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CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The importance of family has never been questioned all over the world. Sociologists believe that the family occupies a unique niche. In the process of socialization which goes from cradle to grave, the family is the most influential agent. It is the most intimate among all social groups (James M. White, 1991) and the “basic unit of society” as the bricks in a brick wall. If the bricks in a brick wall are unsound and crumbly than no matter how well the wall is designed, laid out, constructed, maintained, mortared or organized, it is going to fall down. It is bulwark against the hard time. People in strong families are healthier, happier and better adjusted. According to Winnicott D.W. (2001) the family has a clearly defined position at the place where the developing child meets the forces that operate in the society. The inner world of child (inborn inherited characteristic) gets a definite shape and child becomes organized. It helps children to internalize culture and develop a social identity by providing an ascribed social status to the young members. It constitutes a favourable pre-requisite for creating a good and lasting basis for children and adolescents and offers them stable conditions for growing.

Families contribute to the maintenance of society by serving as contexts in which children are loved, protected and encouraged to develop into competent, caring adults. It is the child’s first and longest lasting context for development. In the gradual journey to maturity children require years of support and teaching before they are ready to be independent. It fosters children’s competence through warmth and sensitivity to their needs, by providing models and reinforcers of mature behaviour, by using reasoning and inductive discipline and by guiding and encouraging their new skills (Berk L.E. 2002). It is in the family that the basic values and morality are formed, the essential capacities for learning, self-confidence and positive social interaction are acquired and individuals are best able to contribute to society as a whole.
In the strong family children become aware of their essential unity with all other people and attain the courage to be truthful and truth seeking and learn to establish a life of unity. Thus strong families are indeed central to overall efforts to improve social and economic development that create sustainable communities and increase global prosperity.

**Bornstein (1995)** offered a broad perspective of parenting and delineated four essential functions of care giving (parenting) –

1. Nurturant care giving – meets the physical requirement of the child.
2. Material care giving – constructs and organizes the child’s physical world.
3. Social care giving – includes the variety of behaviours parents use in engaging their children in inter-personal exchanges.
4. Didactic or dyadic care giving – consists of the variety of strategies parents use in stimulating children to engage in and understand the world outside the parent – child dyad.

### 1.2 The Changing Picture of Family

The ideal traditional picture of family includes two parents (based upon married husband and wife) and children. Husbands and wives generally balance each other’s responsibilities and provide a secure environment for children. Each parent socializes a child differently. Both the parents make unique contribution in the development of child and have an enormous responsibility to protect, care and nurture the young. The father provides loving leadership to the family, protection from evil influences and instructs his children in the principles of good citizenship. The father’s presence in the house is an important factor for healthy development of the child. Boys look up to a father as a role model and a girl’s future relationships with the opposite sex is largely shaped by her interactions with her father. The mother nurtures the children by taking care of their needs, teaching them and building strong moral character.

Family research has shown consistently that being raised in a warm and trustful family environment serves as a good predictor for successful development in later life (**Darling and Steinberg, 1993**). Parents are not only the providers of resources in the early years of their children’s life, but also the active managers of their children’s
development. They regulate their children’s access to physical and social resources outside the family (Parke and O’Neil 1992).

Now the traditional family has become outmoded with a decline in stability and losses of parental authority (Auspin, Lois J., 1997) and unfortunately the picture of family with two parents and children is fading. Like the world as a whole, the family is in transition. In every culture families are disintegrating, fragmenting under the pressure of economic and political upheavals and weakening in the face of moral and spiritual confusion. They are becoming more materialistic, more mothers are working and neglecting their children and marriages are breaking down at an increasing rate (Bennett, 1992).

From a two parent family structure the scene is changing to a single parent family. In developed countries in the last fifty years with higher percentage of marriage ending in divorce and higher rate of children born out of wedlock, and number of single parent families is increasingly rapidly.

In developing countries too the exponential rise in single parent households has become one of the most important issues of concerns to social welfare workers and policymakers. In India too the two pillars of Indian society- the traditional Hindu marriage and joint family system are weakening. The process of industrialization, urbanization and secularization has brought about the socio-psychological changes in the attitude and values of people especially among the urban population.

Single parenthood in India may be the result of many things. In most cases it is an enforceable tragedy as in the death of one parent, divorce or abandonment by one parent. On the other hand in western countries there may be another reasons also such as many independent youngsters choose to become a single parent as in adoption, artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood and extra marital pregnancy.

Psychologists remain firm on the fact that being a single parent can be hard and growing up in a single parent family puts children at risk. Single parents have to bear with added responsibilities, tensions and pressures. They are left alone to deal with
multiple tasks and have to be fathers and mothers at the same time. They have to take care of all the physical or emotional needs of their children by themselves. Although they can share their responsibilities with family members, trusted friends or loyal maid servants but ultimately they are responsible for making decisions for their children.

Indian society looks harshly also upon divorced women and invariably blaming them for the break up. Widowed women are however, somehow ‘ennobled’ but for them problems are different. Indian widows are more likely to become household heads than the divorced and separated and they experience more poverty than head - of - households who are divorced and separated, more difficult when they never worked outside the home. They neither have the qualification nor the work experience or even the mental make-up necessary to go out into the world and fend for them. A number of cultural factors limit their full participation in the social life of community. 

Chakravarti and Uma (1998) cited at least four aspects of social exclusion of widows in India. They are expected to - withdraw themselves from public gaze and participation, remain unmarried, restrict themselves to participate in domestic ceremonies and not to assert her rights to property, if any, left behind by her deceased husband.

Unmarried single women also face hostility. They find very difficult to meet the basic needs of their children, the emotional life of the single mother is also affected by their single status, find hard to maintain discipline among children due to absence of male member and suffer from loneliness, trauma and depression (Kotwal and Prabhakar, 2009). Difficult task of earning a living makes disproportional demand on single parents and financial stress has been observed to decrease their emotional exchange with the children (Burden 1986). Apart this they find difficult to handle the loneliness and the despair that comes with the feeling of being rejected. Family support is very important in these cases but their problems are compounded when they find that their friends and families are unable to offer needed solace and moral support.

There is mountain of scientific evidences showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual physical and emotional scars that persist for
life. Children in single-mother homes are also more likely to experience health-related problems as a result of the decline in their living standard, including the lack of health insurance (Mauldin 1990). According to Angel and Worobey, (1990) children living with single parents experience the consequences of lost income and poor living conditions including poorer housing and health risks. This lack of financial support also causes increased parental role burden, which reduces parents’ time for each child in the family (Furstenberg and Nord, 1985) and increased stress (McLoyd et al., 1994). They have less time to help children with homework, are less likely to use consistent discipline and have less parental control and all of these conditions may lead to lower academic achievement (Mulkey et al. 1992, McLanahan and sandefur 1994, Thiessen 1997, Kim 2002 and Scott 2004).

Lack of parental support may precede future arrogance, aggression, withdrawal and dysfunctional behaviour. In most of the cases single parents and their children often have to face stigma, violence and social problems based on myths, stereotypes, half-truths and prejudices.

Thus it could be concluded that single parent families in today's society have their share of daily struggles and long-term disadvantages. The issues of expensive day care, shortage of quality time with children, balance of work and home duties, and economic struggle are among the seemingly endless problems these families must solve.

1.3 Demographics
The demographics of single parenting show that gradually there has been a marked increase in the number of children living with a single parent. The U.S. Census bureau (2011) compiled a profile of single parent families and presented the international statistics showing considerable increase in the number of children raised by single parents in 1980 to 2009. According to it the United States has the highest percentage of single parent households (19.5% in 1980 to 29.5% in 2008), followed by U.K. (13.9% in 1981 to 25% in 2008), Canada (12.7% in 1981 to 24.6% in 2006), Ireland (7.2% in 1981 to 22.6% in 2006), Denmark (13.4% in 1980 to 21.7% in 2009), Germany (15.2% in 1991 to 21.7% in 2008), France (10.2% in 1982 to 19.8%
in 2005), Sweden (11.2% in 1985 to 18.7% in 2008), Netherland (9.6% in 1988 to 16% in 2009), Japan (4.9% in 1980 to 10.2% in 2005). The U.S. statistics also shows that since 1980 to 2008 there is decrease in divorce rate (7.9% to 5.2%) and the rate of births to unmarried women increased and single parent homes were likely to involve more never married mothers. Since 1980 the percent of unmarried mothers (18.4%) doubled in 2005 (36.9%) and further increased to 40.6% in 2008.

Other countries like Canada, Japan, Denmark, France Germany, Sweden, U.K. etc. also showed a similar trend. Sweden has the highest percentage (54.7%) of births to unmarried women as compared to other countries. But contrary to U.S. above mentioned developed countries depict continuous increase in divorce rate. Of all single-parent families, the most common are those headed by divorced or separated mothers (58%) followed by never-married mothers (24%). Other family heads include widows (7%), divorced and separated fathers (8.4%), never-married fathers (1.5%), and widowers (0.9%) (US Census Bureau Reports 2010).

In developing countries, divorce is not as common, but desertion, death, and imprisonment produce single-parent families, primarily headed by women (Kinnear 1999). But now developing regions of the world are also experiencing an increase in the divorce rates, although the proportions remain low in most regions. Rates vary country to country from a low of less than 5 percent in Kuwait to a high of over 40 percent in Botswana and Barbados. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, and Tobago more than 25 percent of households are headed by women.

In India in majority of cases of single parenthood occur due to the death of spouse. According to Chen M. (1998) there were more than 33 million widows in 1998. Because the divorce and marital separation are socially disapproved, India has the lowest divorce rate in the world, which makes single parenting not a large problem. But the report of Census of India (2001) has shown a slight rise in divorce rates in India during last two decades. The percentage of divorce was 0.74 in 1991 which rose up to 1% in 2001. The census of India 2010 shows widowed/ divorced/ separated (W/D/S) constitute 5.1% of the total population. The proportion of W/D/S female
population (8%) is higher than males (2.3%) at the national level for all the bigger states. Tamil Nadu reported the highest percentage of W/D/S population (7.4%). It could be estimated on the basis of rise in percentage of W/D/S from 2001 that the number of single parent families is gradually increasing in India too.

1.4 Theories for understanding family transitions

Whenever attempts have been made to understand the complex phenomena of life in deviated family form, it is found that interpretations are influenced by personal meaning, values and beliefs and individuals’ experiences. Each theory or framework carries its author’s selective interpretation and these subjectively based frameworks give a pigeonhole view to any problem. According to Jan Pryor and Bryan Rodgers (2001) in order to explain the outcomes for children who have experienced family transitions all the frameworks could be grouped in two main categories – Trauma Theories and Life-Course Theories.

The distinction between ‘trauma’ and ‘life-course’ theories is reflected in the common usage of the terms “parental loss” and “parental absence”. The following illustration can explain the conceptual difference between two. A child, whose parents remained together for a longer duration and then divorced or separated, may not show serious adverse outcomes as consequence of parental absence but he/she could be affected by the experience of loss. In contrast whose parents separated/ divorced he/she were in very early infancy (or one who was born to a single mother) would not suffer as a result of parental loss, but would face the situation of parental absence. Father absence typically involves a range of adversity for children. These include a fall in parental supervision, lower economic resources, and a reduction in social capital through the links a parent figure has with extra familial resources (e.g. extended families and institutions).

I. Trauma theories encompass the notion that events such as separation, divorce, especially those occurring in childhood are potentially traumatic events for children and have direct effects on psychological outcomes later in life independent of intervening experiences. The impact for some people may not be seen at the time, but may remain latent and emerge later. This could be
termed as “Sleeping effect” (Hetherington, 1972; Wallerstein and Corbin, 1989; Rodgers, 1994). These theories encompass three main theories - loss theory, abandonment theory and attachment theory.

A. Loss theory - The psychoanalytic tradition in the early 20th century emphasized the particular importance of parental loss and its implications for mental health. At that time parental loss meant “parental death” as separation and divorce were not common in those days. This ideology suggests that intervening events may have a role in influencing the connection between early environment and later outcomes. The loss may be considered as a continuum rather than as an all or nothing event that is why some children experience greater loss if they lose all contacts with a parent compared to those who maintain a regular and lasting relationship after parental separation and potential for contact that may not occur. The ‘loss’ perspective predict that

i. Children who lose parents by death or by separation would be similarly affected.

ii. Outcomes would be worse for children who lose their parent at an early age than those who lost them at later age.

iii. Children from separated families should be substantially more disadvantaged than those from two-parent families after separation has occurred but not before.

B. Abandonment theory - The notion of abandonment implies an actual or a perceived deliberate act by a parent. Because an absent parent is still alive can imply, to the child, that he or she is not wanted. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) have suggested that the consequences of abandonment include feeling of rejection and low self-worth in children, and a fear of further abandonment particularly by the remaining parent. If a child believes that the parent has chosen to leave him/her, the consequences would be worse than when the child does not blame the parent for leaving.

C. Attachment theory - John Bowlby (1969) the originator of this theory, observed that the quality of attachment formed in early life has implications for future social relationships, especially close relationships, and for associated mental health problems including delinquency and depression. The
The link between later well-being and early attachment type was seen to be the development of internalized working models, of interpersonal interactions between the self and others. In this sense attachment theory straddles both trauma and life course theory as it accounts for long-term consequences. But there are certain limitations of this theory. It is not easy to make precise predictions about the outcomes of absence of one parent. Outcomes depend on many factors such as-

I. Whether the attachment to the residential parent compensate for the loss or not or does the child suffer because of loss of his or her attachment figure?

II. How important is the nature of those early attachments? Is it worse for a child to lose contact with a person to whom he/she is securely rather that insecurely attached or not?

II. **Life-Course theories** - In contrast with trauma theories Life-course theories, see outcomes for children as being the result of cumulative factors occurring overtime, and parental separation is seen as only one aspect of a process that begins long before and continues thereafter. Life-course frameworks include considerations of time, agency and process. These theories suggest that any outcome is a result of a dynamic process involving many components. Sometimes an outcome, too, can itself become a factor contributing to later well-being, for example, leaving school early becomes a risk factor itself for unemployment and poor economic conditions. In the pathways of development social, economic and community contexts also have a potent influence. The contribution of Life-Course models to the understanding family transitions can best be understood by considering four key principles of life-course theory (**Elder G.H., 1994**) which are - Historical time and place, Timing within lives, Human agency and Individual differences, Linked lives.

A. **Historical time and place** – This principle emphasizes that both times and place have characteristics that provide specific contexts for developmental pathways. Families exist in frameworks of social belief, customs, and sanctions that vary by time and place. That is why the perception and attitude
towards divorce, illegitimate children, lone parents, and step families vary across cultural and ethnic groups.

B. **Timing within lives** – The developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person’s life (Elder, 1998). Thus this principle suggests that the age at which major life transitions occur is also important. Children’s age and developmental stage at the time of family transition determine that how they will comprehend and react in the short term. For parents also these early transitions to adult roles have implications. For example early school leaving, partnering, child birth and parenting may bring pseudo maturity. Another aspect of this pseudo maturity is increased autonomy for children in lone-parent households and the emotional needs of lone parents. A kind of role reversal occurs and children become confident and comforters of their parents (Hetherington, 1999).

C. **Human agency and individual differences** – This principle suggests that individuals construct their own life-course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances. Perception of events, responses to change and choices made vary between people for example difficult children find change challenging and are liable to elicit negative reactions. Conversely, children with happy disposition may cope better with adversity.

D. **Linked lives** – In Elder’s words, “lives are lived interdependently and social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared responsibility”. This principle lays stress on role of ‘interrelationship’. These interrelationships extend outwards from the individual to family members, friends, peers and the community as a vital part of the context in which children develop. This principle has given a rise to many theories that can be characterized as four main “Ecological Theories” – Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological theory, Social and economic capital theory, Family system theory and Patterns of parenting and well being framework.

i. **Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological theory** emphasizes the fact that children are from birth embedded in a social context. It describes four levels/ systems within which individual functions.
I. **Micro system**, which encompasses the immediate set of relationships for a child.

II. **Mesosystem** which comprises the links between the child and the family and other systems within which the child operates. For example school, health professions, community groups etc.

III. **Exosystem** involves contexts in which the child does not directly participate but which have an impact on the child. For example parents workplace, flexibility of hours, attitudes to parental leaves and time off for children’s needs (illness, school meetings etc.).

IV. **Macrosystem** establishes the wider culture within which families live and encompasses the attitude, beliefs, opportunities and policies.

ii. **Social and economic capital theory** – James Coleman (1988) distinguishes ‘social capital’ from ‘physical capital’ (machines, computers, other equipment) and ‘human capital’ that helps in acquisition of skills and knowledge, such as education. Social capital exists in the relationships between persons both within families and between family members and the community. Thus there is overlapping of Bronfenbrenner’s micro and meso systems. Social capital is seen as social resources that influence the wellbeing of individuals.

iii. **Family system theory** - This framework proposes that family system is made up of subsystems comprising members of, for example, the same generation (e.g. Parent-parent relationships), the same sex (e.g. fathers and sons) or function (parent-child). This theory assumes that families are usually self-regulating, and that they establish rules and structures to stabilized family role and functions. When parents separate or divorce subsystem outside the household also become important. For example, nonresident parent-child relationship becomes a part of a family. Thus family system theory predicts that children’s well-being is linked with associations between relationships.
iv. **Patterns of parenting and well-being** – This framework suggests that children’s development get influenced by parenting they receive and the ways in which parents behave towards children are liable to change around the time of family transitions. Many models of parenting consider parental characteristics as the most important determinant of child’s development. **Belsky’s models (1984)** suggests that parenting is determined by three major influences –

I. Parental characteristics and resources
II. The social context in which the family lives
III. The support available in this context.

1.5 **Models of family**

Research on single parent families has changed over the years. During different periods research has followed one of the two models –

I. **The family Deficit Model** – this model views the nuclear or two parent family as the ideal family structure. According to this model, single parent families have a negative impact on children simply because they do not have a two parent structure. Research using this model begins with the assumption that single parenting is always bad for children. It overlooks the influence of economic and other background factors on outcomes of children and parents.

II. **The Risk and Protective Factor Model** – This model was developed in early 1990s. It doesn’t regard single parent families as irregular because the foundation of this model is the assumption that all families have both strengths and weaknesses. Rather than view single parenting as the cause of negative outcomes for children, this model describes family structure as one of the many risk factors. **Risk factors** are the weaknesses and **Protective factors** are the strengths of any given family.

**Personality factors, availability of social support, and family cohesion** are the factors that can impact positively and negatively. **Personality factors** include child’s intellectual ability, approach to learning, attitude and disposition, self-esteem, impulse control etc. **Social support** includes availability of resources at home, school, and
elsewhere in the community. Family cohesion includes family structure and background characteristics such as the parent’s occupation, family income, parent education, parental mental health, parenting style, family size, life’s events such as divorce, death, remarriage and other changes.

Elements of each of the three categories can serve as either Risk or Protective factors. Children who have combination of risk factors such as poverty, many siblings and a single parent, are at greater risk of negative outcomes. But the presence of risk factors does not guarantee poor outcomes. Indeed, protective factors mediate and limit the impact of risk factors on development of children. Protective factors include high self-esteem, strong social support at home, school, and community, low rates of criticism, positive parental mental health, high income etc.

**Fig 1.1– Showing factors that can impact individuals in single parent families positively or negatively**
1.6 Factors influencing adjustment in Single parent families

Several factors affect the adjustment to single parenting. All these could be categorized into two broad categories

I. Personal factors (That reside within or are inherent to individuals)

II. Contextual factors (That reside outside individuals)

I. Personal factors :- Characteristics included in personal factors are as follows-

a. **Demographic characteristics**: (age, educational level, employment and socio economic status):- Higher education, higher SES and being employed are associated with better adjustment. In the case of divorce and separation studies have found that older individuals find it difficult to adjust to divorce because of their limited post divorce options like employment, remarriage (Kitson and Morgan, 1990).

b. **Psychological function**: - Adults who have better coping skills and higher levels of emotional stability and have higher sense of self-mastery and self-esteem are generally well adjusted and experience higher level of well being. According to Hetherington, Law and O’Connor (1997) individuals’ levels of pre separation psychological functioning also affect divorce adjustment.

Whether the individual initiated the divorce is another factor affecting adjustment. The person who initiates the divorce is already on the road to recovery where as non-initiator can experience surprise when the request for a divorce surfaces and find difficult to adjust. Individual’s belief and attitude also affect their post divorce adjustment. People who look at divorce more favorably exhibit better adjustment.

The degree of attachment to the former spouse also can affect adjustment. When one or both spouses remain preoccupied with their former spouse (with feeling of either love or hate) post divorce adjustment is hindered. Carol Masheter (1997) found that unhealthy (preoccupied) post-divorce attachment was more important to post-divorce wellbeing than was the amount of hostility in the post-divorce relationship.
II. **Contextual factors:-** Adjustment to single parenthood is also affected by a number of contextual factors such as –

a. **Social support perceived and received by divorced individuals:-** Those who are less socially involved and more socially isolated find difficulties in adjusting. Higher level of social involvement is associated with healthy adjustment. However, Wang and Amato (2000) suggested that some social support comes with a price, including feeling of guilt, dependence on others, or criticism from the giver of the support, particularly if the support comes from kin. Researchers also show that new romantic relationships both dating and remarriages are also associated with better post divorce adjustment (Hetherington, Law and O’Connor 1997). Age of children also plays an important role in adjustment. Older children can serve as source of social support. However, children also can be a source of post divorce stress when complication occurs in maintaining the co-parental relationship.

b. **Cultural factors:-** Stigma attached with divorce/separation also affects adjustment. In some countries (Japan, India) divorce is associated with more social stigma. Social opportunities are more limited in these countries. Widows/divorced women in India have difficulty in finding other single mothers with whom they can develop a support network. They generally are reluctant to seek friendships with Indian men because of fear that their relationship might be misinterpreted.

The differing legal contexts of divorce can also be influential to adult adjustment. Most countries in Western Europe have moved from fault-based, punitive divorce laws to no-fault divorce laws, making divorce less painful to obtain. Since the 1960s, property settlements have become more egalitarian and awards of alimony have dramatically decreased in order to promote self sufficiency for both divorcing parents.
1.7 Need and Justification

The well being of children growing up in single parent families has been a long attracted concern. Historical research into characteristic of family life has shown that the rising tide of single parent households and family dysfunction put these children at risk. Measures of psychological development and behaviour suggest that children from these families are more likely to be physically, psychologically, socially and academically mal adjusted. Drug abuse, crime, delinquency, violence, suicide, running away, dropping out of school, myriad emotional and behavioural disorders are symptoms of family disturbances that turn innocent babies into rebellious teens and dissocial adults. These alarming facts have become the focus of recent anxiety and suggest that there is a need for new focus of human development dedicated to understanding the impact of single parenthood on children and try to minimize damage, otherwise it will push our children into the less satisfying and less fulfilling lives.

Demographic reports have indicated that single-parent family units have been persistent phenomena in western countries but a similar trend is emerging in India also. Historical research into characteristics of family life that affect the wellbeing of its members often has been limited to the effects of income property, socio-economic status of family. But there are more dimensions of family life that might have an influence on the living conditions of the members: the family structure, the family culture and the quality of relationship. While studying the consequences for children growing up in the single parent family the attention also diverts towards the role that fathers and mothers play in family life and the roles the other significant members (grand-parents, uncles and aunt, siblings, cousins, friends etc.) can play in rearing of young children and teens. Amerty Sen (1998) argued that in judging a person’s quality of life, attention has to be shifted from an exclusive concentration on income and commodities, which are valued mainly as means to other ends, to things that people value intrinsically. Though extensive research has been done in the West to understand the effect of family disruption on children, there is dearth of research in the Indian context. There are several caveats and delimitations of previous research on single parent families –
• No research evidence is found that addresses the perspectives of parents and children in single parent families at different levels.
• Role of human and material resources in relation to problems of single parent families have also not documented comprehensively.
• No evidence is found regarding the comparison of the problems of single parents and their children in diverse forms of single parent families.

To understand the effect of family disruptiveness and perceived problems of children and parents in single parent families, present study was an attempt to find out the answers of following questions-
• What problems single parents and their children face at different levels viz. family, society, individual etc.?
• What role the human resource, (support of family members, parents, in-laws, neighbours, school teachers etc.) play in shaping the life courses of single parents and their children?
• What role the material resources (income, good housing conditions and facilities etc.) play in life experiences of single parents and their children?
• How significantly various demographic characteristics viz. type of family, cause of single parenting, gender, education, income, employment status of single parents, number of children, duration of single parenting etc. are related with the problems of single parents and their children?

By finding answers to these questions and solutions of problems faced by single parents and their children, the present study could be relevant for family life educators, academic and career counselors, higher education professionals and school teachers, family therapists (psychologists), social workers and members of single parent families. The information gathered by this study will help parents and children to adjust emotionally and grow positively through this challenging time in their lives. Understanding the influence of disrupted families on lives of children and their parents in Indian setting would be useful for programming remedial measures. It will be a valuable guide to parents who desperately look for guidance.
1.8 Statement of the problem

The quest for identifying the problems faced by single parents and their children and the roles played by various human and material resources in their lives at different levels (viz. - family, school, society and individual) motivated the investigator to take up this research project. The problem has been stated as –

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES: PROBLEMS OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN -A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS OF ROLE OF HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

1.9 Objectives of the study

The larger aim of the study was to identify problems and role of human and material resources in relation to these problems. In order to achieve this aim various objectives had been formulated separately for single parents as well as their children to get perspective of both the groups. Following objectives have been formed –

1. To identify the problems and available resources (Human and Material) as perceived by single parents at different levels viz. family, society and individual

2. To study the association of available resources (human and material) with problems faced by single parents at different levels viz. family, society and individual

3. To find out the difference in available resources and problems of single parents with reference to demographic variables

4. To identify the problems and available resources (Human and Material) as perceived by children of single parents at different levels viz. family, school, society and individual

5. To study the association of available resources (human and material) with problems faced by children of single parents at different levels viz. family, school, society and individual

6. To find out the difference in available resources and problems of children of single parents with reference to demographic variables

7. To list down solutions and suggestions emerged during the course of study
1.10 Assumptions
Following assumptions have been laid down in connection with this research project -
I. Single parent families (parents and children) may have problems at multilevel (individual, family, school and societal levels).
II. Availability of human and material resources may play a significant role in the lives of single parents and their children.
III. Diverse demographic characteristics may have impact on availability of human and material resources and problems of single parents and their children.

1.11 Terms defined
Single parent family
A family in which a single parent lives with his/her children in a home, without the presence of a fixed couple and in the presence of at least one child who has not yet reached eighteen years of age. It may encompass diverse family arrangements, such as divorce with custody of children shared by both the parents, divorced parents living separately, death of one parent, mutual separation between parents, unwed parent of child, raising to an adopted child alone etc.

Multilevel analysis:
Analysis of different variables at different levels viz. individual, family, school and societal level.

Human resources
Variables related to individuals who are significantly related to single parent families such as support of single parents and children to each other, parenting practices adopted by single parents and supportive role played by other family members, relatives, neighbours, peers, school teachers etc.

Material resources
Materialistic variables like income, goods and facilities provided in home, school and community etc.
1.12 Delimitations

I. Only single parent families of school going children (studying in 6th to 12th standard) have been selected for study.

II. The sample has been selected from Delhi and few cities from six zones of Rajasthan.

III. The schools from urban area only have been included in the study.