).

Single parenting is a form of family unit in which one of the parents, either the mother or the father, brings up a child or children without their parents. This situation puts all the emotional and economic care, guidance, and choice on a single individual. Amato (2019) and McLanahan (2011) believe that single parenting is a complex social phenomenon that is determined by economic, cultural, and personal circumstances and not a family difference. Single fathering in Nigeria is a personal, social construct of life, and therefore more likely to be condemned by the culture and

morally criticized especially in patriarchal societies that believe that marriage forms the foundation of family living.

Single parenting is caused by several factors. The most widespread of them is the death of a partner, leaving the surviving partner, who is usually a woman, to the sole role of child upbringing. Single parenting also comes as a result of divorce and separation where couples separate because of incompatibility or infidelity (Amato, 2000). The other significant reason is the abandonment of the home or permanent migration of one of the parents due to economic reasons, and the other parent is left with the kids to be nurtured by themselves. Parenthood out of choice or unplanned pregnancy that is not married is also becoming more prevalent especially among the younger adults and women who want to be independent. Also, economic migration and career-related divisions have resulted in a contemporary type of single parents who do not live with their partners extensively. In modern society, some people voluntarily become single parents to avoid losing control, sanity, or self-fulfilment.

The role of parents in education and social development also brings out the complexity of agency in normal life. Oyinloye (2021) highlights that agency in schooling decisions is exercised by parents in Nigeria even when structural issues limit this agency. This observation proves that parental agency is not confined to economic provision or formal authority but it expands to the way parents understand, frame, and perform their roles. In the case of single parents, such agency is an important tool for resisting stigma and the construction of the experiences of their children. The language that they use to narrate their roles as parents pre-empts responsibility and purposefulness. That is, their language puts an emphasis on them being intentional and responsible caregivers. This type of discourse helps them to defy the social stereotypes of irresponsibility or failure. Their construction of positive identities and presentation of themselves as competent and devoted parents in their communities is attained by foregrounding responsibility and purpose through language. Because they focus on their ability to do things, they transform narratives of

victimization into empowerment. It is a form of agency foregrounding that illustrates how the marginalized groups reclaim voice and space in their social spaces.

Hyphenated and negotiated identities also demonstrate the flexibility of discourse in making selfhood. Nwachukwu (2022) demonstrates the way in which first-generation Nigerians use language to balance between various cultural and social identities. The same balancing act is applicable to single parents, although, in their case, the balancing has to be made between the judgment of society and self-affirmation. In their discussion, it is often seen that they adopt hybrid roles, playing the role of mother and father at the same time or sole breadwinners and nurturers. The identities are dynamic and, therefore, parents have the opportunity to break stereotypes and respond to cultural pressures. This negotiation is profoundly rooted in the accounts that they give of themselves. In the process, identity turns out to be a dynamic and contextual phenomenon (Bamberg, 2004).

Another possible way of understanding gender and identity construction is through cultural contexts. According to Ogunleye and Adewale (2024), identity formation necessitates choice and agency, especially with the Yoruba and Igbo societies. In such settings, resilience and independence are often foregrounded as core parts of single mother identity. Their decisions regarding the upbringing of children, the means of their livelihood, and the social networking become the symbolic representations of agency. Through such agency brought about in discourse, single parents challenge cultural norms of motherhood and fatherhood. This negotiation shows that identities are not predetermined and unique, but they depend on the situation in life (Hall, 1996). Agency assertion power, therefore, allows single parents to resist oppression by prevailing cultural standards.

In African nations, motherhood is one such potent identity. Ogbaa (2021) highlights the priority of motherhood as a desirable identity among women in Nigeria. This role is also heightened among

single mothers who in most cases take up other roles that were traditionally the prerogative of fathers. Their conversation emphasizes not only nurturing but also provision, strength, and sacrifice as well. This way, they broaden the definition of motherhood beyond traditional stereotypes. Ogbaa continues to argue that this broadened role turns into a place of identity formation which focuses on ability and strength. Language then allows single mothers to subvert the limited definition of parental roles and reaffirm their experiences.

The society in Nigeria still relies on local traditions and norms when forming identities. According to Uche and Uche (2025), the culture, healthcare, and community institutions have strong ties in social work practices in Enugu Metropolis. In this situation, single parents negotiate these traditions as they build an identity that is consistent with their lived experiences. Their speech frequently demonstrates the manner in which they rely on cultural ideals like endurance, honour and shared accountability (Ndou-Chikwena, 2025). Meanwhile, they are opposed to cultural demands that also make them incomplete or inadequate. In this way, they create hybrid identities that are based on tradition but responsive to modern challenges. This is how culture, language, and agency intersect in our daily lives.

The masculinity discourses also give an insight into the manner in which identity is negotiated within the Nigerian context. Also young people create hegemonic masculinity using language as an assertion of power and expansion of relationships. Likewise, single dads employ language to establish authority in ways that are not constituted by conventional patriarchal structures. This redefinition also helps them to create respectable identities in their communities (Bamberg, 2004). They can oppose marginalization and assert their entitlement to be agents of change through such discursive practices. The creation of identity is then a technique of survival and empowerment.

In African societies, feminine identity is symbolically associated with motherhood and nationhood. According to Femi-Olaleye and Soneye (2021), the symbolic value of motherhood does not stop

with the family but passes to broader cultural implications. In the case of single parents, such a symbolic role may be empowering and a source of stigma. Although motherhood offers a culturally confirmed identity that reinforces the primary role of women in family life, the lack of a father may also provoke judgment and marginalization. Single mothers reconstruct themselves in a positive way by tactfully focusing on nurturing, protection, and sacrifice. This symbolic negotiation shows the use of language as a means of fighting cultural silencing (Fairclough, 1989).

Autobiography and vernacular narrative can shed more light on the construction of identities. Onyerionwu (2022) shows the construction of personal and social identities using diaries and autobiographical pieces of writing. In the case of single parents, some similar functions are played by oral narratives and everyday conversations. Through these stories, they can express their struggles, their successes, and who they are versus the social expectations. They predict agency and resilience by telling personal stories and revealing experiences that otherwise would have been opaque (Riessman, 2008). In this regard, storytelling is identity work and resistance.

The Nigerian parenting styles also make the process of identity construction more complex because of patriarchal values. he claims that patriarchal systems limit the social freedom and agency of women. In the case of single mothers, this becomes a two-fold load because they have to deal with partner absence and cultural requirements. Their speech is frequently an opposition to these norms as they accentuate independence and self-reliance. They dispel the dependency and weakness assumptions by placing themselves in a position of competence and resourcefulness (Bamberg, 2004). In such strategies, they recreate identities based on empowerment and not victimhood.

Discourse-based foregrounding agency reveals linguistic strategies as crucial in identity formation (Fairclough, 1992). Personal pronouns, like I, are applied strategically by single parents to emphasise the active involvement and responsibility. They use the stories of resilience, including

I am both father and mother, to rebrand themselves in the context of the cultures. These plans focus on deliberate, accountability and resilience amidst stigmatization. Single parents struggle against the discourses of powerlessness and establish themselves as active agents by foregrounding agency (VanDijk, 2008). Such a discursive practice transforms the perceptions not only within the community, but also in the larger culture.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The family occupies a central place in the Nigerian society, where cultural expectations often define a “complete” household in terms of both a father and a mother. Within this framework, single parenting is frequently perceived as a deviation from societal norms, resulting in stigmatization, judgment, and marginalization. In Enugu Metropolis, where communal values and kinship ties remain strong, these perceptions are particularly pronounced, creating additional layers of social and psychological pressure for single parents. Such cultural attitudes often reduce single parents to stereotypes of inadequacy, dependency, or failure, while overlooking the complexity and diversity of their lived experiences.

Language, however, provides single parents with a strategic resource for challenging these stereotypes by foregrounding their agency and reconstructing their identities. Through discourse, they present themselves not as deficient, but as resilient, capable, and self-reliant individuals. Yet, research on single parenting in Nigeria has largely focused on economic challenges, child development and social outcomes, with little attention given to the discursive strategies parents themselves employ to navigate stigma. The absence of this perspective result in one-dimensional understanding of single parenting that fails to capture the ways in which language serves as a resource for agency and identity constitution

The gap that this study has is the neglect of linguistic and identity-focused approaches in studies on single parenting. Until the research of how single parents depict themselves using their own

words, scholarship can contribute to perpetuating the dominant cultural discourses that suppress or devalue them. In addition, very minimal research in Enugu Metropolis has been done on the linguistic foregrounding of agency in daily interactions, personal stories, and communal relationships. This bad attention restricts knowledge on the construction of identity that is actively created within the context of cultural constraints and social judgment.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to investigate agency foregrounding and identity construction for single parenting discourse in Enugu metropolis. Specifically, the study

- i. examined how single parents in Enugu metropolis use language to foreground their agency in everyday discourse
- ii. explored the discursive strategies used by single parents to construct and negotiate positive identities in the face of cultural stigma
- iii. analyzed the role of discourse in resisting dominant ideologies and stereotypes about single parenting

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the work:

- i. How do single parents in Enugu metropolis use language to foreground their agency in everyday discourse?
- ii. What strategies do single parents employ to construct and negotiate positive identities in the face of cultural stigma?
- iii. In what ways does discourse function in resisting dominant stereotypes and reshaping societal perceptions of single parenting?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to examining agency foregrounding and identity construction among single parents in Enugu metropolis. It focuses on how language is used by single parents to highlight their agency, construct resilient identities, and resist negative stereotypes within a culturally sensitive context.

The research situates single parenting within the sociolinguistic framework of discourse analysis, drawing attention to everyday conversations, personal narratives, and identity performances of single parents. However, it does not attempt to cover the broader economic, psychological, or religious dimensions of single parenting beyond their linguistic representation. Its emphasis is on language use as both a mirror and a medium of agency and identity construction.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is important to discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and linguistics. First, it adds to the academic interest in the under-explored topic of the agency foregrounding in the discourse of single parents in Nigeria, especially in Enugu State. The study contributes to the discourse of empowerment in marginalized contexts by offering insight into how language can be strategically employed to oppose stigmatization and create positive self-images.

Also, the study is timely in relation to the contemporary gender, family, and cultural norms in Nigeria, as it is more and more evident that the traditional concept of family clashes with the emerging reality of single parenting. Connecting the linguistic activities with the identity construction, the study offers evidence of the role of language as a mediating factor in the lived experiences of single parents, thus placing discourse at the core of the process of negotiating social belonging and self-definition.

Also, the study has practical implications for policymakers, educators, and social workers. It gives an understanding of the linguistic mechanisms that single parents employ to demonstrate

resilience, independence and responsibility thus guiding interventions which uphold and do not stigmatise them. It also illuminates the use of discourse to refute the negative stereotypes by encouraging inclusive cultural practices among communities.

The work is a worthy contribution to the students, scholars, and researchers of applied linguistics, gender, and social sciences. It shows how discourse analysis when used in terms of family and identity shows the overlapping of language, culture, and social power. In this way, it confirms that it is essential to study language as a method of communication and as a system of negotiating dignity, belonging, and agency among marginalized groups.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study presents the review of related literature relevant to the study. It is organized into conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, and empirical review. The conceptual review focuses on key issues such as single parenting, discourse and agency, identity construction, and stigma within both global and African contexts, with particular attention to Nigeria. The empirical review examines existing works related to single parenting discourse and identity negotiation. These sections are discussed in sequence to provide a coherent foundation for the study.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Single Parenting

Single parenting is a parenting style where one parent takes a major role in bringing up a child or children without the consistent presence of another parent. This may be as a result of separation, divorce, death, or premeditated personal choices. In modern communities, cultural pressures and socio-economic status are becoming the defining factors of the realities of single parenting. The family practices in the Nigerian context are frequently affected by strongly established traditions and religious values, which still outline acceptable parenting categories (Hellandendu, 2023). Such expectations can at times put pressure on single parents to meet the demands of the ideals of family life that are dominant.

Single parenting in the world has been transformed from being view as an aberration to being increasingly accepted as a form of family. The reason why different parenting arrangements have been normalized in many urban societies is the result of the changing social dynamics. All these changes can be portrayed in the daily communication and socialization processes that influence the opinion of the majority. Discursive practices contribute to creating meanings of parenting and

family identity (Uzuegbunam, 2024). Consequently, single parents are forced to deal with rejection and acceptance in various cultural contexts.

In African cultures, though, single parenting is strongly connected with communal and kinship structures. In the past, the role of the extended family networks in the upbringing of children was high, thus offloading the responsibility of individual parents. Modern socio-economic developments have undermined these systems, thus causing more responsibilities to single parents. The belief that there should be two parents in a family is still supported by cultural beliefs and impacts the perception and treatment of single parents (Egbuchulem, 2024). This usually puts them in a situation where they are always forced to explain why they have this kind of family setup.

The situation of single parenting is also influenced by the cultural values of a region, such as Nigeria. The identity of the family in the South-East, especially in Enugu metropolis, is strongly connected with the lineage and the social expectations. These cultural influences manifest themselves in social practices and institutional interactions in the metropolis (Uche & Uche, 2025). Therefore, single parents can face structural as well as interpersonal problems in their lives. These facts render Enugu an important place to study the role of language in reflecting and negotiating parenting identities.

Single parenting is not solely a demographic situation, but a socially constructed experience that is created through discourse. The discourse of single parents and that of other people who surround them adds add to the wider societal significances. These meanings shape the ways in which people perceive the concept of responsibility, morality, and the role of the family. Such interpretations are either supported or criticized through language (Ogunkan, 2023). Therefore, the analysis of single parenting in terms of discourse provides an understanding of more profound social processes.

2.1.2 Discourse and Agency in Single Parenting

Discourse refers to language as it is used within social contexts to construct meaning and reality. It goes beyond mere communication to include the ways individuals position themselves and others through language. In everyday interactions, discourse reflects power relations and social expectations. Within Nigerian communicative practices, speakers often use linguistic strategies to emphasize responsibility and control in social roles (Femi-Olaleye & Soneye, 2023). This makes discourse a crucial tool for understanding how single parents present themselves.

Agency on the other hand is the ability of individual persons to act and make meaningful decisions on their own. Agency is manifested in discourse through the way speakers construct their actions and duties. Single parents tend to employ words in such a way that they depict themselves as people who make decisions, and not victims of the situation. This can be traced in the stories that emphasize resilience and self-reliance. This is indicative of more general tendencies in terms of self-presentation in Nigerian urban environments (Uzuegbunam, 2024).

The connection between discourse and agency is especially important in cases when people have to protect their social status. Single parents often practise discursively and project their ability and moral obligation in advance. These might involve the focus on hard work, sacrifice, and dedication to raising their children. By so doing, they debunk dominant accounts that depict them in a bad light. Language is then a form of establishing control over personal identity (Ogunkan, 2023).

Communication in the day-to-day life in Enugu metropolis is the clash of culture, language, and social expectations. There are social values that tend to influence social interactions by establishing what is acceptable in terms of behavior. In these environments, discourse can be used strategically by single parents to identify with socially desirable characteristics. The cultural rules determine the expression and perception of agency in such interactions (Uche & Uche, 2025). This

underscores the need to investigate the process of using language in particular socio-cultural contexts.

In addition, agency in discourse is not fixed but is constantly negotiated through a process of interaction. The language used by the speakers varies depending on the circumstances, audience, and intent. Fathers and mothers, who are single parents, might use various approaches to language in both formal and informal communication, in order to preserve a positive self-representation. These modifications show how dynamic the discourse is in terms of identity construction. Discourse and agency study is thus helpful in understanding how individuals manage the complicated social realities (Masombuka, 2023).

2.1.3 Identity Construction in Single Parenting Discourse

Identity construction refers to the process through which individuals create, express, and negotiate who they are through language and social interaction. It is not a fixed or static attribute but a dynamic process shaped by context, experience, and interaction. Narratives and everyday conversations play a central role in this process, as they provide the means through which experiences are organized and interpreted (Ademodi, 2023). Within discourse, individuals draw on available linguistic resources to position themselves in relation to others and to broader social expectations. This makes identity construction a crucial concept for understanding how meaning is produced in single parenting discourse.

When it comes to single parenting, there is the construction of the identity whereby one opts to portray oneself as strong, responsible, and moral. These identity positions are not random and they are the result of the necessity to address the demands and verdicts of society. This identity negotiation trend is a mirror of wider processes that occur in the life of marginalized communities that employ language to rebrand themselves in society (Olajimbati, 2024). People often create new

narratives that refute the negatively labeled stereotypes about single parenting. In this way, they can uphold dignity and demand social legitimacy using such discursive strategies.

Cultural, historical, and ideological factors also play a significant role in constructing identity. In Nigeria, the social norms of family life and gender roles are among the influential factors that define and present individuals. The colonial and religious forces have also reinforced specific ideas of identity, in particular, the ones about motherhood and family duty (Egbuchulem, 2024). Such expectations are incorporated in the daily language and supported by social practices and institutions. Consequently, single parents tend to have their way through the intricate levels of expectation as they fashion their identities.

Moreover, the process of identity construction in discourse is not solitary, but rather a process that is affected by interaction and negotiation. People keep changing how they present themselves depending on the situation of interaction and the listener or readers. Family life representations in the context of Nigerians show the conflict between traditional values and modern reality, which is manifested in the way people share their experiences (Bensadok and Maoui, 2026). Identity, in both the literary and social discourses is often depicted as the place of struggle where different values and expectations collide. This brings out the negotiable and fluid character of identity in discourse.

Language is a key component of the way people are able to build and express their identities. Speakers position themselves in a certain way and this is through the use of certain linguistic means like pronouns, evaluative expressions, and the structuring of narratives. Identity in discourse is thus not simply represented, but created by the use of language (Mbassi Elong, 2023). Such decisions affect the way others see them and the manner in which they interpret their experiences. This highlights the significance of studying linguistic patterns in the construction of identity.

The strategic management of social perception is also a part of the identity construction in single-parenting discourse. People tend to expect judgment from society and shape their stories to make them appear in a good light. These strategies indicate that identity is formed not only through personal experience but also through the necessity of social acceptance (Ademodi, 2023). This is characterized by placing special focus on some of the experiences and deemphasizing others to conform to socially desirable qualities. Single parents also negotiate their position in their societies through discourse.

Finally, there is the identity construction in the process of single parenting, which is both an individual and societal process, and which brings into consideration socio-cultural dynamics. It is a process that engages the agency of a person and the demands of society. The importance of discourse in the formation of identity is further pronounced once the discourse is considered in the context of modern communication (Mbassi Elong, 2023). By means of discourse, people are able to affirm their values, beliefs, and experiences in a manner that both influences how people perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. Such representations are an eye-opener to the real-life experiences of single parents and the struggles they endure.

2.1.4 Stigma and Resistance in Single Parenting Discourse

Stigma is the negative social judgment of individuals or groups with regard to perceived violation of societal norms. Stigmatization, in the case of single parenting, tends to be in the form of stereotypes; in this case, the stereotypes are that someone is irresponsible, morally lacking, or socially incompetent. The perceptions are not created in a vacuum but supported by the daily conversation and cultural narratives (Ogunkan, 2023). The language is also a major factor in perpetuating such labels as it defines the perception of the people in their respective communities. It is social labeling processes that lead to the marginalization of single parents in different social situations.

Cultural and religious structures in the Nigerian society that value the significance of the two-parent family structure form the basis of the stigmatization of single parenting. Such norms establish what is deemed as acceptable and desirable in family life and anything that is not in line with these norms may be treated with disapproval. The continuation of these norms is reflected in the degree to which the social and institutional practices support the traditional family values (Hellandendu, 2023). These expectations affect the social attitudes as well as the relationship between people hence determining how single parents are treated. This presents a difficult environment for individuals who do not meet these expectations.

The impact of stigma does not just end on the perception of society but also the lived life of the single parents. Negative labeling can lead to persons being excluded, discriminated against, or having limited access to support systems. Those experiences tend to be reproduced in the discourse, in which stigmatizing language supports the existing inequalities (Ogunkan, 2023). Nevertheless, discourse also gives people an opportunity to enact on these images and offer an opposition to them. The dual role of language shows that it is important in maintaining and opposing stigma.

Although single parents face the problem of stigma, they use discursive approaches to oppose the negative portrayals. Resistance is frequently manifested in the re-definition of personal experiences, and the creation of other identities. Such instances of resistance have been demonstrated in literary and social texts to disrupt the prevailing discourses and leave room for other viewpoints (Adeniyi, 2024). Some of the typical strategies that are used to counter stereotyping are storytelling, self-affirmation, and the use of positive evaluative language. The practices make people regain the power to control the way they are represented and interpreted.

The resistance process is directly related to identity building and agency whereby people redefine the meanings that they experience. Single parents formulate new interpretations of family,

responsibility, and morality by defying the prevailing notions of the same. The stigma and resistance interaction point to the dynamic character of social meaning-making (Shehu, 2023). These other accounts help in bringing about slow changes in perceptions by society over time. Discourse thus serves as a place of exercise and struggle for power.

Besides, the aspect of resistance can be done through discourse and it can be characterized by strategic positioning in the prevailing cultural structures. People can also rely on the values that are socially acceptable like responsibility, sacrifice, and moral integrity to justify identities. This shows that resistance does not necessarily mean opposition, it can also entail bargaining among the mainstream discourses (Adeniyi, 2024). It is through these values that they can better counter negative stereotypes by aligning their stories with them. These strategies indicate the intricacy of the identity negotiation under the conditions of stigmatization.

The relationship between the stigma and the resistance in Nigeria is notable in most of the southeastern regions where it manifests in daily communication (Abba, 2025). The demands of the culture persist in influencing the vision of the masses, but people are constantly bargaining with these limitations using words. The analysis of these processes gives a better understanding of how discourse helps in bringing social change and transformation. By means of discourse, single parents re-establish their roles, establish their agency, and break the social assumptions of society. The struggles that continue to be experienced in these negotiations are those of meaning, identity, and social acceptance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research is built on two theories that are closely related; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Narrative Identity Theory (NIT), both offering a solid theoretical framework for studying the role played by language in the construction of meaning and identity. The theoretical perspectives are based on the fact that language is not neutral but socially situated and ideology-based. CDA is

concerned with the way in which discourse replicates and enacts power relations in society. Narrative Identity Theory describes how people can form their identities through narrative. In the modern context of discourse studies, the focus has been given to the way in which communicative practices are influenced by identity and social positioning in daily interactions (Mbassi Elong, 2023). The views are especially applicable to the current study since they allow analyzing the ways in which single parents in Enugu metropolis use language to anticipate agency, create positive identities, and oppose cultural stigma holistically. The two theories enables the research to relate the wider social framework to the personal experiences in the form of discourse.

2.2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theoretical framework that studies the complex connection between language, power, and social forms. It was an answer to the previous traditions of linguistics which considered language to be independent and unrelated to social life. Some of the most notable practitioners of the theory include Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak who focus on the fact that discourse is a social practice. When analyzing patterns of communication in various settings, the researchers have emphasized the role of discourse in determining the institutions and social identities (Uche & Uche, 2025). This viewpoint points to the fact that language is central to the generation and reproduction of social inequalities.

One of the major assumptions of CDA is the ideological loading of the language and underlying power relations in society. It implies that there is no such thing as a neutral linguistic choice and that linguistic choices are influenced by cultural beliefs, social norms, and institutional frameworks. In most of the African situations, traditional values and social expectations that dictate the roles and behaviors that are acceptable, have a profound impact on discourse. The cultural norms still influence the perception of people, particularly, the way people perceive genders and family organizations (Egbuchulem, 2024). This is the assumption that is mostly

applicable in the interpretation of the position of single parents in the dominant discourses of society.

The other fundamental ideology of the CDA is that discourse does not passively mirror reality but rather it constructs reality. Language is used by people to make meanings that determine the way people interpret and deal with social issues. In modern communication, it has been revealed that discourse can be an important part of creating an identity and agency in various social situations (Uzuegbunam, 2024). This shows the relevance of the analysis of the use of language to create certain versions of reality. Within the scope of the current paper, it assists in clarifying the process of how discourse is employed by single parents in order to rebrand their experiences and change the attitudes of society.

The Three-Dimensional Model by Fairclough offers a procedural approach to the use of CDA when it is applied to discourse analysis. The model theorizes discourse as existing at three interacting levels, the textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. On the textual level, the language characteristics of such features as vocabulary, grammar, modality, and transitivity are considered. Research on spoken English in Nigeria shows how these linguistic characteristics only help in the process of meaning-making and positioning of identity (Femi-Olaleye and Soneye, 2023). This level is important to analyse how single parents employ particular forms of language to pre-empt their agency.

The second dimension is discursive practice: it is concerned with the production, distribution, and interpretation of texts in specific contexts. It also focuses on the importance of interaction and the dynamics of negotiating meaning. The narrative forms in institutional and social settings disclose the way people arrange experiences and shape identities by telling stories (Ademodi, 2023). This aspect is significant in this study of how single parents organize their stories and place themselves

within the context of their audience. It also points out the focus or lack of focus on some experiences in the discourse.

Social practice is the third dimension, which places discourse in the context of socio-cultural and ideological larger scope. It focuses on the way in which language is constructed through power relations and the way in which it can support or potentially challenge dominant ideologies. Cultural norms of family, gender roles, and morality are some of the cultural aspects of Nigerian society that affect the discussion on parenting. These social-cultural processes precondition the perception of people and the bargaining of their identity in society (Abba, 2025). This aspect is especially applicable to the examination of the way in which single parents oppose stigmatizing discourses and transform expectations of society.

In general, Critical Discourse Analysis offers an in-depth methodology of the analysis of language as a means of domination as well as resistance. Through the combination of linguistic analysis and social interpretation, CDA allows for a better insight into the process of identity-making and identity-challenging in a given situation. This study, it exposed how single parents in Enugu metropolis employ discourse to affirm their agency, negotiate their identity, and contest dominant ideologies. critical approach to studying the relationship that exists between language, power, and social reality in the discourse of single parenting.

2.2.2 Narrative Identity Theory (NIT)

Dan McAdams came up with Narrative Identity Theory (NIT) which is a conceptualization of identity as an internalized and dynamically changing life narrative that people create in order to organize their lives. The theory is based on the previous philosophical and psychological understandings of other philosophers like Paul Ricoeur and Jerome Bruner who focused on the importance of narrative in human experience. It presupposes that identity is not pre-determined but is constantly constructed through the practices of storytelling which combines the past

experiences, the present reality, and the future anticipations. Recent discourse-oriented research also offered a focus on how people construct their identities in the form of stories in their daily communication (Olajimbiti, 2024). This view brings out the role of narration in identity formation.

One of the key assumptions of the Narrative Identity Theory is that narratives are constitutive of identity (not just reflective). Stories involve various narrative structures and how the social world constructs the narratives and meanings as individuals tell stories. This is true for the narratives that single parents deploy as part of identity construction. This means narrative agency is a meaning-making process that describes how individuals utilize various social and contextual resources within a narrative structure to tell a story and achieve a particular social outcome. In any narrative, the narrator has the agency to choose how the audience will perceive and engage with the narrative. In narrative theory, there is a significant emphasis on agency and meaning construction. In this context, single parents use this process to distance themselves from the negative stereotypes. In most of today's narratives, especially among single parents, there is a high emphasis on agency and meaning construction to distance themselves from negative identities.

Ademodi (2023) explains that when people tell stories about their lives, they are engaged in a form of identity construction. In order to do this, storytellers must use the techniques of selection, order, and design to organize their lives and experiences into a coherent structure. The social and structural narratives of institutions demonstrate how the cell stories in mobile social networking structures demonstrate how people manage their identities and the meaning they create from their experiences through social networks (Ademodi, 2023). This is true for the narratives that single parents deploy as part of identity construction. This means narrative agency is a meaning-making process that describes how individuals utilize various social and contextual resources within a narrative structure to tell a story and achieve a particular social outcome.

Narrative Identity Theory also points to the role played by culture and ideology in the process of storytelling. Societal norms and expectations constitute the shapers of narratives that outline what is acceptable in terms of identities and behaviors. The family, gender, and morality cultural values are important in the Nigerian context and influence the way people build their narratives. These are cultural influences that are rooted in discourse and influence how individuals perceive and narrate their experiences (Egbuchulem, 2024). This highlights the need to take into account the issue of cultural context when examining narrative identity.

The theory also highlights the dialogic quality of storytelling which is the relationship between the narrator and the audience. Stories tend to be created in the light of how they may be judged and expected to be judged by others. Storytelling in discourse is a negotiating instrument used strategically in order to resist dominating representations. Literary and social texts analyses show how the marginalized people employ narrative to disrupt current power and impose an alternative definition of who they are (Adeniyi, 2024). This is where the relevance of narrative in social resistance is indicated.

Besides, Narrative Identity Theory states the process according to which people derive moral meaning out of their experiences by telling stories. Interpreting events and actions in a narrative context, people establish the impression of coherence and purpose in their lives. This is done by comparing experiences and locating oneself in relation to the experiences. Narratives in this context of single parenting tend to have a sense of resilience, sacrifice, and responsibility. These techniques of narration allow people to form a sense of identity that would resist the negative views on society (Mbassi Elong, 2023).

The importance of the Narrative Identity Theory to the study is that it can be used to understand how identity is formed at the discourse level of the personal experience. It is a holistic approach when combined with Critical Discourse Analysis in that it offers a way to relate personal stories

to the larger social systems. The combination can be used to better understand how single parents in Enugu metropolis can use language to foreground agency, build positive identities, and overcome stigma. In this theoretical combination, the paper has shown how discourse serves as a personal and social source of identity negotiation.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

Akinyemi et al. (2025) concentrated on the role of single parenting and its effect on the English language proficiency of the secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The researchers analyzed the role of the family structure in influencing the participation of students in the English language learning process and their performance in the long run. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design in selecting 400 students using a multistage sampling method in 20 secondary schools, which are rural and urban in 20 schools. Structured questionnaires and academic records of students were used as data collection methods and Analysis of Variance as the method of testing differences between groups. The results showed that children in dual-parent families were better supported in their academic life, emotionally motivated, had access to more resources related to learning, and performed much better. Although the study offers a useful rebuttal on the educational implications of single parenting, it contrasts with the current study as being quantitative-oriented and academic-based as opposed to discourse. Nevertheless, the two studies are alike in the manner that they acknowledge the role of social structure in lived experiences; however, the current study takes a different turn to focus on language use, agency, and identity construction in Enugu metropolis.

Adewoyin et al. (2021) explored the prevalence of single motherhood and its determinants in the Nigerian states during 2003-2018. The research study found that the key sociodemographic variables included urban residence, higher education, wealth, and age at first birth, which are important predictors of single motherhood, and are more prevalent in southern Nigeria. The study takes a demographic and statistical orientation to the idea of the patterns of single parenting in

different regions. Even though the study does not specifically deal with identity construction or agency, it gives valuable background on the structural conditions under which single motherhood takes place. This renders it pertinent to this study, since identity is built and negotiated in such circumstances. Nevertheless, unlike Adewoyin et al. who concentrate on the demographic distribution, the current study is distinct as it concentrates on the discourse as a channel through which identity and agency are enacted and negotiated.

Adedejoh et al. (2019) studied the lived experiences of women raising children outside of marriage, with their primary interest in studying the ways these women manage stigma, social relationships, and financial struggles. The research found that identity construction among single mothers is influenced by factors within the family, religion, and society, as well as individual background factors, including education and upbringing. The respondents were discovered to negotiate both negative and positive identity positions and in most instances, they would introduce themselves as strong and independent despite the judgment of society. This is very similar to the current research and especially in its focus on identity negotiation and resilience. The study is however more differentiated as it takes a wider sociological approach where the present study specifically considers the linguistic and discursive practices through which such identities are created in Enugu metropolis.

Alaba et al. (2025) conducted a quantitative study on the prevailing rates of single motherhood in South-Eastern Nigeria. The research traced spatial clustering particularly in southern Nigeria and the importance of other factors including education, ethnicity, and urbanization in affecting single parenting patterns. These structural variables have been identified to have not only the probability of being a single mother but also the social perception of the role. Though the study does not directly deal with discourse, it gives an insight into the environmental conditions that influence agency and identity. The current study, in its turn, expands upon this background and looks into how people negotiate these structural realities through the use of language. Therefore, the present

study aims at discursive practices as identity construction and resistance tools whereas Alaba et al. pay attention to structural determinants.

David et al. (2013) discussed the interaction within the family in Spanish single-parent-by-choice families through an ethnographic method. The participants were interviewed, observed, and analyzed in terms of social interactions between parents and children. It identified that single mothers by choice actively build socialization goals and incorporate them in daily communication especially in the discussion of future goals. This demonstrates the importance of discourse in creating the meaning and identity of families. The research is comparable to the current study in that it focuses on the construction of identity in narrative and interaction. It, however, varies in context and scope because it dwells on European family structures, whereas the current research is based on the sociocultural realities of Enugu metropolis, and agency foregrounding in discourse.

Ghanney (2024) explored how junior high school students in Effutu Municipality can receive academic support from both single mothers and fathers. By applying a quantitative survey design, the research established that the single mothers were more engaged in their children's academic activities such as supervision of homework and attending PTA meetings. The study brings about gender disparities in parental involvement and emphasizes the family structure in educational achievement. Although this study is informative on the issue of parenting practices, it does not align with the current study in the sense that it focuses on educational support as opposed to discourse. However, the two studies are not any different as they both recognize the active involvement of single parents in determining the outcome, with the current study going a notch further into linguistic articulation of agency and identity.

In the study by Fotoh (2021), a quantitative survey method was applied to find out the impact of single parenthood on the academic performance of students in Cameroon. The results showed that low educational attainment and lack of parental engagement in the lives of single parents had

adverse impacts on the performance of the students. The research also established single parenting causes including divorce, poverty, and the death of a spouse. Although the study offers a bigger picture of the socio-economic issues related to single parenting, it is very different in its focus and methodology from the current study. The current research, however, supplements these results by investigating the way in which single parents discursively react to these challenges by means of identity construction and agency foregrounding.

Reid (2019) introduced a model of the linguistic representation of agency in various forms of discourse. The paper has explored the process of agency construction within media and institutional accounts, with reference to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. It determined various methods of attribution or diffusion of responsibility and action by language. This framework is very applicable to the current study because it offers a basis for why agency can either be foregrounded or backgrounded in discourse. Nonetheless, whereas Reid emphasizes institutional and media discourse, the current study is different because it uses a similar analysis of discourse to the daily discourse of single parents in Enugu metropolis.

Through linguistic anthropology, Ahearn (2001) presented the different conceptualizations of agency highlighting the significance of language in the sense that agency is negotiated and articulated. The paper postulated that agency is not a personal property but it is created in the process of social interaction and dialogue. Even though the study is older than the 2010 cutoff, its theoretical contributions to the current research on language and agency are still powerful. It shares similarity with the current study in its focus on discourse as an agency construction site. Nevertheless, the current research is unique in that it presents the empirical evidence of one sociocultural setting, the discussion of single parenting in Enugu metropolis.

Moummau and Fathi (2020) reviewed the conceptualization of agency in language policy and planning studies as a systematic review. It was observed in the study that despite the growing

concern in local agencies, there still exists a gap in coherent theory integration in agency-based research studies. This brings out the necessity to have more context-based research that examines how agency is practiced in life. This gap is addressed by the current research that considers the way in which agency is foregrounded in daily conversations about single parents. Although Moummau and Fathi concentrate on the analysis of policies at the level, the current research is different as it focuses on micro-level linguistic practices.

Syamsi et al. (2022) examined the phenomenon of identity construction by using Jakartanese personal pronouns and showing how the language impacts social identity and reflects it. The authors discovered that familiarity and social belonging identities can be created by the usage of particular pronouns by speakers. This is in line with the current study that focuses on language as a means of identity creation. But whereas Syamsi et al. concentrate on the usage of pronouns in a particular linguistic context, the current research expands on this point of view to larger discursive options that single parents use in Enugu metropolis.

Lawal et al. (2025) explored a linkage between language and identity in the multilingual environment in Nigeria and how people in the country manage multiple identities by expressing themselves through language. The paper has recognized many types of identity, such as gender, ethnic, and social identities as well as the importance of discourse in determining the identity types. This is directly connected to the current research, where identity construction is also discussed with the help of language. Yet, where Lawal et al. proceed in a general theoretical direction, the current study remains quite different as it addresses single-parenting discourse and the tactics of negotiating identity and agency that are employed.

Okafor (2018) also studied the way single parents are perceived by society in Nigeria and reported that they are commonly regarded as incomplete or irresponsible. The paper has also shed light on the economic constraints that single parents go through and how they exhibit resilience. On the

same note, Adewumi (2017) has established that single mothers frequently use the help of their community and religious involvement to form positive identities. The studies have been comparable to the current study in that they also study the issue of stigma and resilience. Nevertheless, they are different in the sense that they do not examine in specific terms the linguistic processes with the help of which these identities are formed, which is the primary issue of the current study.

Okechukwu (2016) examined the life of single parents in southeastern Nigeria and identified how cultural values affect identity and agency. The researchers have discovered that widows and single mothers are usually stigmatized and economically marginalized and this influences their capacity to support their families. Simultaneously, there are people who are resilient as they rebrand themselves as providers and caregivers. Close to the study is the present research in that it focuses on the southeastern Nigerian context. Nonetheless, unlike Okechukwu, who focuses on the socio-cultural issues, the current study is quite different as it looks at how negotiating through discourse can address the stereotyping of single parents in Enugu metropolis.

2.4 Summary of the Review of Related Literature

Through the analysis of the related literature, it can be seen that single parenting has been studied extensively in various fields especially in relation to social structure, education, and demographic trends. In theory, the literature confirms that identity, agency, and stigma are the key drivers of single-parent experiences, particularly in a culturally sensitive setting like Nigeria. Research emphasizes that the construction of identity is not fixed but rather determined by the interaction, and agency is manifested by daily practice and choices. The theoretical framework, which is based on the Critical Discourse Analysis and the Narrative Identity Theory, further supports the notion that language is very important in creating meaning, identity, and power relations, which is observed in the way communicative practices affect social positioning. This forms a remarkable

foundation for examining how discourse functions as a means of the construction of identities and forms of resistance.

These studies have, however, not narrowed down to discourse and the construction of agency and identity of single parents, particularly in the Enugu metropolis. Most studies on single parents have overlooked the language used by single parents in everyday interactions to highlight agency, resist stigma, and construct a positive identity. This is why the current study is important as it moves away from structural and outcome-centered studies to examine discourse as a space for social meaning and social negotiation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the methodological procedures adopted for this study on single parenting discourse in Enugu metropolis. It explained the research design, area of the study, population of the study, sample and sampling technique, instrument for data collection, and the method of data analysis. These methodological procedures provided the framework through which relevant data were generated and analysed in order to address the objectives of the study.

Because this research was aimed at the extent to which single parents used language to create agency, identity, and challenge cultural stigma, a qualitative research design was deemed suitable for this study. In this manner, the thorough examination of the participants' stories and the linguistic options that single parents used to explain their experiences, roles, and social statuses in their sociocultural context was made possible. It was the methodology that described the selection of the participants, how the interview information was gathered, and how the stories were systematically examined with the discourse-analytic tools.

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative approach used in the study was content analysis. As the study was concerned with the meanings as constructed, negotiated, and reflected through language, disapproach was appropriate since it offered the depth and flexibility needed to conduct a detailed analysis of the discourse. Qualitative research focuses on the interpretation, the meaning, and the exploration of lived experiences.

Instead of producing numerical data, it provided the opportunity to immerse oneself in the voices of participants in the interview, thus being appropriate to explore how single parents defined

responsibility, resilience, and self-definition in their daily interactions. This approach was useful to document the subtle ways in which agency was foregrounded and the constructions of identities formed in reaction to the expectations of society and culture.

Therefore, the qualitative research design served as a coherent and methodologically suitable basis for studying the discursive efforts by which single parents in Enugu metropolis negotiated identity and fought against stigma.

3.2 Area of the Study

The research was carried out in Enugu Metropolis in Enugu State, the southeastern part of Nigeria. Enugu metropolis is divided into three large Local Government Areas that include: Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu East. The metropolis is the administrative, commercial, and educational centre of the state and is occupied by a heterogeneous population that undertake different socio-economic activities that include civil services, trading, education, and small-scale entrepreneurship.

Enugu metropolis was chosen in this research because it was a socially and culturally dynamic urban setting where the various family set-ups such as single parenting were becoming apparent. The metropolis is city-like, which provides the circumstances under which people of various socio-economic statuses interact and negotiate social identities in daily communication.

3.3 Population of the Study

The study consisted of single parents residing in Enugu metropolis. For the purpose of this research, single parents referred to individuals who were raising one or more children without the presence of a spouse due to circumstances such as separation, divorce, widowhood, abandonment, or non-marital childbirth.

Single parents formed an important social group within contemporary Nigerian society, particularly in urban centres such as Enugu metropolis where diverse family structures were increasingly common. These individuals often navigate dvarious social, cultural, and economic challenges while carrying out parental responsibilities. As such, their experiences and the ways in which they articulated these experiences through language provided valuable insight into the discursive construction of agency and identity.

The target population therefore included male and female single parents living within the three Local Government Areas that constituted Enugu metropolis, namely Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu East. These individuals represented different socio-economic backgrounds, occupations, and life experiences, thereby providing a rich context for examining how single parents used language to describe their responsibilities, negotiate social perceptions, and construct meaningful identities within their communities.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling was particularly suitable for qualitative research in which participants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives rather than through random selection. Given that the study investigated agency foregrounding and identity construction in single parenting discourse, it was necessary to recruit individuals who demonstrably occupied the social category of single parent.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

They identified as single parents (male or female),

They resided within Enugu metropolis (Enugu North, Enugu South, or Enugu East),

They had at least one child under their care, and

They were willing to participate in audio-recorded interviews.

To ensure balanced representation, a total of thirty (30) respondents were interviewed, with ten (10) participants drawn from each Local Government Area. Respondents were assigned identification codes ranging from R1 to R30 for anonymity and clarity. Specifically:

- R1–R10: Enugu North
- R11–R20: Enugu South
- R21–R30: Enugu East

The inclusion of both male and female participants allowed for possible gendered variations in discourse, while restricting the study to Enugu metropolis ensured sociocultural consistency.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a semi-structured interview guide designed to investigate how single parenting in Enugu metropolis was expressed through language, particularly in foregrounding agency, constructing identity, and resisting stereotypes.

Structure of the Instrument

Demographic Information:

Gender, age, education, number of children, and type of single parenthood.

Respondents aged between 25 and 55 years were drawn from various areas:

- Enugu North: Independence Layout, Coal Camp
- Enugu South: Uwani, Ogui, Thinkers Corner
- Enugu East: Trans-Ekulu, New Haven, Abakpa

Interview Procedure

Data collection involved face-to-face interviews with the 30 participants. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes and was conducted in a comfortable location. Interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and later transcribed verbatim.

Prior to participation, respondents were provided with a consent form which explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw.

Sections of the Interview Guide

Agency in Single Parenting

- Can you describe your daily responsibilities as a single parent?
- How do you describe your decisions and actions in raising your children?

Identity Construction in Single Parenting

- How do you describe yourself as a single parent?
- Do you use language to show strength or independence?

Resistance to Stereotypes

- Have you experienced negative stereotypes?
- How do you respond to such labels?

Rationale for the Instrument

The semi-structured interview was chosen because it allowed participants to freely narrate their experiences while enabling the researcher to probe deeper into discursive features such as pronoun use, modality, and evaluative expressions. It ensured rich, context-specific data suitable for discourse analysis.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed qualitatively using an integrated framework combining Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Dan McAdams's Narrative Identity Theory.

Analysis was carried out at three levels:

- **Textual Level:** Focus was placed on linguistic features such as pronouns, modality, transitivity, and evaluative expressions to identify how agency was constructed.
- **Discursive Practice:** Examination focused on narrative structure, sequencing, and identity positioning as participants constructed meaning through storytelling.
- **Social Practice:** Narratives were interpreted within broader sociocultural and ideological contexts in Enugu metropolis.

This multi-layered approach enabled the study to connect language use with identity construction and societal structures, providing a comprehensive understanding of how single parents foregrounded agency and resisted stigma through discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Agency Foregrounding in Single Parenting Discourse

Agency Foregrounding in Single Parenting Discourse looks at the use of language by single parents in Enugu metropolis to foreground their agency in telling their lived stories. Agency, is the ability of people who signify themselves as involved decision-makers who accept the responsibilities of their actions, decide on their course of actions, and cope with the difficulty of single parenting. During a social environment where single parenthood is frequently cast within the deficit discourses of dependency, moral failure, or social judgment foregrounding agency is a pivotal discursive tactic.

The responses gathered from the respondents indicate that single parents often use language that focuses on determination, strength, responsibility, and ambition. Instead of only describing themselves as limited by the events, the subjects create identities, that emphasize that they can support their children, handle the home chores, and cope with the social issues. With these language practices, agency does not merely exist, but is performed so that the single parents can take charge of their positions and challenge the social perceptions towards passivity or inability.

In order to investigate the construction of agency in the discourse, the analysis is based on a number of dimensions. First, the focus is made on the linguistic resources used by the participants, such as the lexical options, modal verbs, and expressions of evaluation, which help to show the speaker as an active and competent actor. Second, the stories are analysed using transitivity patterns, which

demonstrate how the respondents position themselves as actors who are undertaking material, relational, and mental processes that enhance their control of family life. Third, the analysis involves the usage of pronouns, voice, and self-positioning, which demonstrates how speakers put themselves at the center of their experiences and give focus to their independence. Lastly, there are the storytelling techniques that predetermine individual accountability and resilience in which cumulative accounts of actions, routines, and moral commitments serve to build socially accepted and morally legitimate identities.

4.1.1 Linguistic Resources for Agency Construction

In the Data collected from single parents in Enugu metropolis, the respondents often used certain linguistic resources that predetermined their agency in the parenting role. Such resources are verbal options, modal constructions, evaluative language, and descriptive wording, which highlight individual agency and accountability as well as resilience. In all the interviews, the respondents always employed language to show themselves as proactive decision-makers, referring to their capacity to cope with the household chores, emotional and financial support of their children, and face the social norms and expectations. The linguistic resources noticed are action-oriented verbs like: “I manage, I provide, I ensure” that makes the parent the agent of initiating and accomplishing the tasks. Determination and commitment to parental tasks are denoted by modal verbs such as must, can, and will. Evaluative descriptors like strong, capable, and independent prove the self-perception of a strong and competent person. Also, Pidgin words such as “Na me dey do am” and “I go make sure say my pikin dey alright” can also be seen to support the same sense of personal initiative and responsibility on a culturally based level. These verbal selections serve to anticipate the parent as an agent of action, opposed to the narratives that can make single parents vulnerable or reliant.

To illustrate, consider the following examples from six respondents:

Respondent: “I dey manage everything for my house, from money to school fees. I must make sure say my pikin no suffer.”

Respondent: “I always dey plan how I go handle every wahala. Nothing fit stop me from giving my child better life.”

Respondent: “I wake up early, cook, clean, and also dey look for work to support us. Na me dey control the home.”

Respondent: “I ensure say my children go school on time, and I dey check their books every day. I no dey leave anything for chance.”

Respondent: “I fit do any work wey go help my pikin grow well. I no go allow laziness stop me.”

Respondent: “I don tire sometimes, but I dey push myself because my children need me. I sabi say na me go make am happen.”

Analysis of these extracts shows that participants foreground agency by combining lexical choices, modality, and evaluative expressions.

4.1.2 Transitivity and Actor Representation in Narrative Accounts

Transitivity is the ability of the action, events, and processes to be expressed in words especially on the side of the one who does the action and those who are impacted by the action. It also concentrates on the association between an actor (a performer of an act) and the rest of the clause participants. Transitivity in the narrative accounts can be used to bring out the way people depict themselves and others in terms of agency and responsibility.

Within the framework of the discussion of single parenting, participants often align themselves with the role of actors by using first-person pronouns and material action verbs.

For instance;

Rp: “I wake up regularly in the morning to prepare breakfast for my kids before they go to school.

This extract foreshadows a material process, with the respondent in the center of action taking concrete action. The first-person pronoun I is used to underline individual initiative, whereas the active responsibility is indicated by the verb phrase of waking early.to cook. The assertion makes the speaker appear as an individual who directly influences the daily routine of her children, which puts emphasis on agency.

Rp: “I take all school decisions and health matters myself; nobody else can interfere.”

In this case, transitivity focuses on the responsibility of the actors and choice. The verbs of the type take and fit interfere are used to establish the respondent as the leader of actions and the key decision-maker. The composition of the sentence makes the speaker grammatically and semantically foregrounded as the one with control of the outcomes.

Rp: “I manage everything, from money to food, because I get everything for the house.”

Material processes are also brought out by this extract and this is a complete representation of management. The mixture of Standard English (I manage everything) and Pidgin (na me get everything for house) is a sign of pragmatic language usage, which claims authority and competence. The ownership and control of lexical choices are foregrounded in the agency that belonged to the respondent.

Rp: “I dey always consider how I fit to make my children successful in life.

The respondent predicts a mental functioning that shows planning and reflection ability. The cognitive processing is indicated by the verb think, and the speaker positions himself as an agent to make his children successful by the statement: fit help my children succeed. Agency is built by purpose and vision.

Rp: “I believe wetin go make my pikin happy and comfortable daily.

This extract is a mixture of the mental and relational processes, which reflect and are morally concerned. The speaker is always foregrounded by the use of the pronoun I, and the statement that he makes his pikin happy and comfortable shows that he is making conscious attempts to control the results. Pidgin makes the decision to focus on natural personal voice.

Rp: “I dey guide dem, talk to dem, and correct dem whenever dem do anyhow.”

The extract previews relational and material processes, depicting care and active intervention. The series of verbs namely guide, talk, and correct defines the respondent as the agent who brings actions which determine behavior.

Based on these six extracts, it is quite clear that the respondents always apply material, mental, and relational processes to place themselves as active agents.

4.1.3 Use of Pronouns, Voice, and Self-Positioning

Pronouns, voice, and self-positioning are important issues that single parents use to create meaning and self-presentation in discourse. The first-person pronouns (I/me) are often used by the participants to preempt their role in parenting and their responsibility. This direct self-reference makes them active agents assuming ownership of their roles and not a passive individual who is moulded by experience.

For instance;

Rp: “I single-handedly am not in control of anything in my house; na me call the last word.

The speaker is always placed in the foreground by the first-person pronoun I and it accentuates the ownership and power. Self-positioning is supported by the use of Pidgin (na me dey call the final

decisions) as the final decision-maker. The declarative form is independent and puts emphasis on the agency of the respondent when it comes to family issues.

Rp: “I always calmly talk to my children whenever wahala shows up at school to make them understand.

The foregrounding of the speaker as a mediator is done through the use of pronouns and verb choice. I place the respondent in the role of the actor who makes a conscious effort and they talk to help them understand accentuates instruction and moral obligation.

Rp: “I no go leave anything for chance; na me go handle all the responsibilities.”

In this case, the speaker predicts agency by means of negation and modality. I no go leave anything to chance is an indication that there is proactive control and determination. The use of pronouns and self-references serves to cement self-positioning as the agent of action who does not want to be interfered with by others.

Rp: “I dey proud say I dey raise my children without wahala from anybody.”

Pride and the use of pronouns are used to underline self-positioning. The phrase, I dey proud, is a foregrounding of personal agency, whereas the phrase, without wahala from anybody, is an indication of autonomy in the choice of parenting.

Rp: “I always explain to dem why certain things must happen; I dey guide dem step by step.”

The use of pronouns I and verbs explain and guide previews the respondent as an active mentor and moral agent. The sequential action (step-by-step) is an indication of the systematic involvement and conscious control over the results which supports agency and cautious self-positioning.

Rp: “I go do everything wey fit make my children grow well, however hard.

This quote focuses on modal verbs and future orientation. The speaker is held responsible and active by placing them in a position that states that I will do everything wey fit help my children. The story puts the parent as the agent that influences the development of children, who exerts power despite difficulties. In these extracts, the respondents always preempt themselves using pronouns, verb forms, and asserting constructions. The declarative/modal/negation constructions combined enable the respondents to take control of their parenting role and project resilience and responsibility.

Rp: “I plan their schedule, I monitor their progress, and I dey encourage them whenever they fall.”

The use of pronouns like self and action verbs like plan, monitor and encourage prefigure the speaker as an active part of child upbringing.

Rp: I can not leave anything to chance; I make sure my decisions will make their future better.

The modal expressions and negation indicate intentionality and active positioning of the self (never leave anything to chance). The position of the use of pronouns places the decision-maker in the respondent, who actively constructs the outcomes, and emphasizes responsibility and agency.

Rp: “I do my best to make the surroundings as stable as possible for my children and I make all the important decisions by myself. The use of self-assertion and moral responsibility is stressed by the use of the word I in the repetition. Declarative sentences are used to organize the narrative showing the respondent as the primary actor who is stable and autonomous, which shows conscious agency in parenting.

Rp: I am not proud of how I take care of my children on my own; I am the one who teaches them values that help them grow up. The active voice and the use of verbs, such as manage and teach, support the idea of resilience and personal agency.

Rp: I make sure that all my decisions are in favor of my children, and I always stand by them regardless of the situation. Foreground The action and protective agency are proacted by the use of pronouns and modal verbs.

Throughout these extracts, the respondents are always foregrounding themselves using the repetition of first-person pronouns, active tenses, and statements.

4.1.4 Narrative Expressions of Personal Responsibility and Resilience

The single parents in Enugu metropolis always portrayed personal responsibility and resilience in their narratives, especially in the choice of words, descriptions of the actions, and storytelling tricks. The respondents emphasized how they are proactive in the household chores, taking care of their kids, and how they survive through social and economic difficulties. Such narrative decisions are used to build competence, endurance, and agency identities, which show that single parenting is an intentional and committed practice and not a passive process.

As an illustration, Rp: talked about her everyday activities using words like, I am up early in the morning, I make breakfast for my children and see that they get to school before I head to work. The lexical decision underlines the importance of personal initiative and planning which is a portent of her key role in the well-being of her children. Equally, Rp20 said, When there is no money, I make sure that my children eat and do homework on time.

Rp: also portrayed resilience in her story as she pointed out that she works alone a lot, but she always finds a way to manage both work and home because she cannot rely on other people. The presence of modal verbs (cannot depend) and self-referential pronouns precedes her autonomy and

agency in the decision-making process. Similarly, Rp: narrated, I ensure that my children know the importance of working hard since I am the role model to the children on a daily basis. In this quote, the moral positioning and educative language are used to demonstrate how she incorporates responsibility and role models in her discourse on parenting.

Rp: also focused on emotional strength, indicating that even when he felt exhausted, he did not allow his children to feel exhausted; he never discouraged his children. The words used to emphasize the protective agency in the case of single-parent stories, such as no let my children feel am and always encourage, are used. As well, Rp: confided that he was not proud to say he could handle everything himself, it was not an easy task but he could handle it. In all these stories, there are linguistic and narrative techniques that involve action verbs, personal pronouns, modal auxiliaries, and descriptive clauses; all of the above contribute to portraying single parents as active, responsible, and strong participants. These phrases show how respondents form grounded identities, oppose marginalization, and assert their agency in their daily parenting activities.

4.2 Discursive Construction and Negotiation of Identity

This assists in investigating the ways in which single parents in the metropolis of Enugu build and bargain their identities by using language and narrative. It brings out how the single parents portray themselves as competent, responsible, and resilient even when faced by the societal demands and stigma attached to being single parents. The discussion of how the respondents construct their stories to include a logical sense of self focuses on their strong points, achievements, and the ability to make decisions.

The argument takes into account the ways single parents make their own narratives to pre-empt their experiences and perform their roles in fruitful ways, uncovering the tendencies of identity formation through narrative to define how they feel and how they introduce themselves. It also takes into account the discursive techniques that are used to give a positive self-presentation and

it is demonstrated that the participants consider the language they use carefully to prove themselves independent, competent, and authoritative in raising their children. Besides, the research deals with identity negotiation in the culturally stigmatizing conditions, where the participants are coping with the societal accusations, negative stereotyping, and legitimization in their parental identity.

4.2.1 Narrative Identity Construction in Single Parenting Stories

The accounts of Rp: demonstrate how single parents in Enugu metropolis create a sense of identity as competent, resilient, and moral caregivers. These participants are actively involved in constructing themselves as competent actors within their domestic and social contexts through the use of their language, evaluative terms, and thoughts about their own decisions.

Rp: has shown her zeal and accountability as she said, I plan everything related to my children, at school, at home, I have no plan to leave them to anyone. These narratives pre-empt her independence and careful monitoring of her parental responsibilities, which is an indication of responsibility and independence.

Respondent described her strength, even when wahala full ground I go still dey try make my pikin dey alright, I no go give up. Persistence is emphasized by the employment of emphatic constructions and modal expressions and her identity is located within the frames of the narrative as a strong and independent one.

Respondent emphasized the aspect of her moral duty and commitment: “I sabi say na me dey responsible for my children's future, so I dey do everything correctly. She uses evaluative adjectives and repetition to position herself as a morally conscientious and completely involved parent.

Respondent explained her daily activity in English and Pidgin: “I walk up and down school, I cook, I follow up homework, I do my best in their favor, I try my best).

Respondent thought about the strategic decision-making, saying that, I decide everything about the house, no matter what happens, I will deal with it, my children must be alright. The declarative form and assertive speech presuppose her power and ability to influence the results of her family.

Together, these stories indicate that the respondents build their identities by using language that indicates their competence, resilience, autonomy, and moral responsibility. Participants can use the assertive verbs, evaluative adjectives, and narrative framing in order to portray themselves as competent and socially legitimate single parents and refute the negative attitudes of society and confirm their self-identification.

4.2.2 Discursive Strategies for Positive Self-Presentation

The discursive tactics of presenting oneself in a positive light to overcome the stigma of single parents as described the narration of the respondents in their attempts to demonstrate their competence. The approaches are reflected in assertive verbs, evaluative adjectives, and framing of narratives which accentuate resilience, responsibility, and care in their roles as parents.

Respondent highlighted her commitment and active care: “I dey make sure say homework dey do, I dey cook, I dey set up everything my children good “well well” She is devoted and details-oriented, which is supported by the repetition of actions and the evaluative modifier well well, which creates an impression of a responsible and competent identity.

Respondent emphasized the ability to resolve problems and be independent: “Regardless of the wahala that I am here, I still make do to ensure my pikin is okay. I do not depend on anybody. The autonomy is foreshadowed with the negation I no dey rely on anybody, and the identity to which she belongs is that of an independent and able woman to cope with the family issues.

Respondent applied reflective language to portray her conscientiousness: I dey think before I do anything on behalf of my children and therefore I will not make mistakes that can affect them. Her

modal and evaluative constructions demonstrate some attention to planning and moral responsibility, which is a positive form of parental identity construction.

Respondent related her multiple tasking skills: I do plenty of work at home, I do manage a small business, I do help my pikin to go to school, and I do my best at work every day. The list of activities portrays her as a hard worker and a dedicated person and creates an image of competence and strength in herself.

Respondent paid attention to her ethical and educational advice: “I always teach my children good manners, I teach them to do everything in the right way, I will never slack off at all. She creates an image of hard work and social accountability through moral evaluatives, the assertive, I no dey slack.

It reveals through these extracts the apparent fact that respondents selectively use linguistic and narrative resources to presuppose the positive sides of their parental roles, which constitute identities of competence, moral responsibility, and resilience. These discursive practices can enable them to challenge the negative assumptions in society and come out as competent, active, and socially acceptable single parents.

4.2.3 Identity Negotiation within Culturally Stigmatizing Contexts

The stories of respondents illustrate how single parents explore their identities in a society where their legitimacy and competence face a challenge due to societal expectations and stigma. They are exercising their agency through carefully selected language, as well as legitimizing their parental status, and constructively challenge the negative cultural expectations.

Respondent explained her attitude to the external judgment: some people dey talk say I no get man, I no dey shame at all, I dey make sure say my children dey well, and na wetin pass anything. The contrast between the social commentary of the society’s disapproving attitudes toward people

(Some people dey talk say I no get man) and the assumption of self-identity (I no dey shame at all) foreshadows her agency and strength, an assured sense of self that cannot be stigmatized.

Respondent described her tactics of negotiating family and community ideas: “Even when dem dey look me anyhow, I go still dey run my home, dey take care of my children, dey see to it dat dem dey learn well. I dey proud of wetin I dey do. In this case, the verbs of repetitive actions and evaluative words (proud of wetin I dey do) emphasize her conscious attempt to retain the positive idea of herself despite the external influence.

Both interviewees demonstrate that identity negotiation in stigmatized situations requires a reframing of assumptions in society, demonstrating competence, and prefiguring resilience and moral accountability. Their stories reveal that language strategies reflect negation, repetitions, evaluatives, and assertive declaratives, furthermore, they are used in order to recreate a socially and morally valid parental self, thus, refuting the negative stereotypes and proving their right to belong to the community.

4.2.4 Moral Positioning and Identity Legitimation in Narratives

The stories of respondents 1- 5 show how single parents ethically position themselves and justify their identities amid the social norms and possible stigma. Their use of words, evaluative expressions, and frame of narrative portray them as responsible, ethical, and competent care givers.

Respondent 1 stressed the moral obligation to take care: they always dey make sure my children are well, I dey teach them good manners, na it is my business. The repetition of the foregrounding word I dey makes her an active participant and the moral judgmental term good manners makes her an ethically responsible parent.

Respondent emphasized strength and moral hard work: Even when wahala is there, I never allow anything to affect the way I bring my pikin up, I will always be honest and just to them. The

foreground of her commitment to fairness and integrity is her negation in the form of I no go let anything affect and a modal expression in the form of I go dey honest which legitimizes her role as a principled parent.

Respondent 3 thought about making the choice and moral compass: I dey try sabi right or wrong, so my children no go learn bad thing, I dey teach dem wetin dey right. The story reveals a cautiously moral stance with ethical teaching being the main focus of her motherly role.

Respondent 4 told about her moral watchfulness in interpersonal relations: “When people judge me, I no vex, I just demonstrate my behavior to my family saying I dey responsible, I dey take care of my house. In this case, the opposition between social judgment and self-legitimation by action proves the identity-building based on moral behavior.

Respondent 5 emphasized accountability and role modeling: “I dey make sure say my pikin dey do right thing, I no fit tell dem say anything wrong dey okay. I dey set example to dem. The evaluative verbs I dey set example and the repeated verbs I dey indicate her authority on the moral side and underline her positive parental image.

4.3 Discursive Resistance to Stigma and Dominant Ideologies

This study examined how single parents in Enugu metropolis are vigorously fighting against social stigma and the prevailing cultures on single parenthood. Through their stories, the respondents show how assumptions, moral judgments, and stereotypical beliefs about them in society seek to limit them and represent them as irresponsible, incomplete, or dependent. Single parents use language, narrative, and critical commentary to not only offer their experiences but also to proclaim other possible narratives that put in question these restrictive accounts.

The discussion is based on the identification and tackling of social stigma by respondents, the discursive measures to oppose the negative labeling, and the re-framing of their experiences to emphasize competence, responsibility, and moral authority. It also examines the way in which single parents subvert the ingrained cultural stereotypes and work out the meanings of parenthood that do not conform to the expectations of the traditional norms. The emphasis on resilience, agency, and ethical behavior allows participants to establish a single parenthood as a legitimate and desirable identity and claim their social and moral legitimacy in the private and social spheres.

Essentially, this paper preconditions the analysis of the different methods used by the respondents to overcome stigma, oppressive ideologies, and impose their own version of the story about their own lives which will be elaborated in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1 Representation of Social Stigma in Participants' Narratives

The stories of lone parents in Enugu metropolis show the overwhelming nature of social stigma and how it affects the day-to-day experiences and perceptions. The stigma tends to be manifested in the shape of social condemnation, moral criticism, and dependency assumptions, as single parents are not able to properly care for their homes and meet social requirements. The stories of the respondents reveal that this stigma is not external only, but it may also be provided by close relatives and neighbors, as well as community networks.

Respondent noted that she worries about what society thinks about her and her ability: "People tend to believe that since I am a single parent, I cannot take good care of my children, and I have made sure that they are taken care of and educated. This is an indication of being aware of the stereotype and at the same time being competent and responsible.

Respondent emphasized moral questioning: "There are those who question my character because I am raising my children by myself yet I have high moral standards and educate my children the same. The words that we have used here, including questioning my character and upholding high

moral standards, are foreshadowed by the fact that the participant is actively opposing moral judgment and constructing a positive self-image.

Respondent explained the emotional burden of peer judgment: Neighbors believe that I am suffering because I have no husband but I work hard to make sure that my children are happy and supported. In such statements such as I work hard and make sure my children are happy, the story focuses on resilience and agency of the person in the face of societal stigma.

Pidgin English was used by the respondent 4 to communicate gossip in the community: “Dem dey always dey talk say single mothers no fit handle their pikin, but I dey manage am well. External labeling is shown in the verbs of dem dey always dey talk and I dey manage am well, which shows the assertive attitude of the participant, which is shown in the verbs, showing discursive resistance by the choice of words.

Respondent; I always dey vex my aunty say I no get man, but I dey provide to my children, e no concern anybody. In this case, the opposition of the societal expectation (My aunty dey always dey vex) and the individual agency (I dey provide for my children) brings out the conflict between stigma and self-representation of the participant.

All these stories suggest that the stigma of single parenting is not only rampant but also multifaceted, and that it involves the assumptions of incompetence, moral disapproval, and family disapproval.

4.3.2 Discursive Strategies of Resistance and Reframing

Single parents respond to the stigma of society by actively using discursive strategies that oppose negative labeling and rebrand the story of single parenthood. These tactics include prudent use of lexical, competence assertion, and linguistic positioning that focus on independence, resilience, and the capacity to make informed decisions on behalf of their families. Respondents develop their

own counter-discourses, which break the stereotypes and re-establish their social and moral legitimacy, through these narratives.

The self-sufficiency was also prioritized by the respondent: although others tend to question my strength to make decisions alone, I organize my finances, decide on behalf of my children, and make sure they are the top students at school. The lexical options of the participant are used to preempt his agency and proactive attitude in terms of defying the social skepticism: plan my finances and make decisions.

Respondent also mentioned the concept of resilience and moral strength: “I might be parenting on my own, but I do not cut corners when it comes to teaching them good values and showing them the right morals. Other phrases such as never compromise and the need to guide them morally create a story of an agency based on principle, which directly opposes the assumptions of negligence or insufficiency.

Respondent shared her experience of difficult social assumptions: People dey always look at me like I no sabi raise my pikin, but I take care dem, they teach them good things and they grow well. The Pidgin phrase, I dey take care dem, dey teach dem good things, is itself a discursive resistance, which claims the ability to do things, but redefines the stereotype of inability in a sneaky way.

Respondent also depicted the community resistance in Pidgin English: “Dem say that single mother not fit to keep house, however, I do it all much better than some people who have a husband. The oppositional wording of even better pass some people wey get husband here reforms the discourse, destabilizing the cultural belief that the status of marriage makes the parent effective or not.

Respondent: “I attend school meetings, parent-teacher events, and I plan learning activities at home and people tend to think that single parents are lazy. The development of my children is the answer

to it. The list of actions and accomplishments also focuses on active interaction and builds an anti-narrative to societal skepticism.

Nevertheless, these stories show how the single parents in Enugu use linguistic means to defy social stigma, establish their power over parenting, and redefine the meaning of single parenthood. The overt and covert discrimination is challenged by taking an active role in framing themselves as competent, responsible, and morally upright. Such discursive strategies offer a platform upon which the challenge of addressing cultural stereotypes and redefining them is addressed in the following section.

4.3.3 Challenging Cultural Stereotypes about Single Parenting

The respondent stories disclose active efforts to counteract and break the cultural stereotypes surrounding single parents as irresponsible, dependent, and morally weak. Through the use of certain approaches in language and storytelling, respondents claim their competence, resilience, and moral uprightness and remake single parenthood as an agency and a deliberate act.

Respondent focused on competence and accountability: even though society tends to believe that single parents are incapable, I am in charge of my family and can take proper care of my children by making sure that they are educated and provided with proper care. Personal agency is prefigured and the challenges to the societal assumptions are addressed by lexical decisions such as manage my household efficiently, receive proper education, and care.

The social and moral competence was noted in the respondent 12: “I am completely responsible for my children, and I teach them good values, even though other people can look down on my being single. The emphasis on the need to be not only fully responsible but also to guide them with strong values creates a story that challenges the moralized stereotypes directly.

Respondent: The fact that I balance between work and parenting is usually questioned by people, yet my children do well at school and are active contributors to the community programs. In this case, concrete proof of success is used in refuting stereotypes and proving that being a single parent does not mean being a fool.

Respondent: There is a saying that some people do not talk, that I would not know how to manage my pikin, but I do plan everything about him, and I have to support him right. The Pidgin forms of the verb plan and support am dey are active in their forms, indicating that ability is a matter of action and not of marital status.

Respondent : “Dem go dey laugh single mother no sabi run house but I dey provide to my family and my pikin dey happy. The wording shows that the language decisions can declare their ability and reform the discourse of single parenthood.

They are examples that could be used to describe the way in which, single parents in the Enugu metropolitan communities are actively using language and narrative strategy as a way of resisting and rebuilding cultural stereotypes. Their responsibility, planning, and achievement foregrounding redefine single parenthood in such a manner that challenges the deficit-based assumptions and asserts social and moral legitimacy.

4.3.4 Reconstructing Alternative Meanings of Single Parenthood

The stories of the respondents demonstrate how single parents in Enugu metropolis actively recreate the meaning of single parenthood, and they turn the stigmatized state of being single into the condition of empowerment, agency, and self-determination through the use of language.

Respondent emphasized personal motivation and organization: “Although society tends to undermine single parents, I manage my finances, handle household chores effectively, and make

sure that my kids are doing well in school. The foregrounded agency and self-directed action are applied through the lexical selections of organize, manage efficiently, and excel.

Respondent also focused on the importance of resilience and moral direction: “I instill high values and independence in my kids and I ensure that they grow up knowing how to be responsible even though their parents are single parents. In this case, the story presents single parenthood as an empowering, ethical, and intentional practice.

Standard English was also applied by Respondent to emphasize the achievement and social participation: I participate in community activities, attend school meetings, and contribute to the education of my children. This is a testament to the fact that single parents can effectively play multiple roles in their achievement and in their role as social participants. The listing of the duties strengthens the competence and overcomes the social beliefs of inability.

Respondent: “According to people dey talk, I no fit to take care of my house but I manage well and my pikin dey happy. The active agency and re-framing of single parenthood as an active useful position is depicted in the verbs, dey manage well and dey happy.

Respondent: “Na me no plan my family future, save, teach my pikin good things, e no matter whether people will judge me. This story brings out the characteristics of foresight, parental care, and opposition to societal judgment, restating single parenthood as a choice that is possible and competent.

In these data analyses, we can observe that single parents do not just go through the social stigma but they are also in the process of redefining single parenthood, foregrounding agency, moral responsibility, and resilience. Their stories prove that language and discursive options are significant in the process of redefining the social meaning, defying stereotypes, and justifying the single-parenting process as a socially suitable and morally sound activity.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.1 Discussion of Findings

The results of this study established that single parents in Enugu metropolis engage actively with language as a resource to construct meaning, negotiate identity, and react to the social stereotypes associated with single parenting. These results resonate well with the assumptions of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Narrative Identity Theory (NIT), which highlight that language is socially placed and forms a key factor in identity and power relations. The texts examined in this paper have revealed that respondents are not passive narrators but active meaning-makers who strategically employ discourse to establish themselves in their sociocultural space.

The study found that single parents are consistent in their projects of agency throughout their narrations. The respondents identified themselves as being active decision-makers who had the role of taking care of their children and running their homes. The outcome validates the theoretical position of CDA that views discourse as a space where social actors define their domination and bargain power. It is also a coincidence of the work of Reid (2019), who established that the agency can already be predetermined by the linguistic structures that assign responsibility and action to specific actors. On the same note, Moummau and Fathi (2020) highlighted that agency is performed with the use of language in context-specific situations. The present work enlarges these perspectives showing how single parents in Enugu metropolis actively use such linguistic tools as action verbs, first-person pronouns, and narrative emphasis to form the pictures of themselves as competent and responsible individuals.

It was also determined based on the results that the patterns of transitivity and pronoun usage are significant in agency building. The respondents never put themselves on the periphery of their narratives, but centered themselves on such activities as providing, leading, and decision-making. This helps to substantiate the argument in CDA that grammatical structures are not neutral but also help in the process of meaning-making and social role representation. These findings also confirm the views of Syamsi et al. (2022), who highlighted the identity and social positioning by means of using linguistic options, such as pronouns. When applied to the situation of this research, these linguistic patterns strengthen the depiction of single parents as actors instead of passive victims of the situation.

In solving the second goal, the research discovered that identity formation and negotiation are core aspects of the discourse of single parenting. In reaction to the stigma in society, respondents actively created identities that valued responsibility, resilience, and moral uprightness. This is in agreement with Narrative Identity Theory which is based on the assumption that individuals create their own identities by telling stories. The stories that were analyzed in the paper are an indication of intentional attempts of the participants to project themselves as effective and committed caregivers, thus, defying the social negative image.

Adedegun et al. (2019) also found that single mothers concur that they are negotiating between positive and negative identity positions because of the expectations of society. In the same vein, Lawal et al. (2025) asserted that identity is dynamic and is created using language in particular sociocultural contexts. The current research expands upon the findings to show how single parents in Enugu metropolis employ discourse in their strategies to build positive self-identities and gain legitimacy in their communities.

More so, the research also found that identity negotiation is usually a process that takes place in stigmatizing social environments. The respondents admitted to the negative stereotypes but they

fought them by insisting on their commitment, discipline, and parental involvement. This is in line with the research of Okafor (2018) and Okechukwu (2016), who emphasized the stigmatization and durability of single parents in the Nigerian society. Nonetheless, the current work builds on these studies by looking specifically at the language and discursive practices by which these identities are created and negotiated.

With regards to the third objective, the results revealed that single parents utilize different discursive practices in order to oppose dominant ideologies and stereotypes. The respondents often applied the reframing in order to emphasize strength, independence, and success, which contested the societal expectations of single parenthood. This observation is in a great deal consistent with the focus of CDA on discourse as a place of contestation and ideological conflict. It is also indicative of an argument by Mbassi Elong (2023) that communicative practices are significant in creating social positioning and challenging dominant narratives.

The paper also found that the two tools of resistance employed by respondents are narrative reframing and positive self-presentation. By focusing on the positive contribution of their children and their personal work, the participants break the myth of single-parent households being inherently incomplete. The fact has been aligned with that of Fotoh (2021) and Ghanney (2024) who admitted that single parenting is not easy but at the same time noted that parents play an active role in the creation of positive results. The current paper contributes a discourse aspect to these results by demonstrating how this resistance is performed in the language.

The findings were also able to show that language is a major mediator of social experience. The fact that both formal and Nigerian Pidgin English are used by the respondents can be seen as an indicator of the fact that they can negotiate various communicative situations and demonstrate complex emotions and experiences. This helps in the bigger claim of the discourse studies that language is not only a tool of communication but also a tool of creating social reality.

On balance, the discussion indicates that the results of the research can be aligned with the theoretical anticipations and the available empirical studies, as well as add new information to the role of discourse in developing the agency, identity, and resistance of single parents in Enugu metropolis.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the discussion of findings, the study reached the following conclusions in line with its objectives:

Firstly, the study has found that the single parents in Enugu metropolis are proactive in foregrounding their agency with the help of discourse. They rely on language to show themselves as responsible and capable people who make conscious choices and take charge of their lives in the family.

Secondly, the research determined that identity construction and negotiation are the key points of the discourse of single parenthood. To overcome the stigma of society, single parents strategically build positive identities that focus on resilience, responsibility, and moral integrity.

Third, the research came to the conclusion that single parents actively struggle against dominant ideologies and stereotypes with the help of discursive strategies. They reposition themselves and underscore their accomplishments to shatter social prejudices and redefine single parenthood as a healthy and useful way to be a family.

5.3 Recommendations

Government and policy makers should develop inclusive social policies that recognize and support single-parent families.

Educational institutions should provide support systems that accommodate the unique challenges faced by children from single-parent households.

Community leaders should promote positive social attitudes toward single parents to reduce stigma and discrimination.

Researchers should incorporate discourse-based approaches in studying family structures and social identities.

Media organizations should portray single parents in a balanced and realistic manner to challenge negative stereotypes.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The following areas are suggested for further scholarly investigation:

Single parenting discourse in other regions of Nigeria to identify cultural variations in identity construction and agency.

Perspectives of extended family members, educators, and community leaders on societal discourses surrounding single parenthood.

Experiences of children raised in single-parent households, particularly how they interpret and negotiate family-related narratives.

Application of additional theoretical frameworks alongside Critical Discourse Analysis to deepen understanding of language and social reality.

Role of digital and social media platforms in shaping contemporary discourse on single parenthood, especially in relation to identity construction and resistance.

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