

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN IMMIGRANT SINGLE PARENTS
RAISING THEIR CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

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BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband who encouraged me to ensure that I finish this program, and for his financial support. I cannot forget. You are the wind beneath my wings. Thank you.

For my sweet mother who was always present to urge me on. Even though she had gone through four surgeries at the time I was writing this. She still had the strength to ensure that I do not give up on my dreams. She kept telling me. “You will make it. Do not worry.”

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ABSTRACT

FLORENCE OSUOFA

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN PARENTS RAISING THEIR CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES

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The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. A phenomenological approach was used for this study because it deals with human experiences and seeks to understand a group of persons' lived experiences, how they interpret and construct their world, and the meaning they attribute to these experiences (Creswell, 2014). The theoretical framework that guided this research study was Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1979) because of its complete account of the contextual influences on development, and the emphasis on the importance of the relationship that exists between the individual and the environment. The participants included 12 first generation Nigerian immigrant single parents who were raising their children by themselves around the United States. They have lived in the United States for at least 2 years and are currently raising at least one child.

All 12 participants were fluent in written and spoken English language and responded to all the demographic and interview questions through a face-to-face audio-

recorded Zoom web conferencing. The participants participated in semi-structured, open-ended interviews that lasted about 45 minutes. The researcher transcribed the data verbatim after listening to the audio-recorded interviews several times. Data were coded and analyzed. The following four themes emerged: Struggles with Childcare, Sources of Help, Inner Strength, and Cultural Values. The results were compared with previous studies, and conclusions, and implications were drawn. Finally, limitations and recommendations for future research were discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Immigration is a global and complex phenomenon (Chu & Thelamour, 2021; Connor & Lopez, 2016; Okafor, 2014; Paat, 2013). It is the movement of persons across territorial and national boundaries from countries of origin to more developed countries to establish a new residence (Radford & Noe-Bustamante, 2019; Okafor, 2014). Lersch (2016) reported that most people relocate for different reasons. It could be for political, religious, economic, or educational factors. Some immigrants said they wanted to spread their wings and others wanted to provide their children an opportunity to pursue higher education. In contrast, many others highlighted a sense of not belonging to their country of origin.

Marchetti-Mercer (2016) added that people migrate because of violence, crime, corruption, and the desire to experience other countries. He compared immigration to "an uprooting disorder" (Marchetti-Mercer, 2016, p. 2). Immigration uproots people from a familiar social and cultural context to an unfamiliar social and cultural context. Usually, this movement involves emotional, psychological pains, and challenges. Most immigrants relocate from less developed countries to more developed countries like the United States, Russia, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, and Denmark (Onwujuba, 2015).

Studies have shown that amongst the countries mentioned above, the United States has more immigrants than any other country in the world because of the possibilities for more robust labor demand, economic, occupational advancement, and as a land full of opportunities (Radford, & Noe-Bustamante, 2019). As a result, global migration remains a hot topic among researchers, educators, and policymakers (Onwujuba, 2015).

According to Pew Research Center (Kramer, 2019), African immigrants represent 4% of the total Black immigrants in the United States. The number of Nigerian immigrants residing in the United States is rapidly growing. According to the American Community of Survey (ACS) of the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), the number has risen to an estimate of approximately 461,695 Nigerian immigrants living in the United States.

Challenges

The decision to remain in a foreign country like the United States is not without its consequences. Research studies indicate immigration involves numerous struggles and challenges because of the difficulty involved in the acculturation process (Balogun, 2011; Rufai et al., 2019). The differences in socio-cultural values, language, communication, adaptation to the new environment, and the American way of life can be daunting (Balogun, 2011). These cultural differences pose several stressors for immigrants as they strive to settle in the host country.

One of the most significant stressors among Nigerian immigrants is the conflict between Nigerian culture and American cultural beliefs and values. This difference in

culture has resulted in troubled marriages, divorce, separation, and family crises (Ibezim, 2008). The partners in these marriages and their children are affected as they decide to go their separate ways leaving one of the partners to raise children by themselves. This becomes a social concern because in the United States, the number of children living in single-parent homes has risen over the decades because of the decline in marriages and the increase in births outside marriage (Kramer, 2019). Daryanani et al. (2017) reported that one in every three children live in a single-parent family in the United States with many of the families (83%) headed by a mother. Single-parent homes have become a universal phenomenon (Essien & Bassey, 2012). A new Pew Research study (Kramer, 2019) of 130 countries and territories indicated that a quarter of U.S. children under 18 years live with a single parent. The United States has the highest percentage (23%) of children living in single-parent homes, compared to China with 3%, Nigeria with 4%, India with 5%, and Canada with 15%, respectively (Kramer, 2019).

Studies indicate that immigrants suffer more depressive and other mental health symptoms than non-immigrants because of cultural conflicts and the acculturation process (Rhee et al., 2013; Sirin et al., 2012). In addition, children raised by single mothers are exposed to different cultural standards. These different standards and expectations in their upbringing could lead to mental, psychological, and physiological problems (Agbemenu, 2016; Sue & Sue, 2003). These children become easily frustrated by these double cultural standards, subsequently impairing their ability to function at school and other life areas. The frustration of not knowing whether to obey and observe

parents' cultural heritage or American cultural values can lead to depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Álvarez, 2014).

Findings from research on immigrant families indicate that parents are more likely to hold on to their traditional values and norms of their original culture while the children are ready to accept the dominant culture's values and norms (Habecker, 2016; Lim et al., 2008; Onwujuba, 2015). Therefore, these differences in cultural values have created an enormous acculturation gap and discrepancies between parents and their children (Rasmussen et al., 2012; Sirin et al., 2012). Some of the stressors reported by African immigrant parents, including Nigerian immigrants raising their children in the individualistic culture in the United States, are the excessive freedom and independence accorded to the American child, which is non-existent in the Nigerian or African culture (Adewunmi, 2015; Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Onwujuba et al., 2015; Rasmussen, 2012).

As Nigerians practice collectivism, raising a child in the individualistic culture in the United States as a single parent may result in poor child outcomes (Onwujuba et al., 2015). Some children from single-mother homes may suffer from economic hardship due to limited finances, lack of social support, and other untold difficulties, leading to poor school performances and dropouts (Essien & Bassey, 2012). In addition, Daryanani et al. (2016) reported that children raised in single-mother homes are at increased risk for psychopathology. These children often feel overwhelmed by the myriad of demands and stressors experienced by their parents. Consequently, single parents do not have enough time to pay proper attention and care for their children's needs. When this happens,

children from single-parent homes express this dissatisfaction by acting out, or showing externalizing and internalizing behaviors, which often leads to the disruption of family units, mental health issues, and other unpleasant outcomes (Daryanani et al., 2017).

Driver and Amin (2019), in their study of parenting stress among U.S Hispanic mothers, reported that long-term-parenting stress has been associated with negative outcomes for both parents and children. The negative outcomes reported were (a) lower quality relationships, (b) negative feelings about oneself and one's child, and (c) increased risk of child abuse. This phenomenon is even more catastrophic for immigrant single parents experiencing acculturation and intergenerational cultural issues and raising their children in a new environment.

Therefore, this research focuses on Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States while striving to maintain their heritage culture in a new environment.

Statement of the Problem

Parenting is a daunting task (Bigner, 2006). It is a challenging task for single parents and raising their children by themselves. Whisenhunt et al. (2019) stated that the number of children living in single-parent homes increased from roughly 5.8 million in 1960 to 19.6 million children in 2018; the rates of two-parent homes decreased from 88% in 1960 to 69% in 2016 (Daryanani et al., 2017; Whisenhunt et al., 2019). Even though single parenting is increasing, there is a dearth of literature about single parenting (especially among immigrant families), its implication for society, the general well-being

of the children involved, and the social stigma attached to this phenomenon (Whisenhunt et al., 2019).

Parenting impacts every child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. It is the process of raising a child from childhood to adulthood. It can be taxing; therefore, it requires skills. Raising a child alone as a single parent in the United States is traumatic and exhausting (Meier et al., 2016). Research has consistently reported that children raised in single-parent homes are susceptible to elevated risk of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and other difficulties (Daryanani et al., 2016; Daryanani et al., 2017).

Children from single parent homes are more likely than two parent homes to experience low-socioeconomic status, poverty, low emotional support, stress, increased responsibilities, substance abuse, social misfits, and role overload (Meier et al., 2016; Schleidner et al., 2014). Several studies reported the difficulties Nigerian immigrant parents experience raising their children in a different cultural environment and cultural values (Amayo, 2009; Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Heaton & Hirschil, 1999; Onwujuba, 2015; Onwujuba et al., 2015; Rasmussen, 2012). However, none of these studies has explored the plight of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children alone in the United States and the effects of single parenthood on their children's psychological and general wellbeing. Being an immigrant single-parent raising children in a bi-cultural society makes it even more overwhelming because of the process of acculturation and the difficulties immigrants experience.

Some of the difficulties experienced by biological (both) parents are lack of familial and social support, financial challenges, racial discrimination, language barrier, and unemployment (Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba et al., 2015; Rhee et al., 2003). These stressors have disrupted the family unit, increased intergenerational conflicts, depression, anxiety, and defiant behaviors amongst Nigerian children (Child Trends, 2017; Chu et al., 2013). If both Nigerian biological parents raising their children in the United States experience these difficulties. How easy could it be for Nigerian immigrant single parents to raise their children by themselves? Understanding these difficulties will not only help marriage and family therapists (MFTs) and other professionals working with Nigerian immigrant single parents, but also, help mental health professionals know what type of intervention to explore in creating better opportunities for Nigerian immigrant single parents to successfully raise their children in a new and different cultural environment.

Purpose of the Study

Literature is abundant on Southern African, Hispanic, Asian, Chinese and Nigerian immigrant parents raising children in the United States (Adewunmi, 2015; Habecker, 2016; Onwujuba et al., 2015), but there is a paucity of literature on Nigerian immigrant single parents raising children in the United States (Akintayo, 2009; Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba et al., 2015; Osundeko, 2006). The focus of this study was on the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. Due to the increase in single parenting structure (homes) today, the study

revealed the struggles immigrant single parents go through and how they navigated the differences in culture as they raised their children.

Research Question

The following question guided this study: What are the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological systems theory because of its complete account of the contextual influences on development and the emphasis on the importance of the relationship between the child and the environment. For example, this theory indicated that family processes (such as parental behavior) and contextual factors (such as parents' social class or race) often interact in affecting children's development (Tudge et al., 2016). In the same light, because immigration is not an isolated event but a systemic phenomenon, immigrants are affected by all the contextual factors in their environment nested in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) five systems.

Therefore, this theory was most appropriate in discussing the relationship or the interconnectedness of the immigrants with the various systems in their immediate environment. Bronfenbrenner believed that an individual's life course could not be understood without understanding how all aspects of the environment affect the individual and how the individual affects the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2001; Levine & Munsch, 2021).

Applying Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory to this study means the relationship between immigrants and their immediate environment is essential to their growth and development just like the child in his or her immediate environment. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship is beneficial to the growth and development of immigrants as they strive to integrate themselves into the new culture in the United States (Tudge et al., 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory includes four major concepts: proximal processes, person characteristics, context, and time (PPCT). Proximal process represents the daily interaction of the individual with his or her environment. Person characteristics represent peculiar traits of an individual or a group of persons, the qualities they bring into relationships, the human interactions that helps to regulate human development, and how these individuals or group of persons respond to their environment (Bush & Price, 2021). The way immigrants or group of individuals interact and respond to their environment will depend on personal traits such as resource characteristics (intelligence, skills), force characteristics (temperament), and personal demographics such as eye, age, physical appearance. All these features will determine the level of acculturation (Chu & Thelamour, 2021; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009).

When people migrate, they either integrate, assimilate, separate themselves, or marginalize themselves (Berry, 1979). For example, marginalization describes an individual who has no interest in his or her culture and, at the same time, has no interest in the dominant culture thus refusing to relate with others in the dominant culture. This

could be a problem because the individual might become marginalized if not accepted in the host culture (Agbemenu, 2016; Berry, 1997). All the factors mentioned in the personal characteristics in Bronfenbrenner's exosystem come into play in the process of acculturation. The immigrants' refusal to either assimilate or integrate into the dominant culture may result in more serious psychological and emotional problems (Merchatti-Mercer, 2016).

The context in the PPCT refers to the four layers of systems in which people are embedded in their environment. Such as the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem, and the macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Tudge et al., 2016). Time refers to a given period, the historical time in a person's life, or the developmental stages (periods) in a child's life or the life of an individual in general (Bush & Price, 2021). Also, in respect to immigrants and the acculturation process, the first 2 years of immigration are the most traumatic and stressful periods (Chu & Thelamour, 2021; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009). Bronfenbrenner (1979) observed that the growth and development of an individual (child) involves the interaction with the nested structures mentioned above in their environment.

The Microsystem

The microsystem represents structures such as the school environment, the community, the childcare system, the immediate family, and the interactions a person (a child) has with their environment. For example, the interactions a child has with the

mother. Bronfenbrenner (2001) explains these interactions as parent-child relationships or the relationship between siblings.

This represents the relationship between the immigrant and the citizens in the dominant culture, at school, at work, and in the community. These interactions are normally the strongest because of the reciprocal relationships and how they affect one another. For example, the behavior of a child affects the mother, and the mother's behavior affects the child relationship (Bronfenbrenner, 2001).

Therefore, in applying this concept to this study, the immigrant in a new environment is affected by all the nested structures mentioned above. Similarly, a child is influenced by his or her biological makeup and the environment's influences. These are two powerful forces that help mold the child's (immigrant's) development (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

The Mesosystem

The mesosystem is the second system in Bronfenbrenner ecological theory (1979). The mesosystem represents the connection, the linkage, the interrelationships between the individuals in the immediate family, at the home, the school, and the community. The mesosystem is defined as the interrelationships among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, whenever a parent (single parent) visits the school for any kind of interaction or involvement in the child's activity, both systems are directly connected to the child's (individuals) development. If a parent attends a parent-teachers association at the school,

the outcome is to enhance the child's development and to build trust between the family and the home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These two systems become connected towards the growth and development of the child. Also, immigrants are affected by their relationships with other people, how they interact in their workplaces, school, and community settings, which are in turn affected by broader social, cultural, and policy conditions. It makes sense to realize that a person's environment and how they think is dependent on how they grew and interact with their environment (Paat, 2013).

The Exosystem

The exosystem system is an extension of the mesosystem. This includes the social setting that represents the influence the extended family members have on the developing child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines exosystem as "the influence of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (p. 25). For example, a parent's social network, like workplace relationships, can affect a child's developmental processes (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

For example, suppose a single mother loses her job, this will affect the psychological and emotional well-being of the children because she will no longer be able to provide for the children's basic needs. Likewise, if a parent gets a promotion and a big raise, this means the parent might need to work long hours (Levine & Munsch, 2021). Working more hours might lead to a loss of family time. Consequently, the family might be neglected in the process, and the children will lack supervision if this parent is

single. In applying this to immigrants, an immigrant's social network can affect the acculturation processes, like work relationships. If an immigrant lacks proficiency in the English language, this might hinder a good rapport with other people in his or her environment and workplace. As a result, adaptation might become difficult, and the acculturation process will be prolonged.

The Macrosystem

Next is the macrosystem, which is the most appropriate of the systems in addressing the phenomenon of this study. The macrosystem refers to the values, laws, customs, and resources of the culture that affect activities and interactions of the inner layers—parents' cultural norms, beliefs, and values (Bronfenbrenner, 2001).

In applying this concept to this study, studies indicate the differences between the American and Nigerian cultures have created an inter-generational gap between African children and their parents. The parents want to adhere to their culture of origin while raising their children in different environments and cultures. On the other hand, the children prefer cultural norms and values found in the dominant culture (Rhee et al., 2013; Sirin et al., 2012). These cultural differences remain the bone of contention in most immigrant homes. For these reasons, immigrant children are torn between two cultures.

Research studies indicate that the typical African (Nigerian) parents are experiencing difficulties in raising their children in the US because they are torn between two worlds as they struggle to balance both cultures in a different sociocultural context (Obiakor & Afolayan, 2007; Onwujuba et al., 2015). Likewise, the children are facing

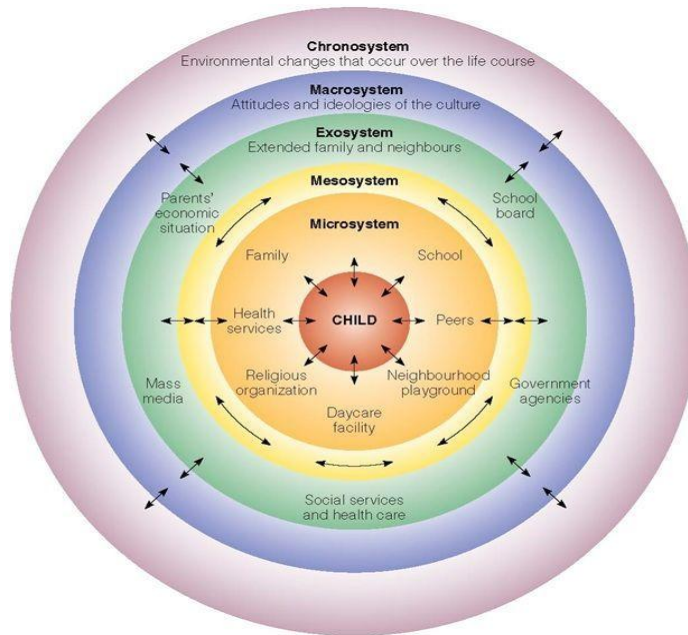
their own struggles between two cultures. Adolescent immigrant children struggle with parental expectations, intergenerational conflicts at home, acculturative stressors, and ethnic peer pressure at school (Li, 2009). Sometimes, they are confused about the different expectations in their upbringing, thereby, leading to frustration, anxiety, and depression (Alvarez, 2014).

The Chronosystem

In comparison, the chronosystem is the influence of change in a persons' development in their environment overtime. This could include the historical time in which they live (Chu & Thelamour, 2021). Environment changes people and people change the environment (Tudge et al., 2016). Therefore, the chronosystem represents the passage of time and the dynamic, ever-changing nature of the child's total development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) or the immigrant growth in the new environment. The chronosystems consider the changes that occur over time in the individual's (immigrant's) lifetime such as the socialization of the child into the family and society (Chu & Thelamour, 2021). A perfect demonstration is the migration period for the immigrant, the acculturation process, the final settlement, and the period or the length of time it takes for the immigrant to become established in the host country.

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory



Note: Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory as showed in this figure gives a clear understanding of the influence of society on human development represented in layers. The first is the microsystem (immediate environment), followed by the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. Guy-Evans, O. (2020, Nov 09). *Bronfenbrenner'ecological systems theory*. Simply Psychology. www.simplypsychology.org/Bronfenbrenner.html

Methodological Approach

I used the phenomenological approach for this qualitative study. A phenomenological research methodology deals with human experiences and seeks to understand a group of persons' lived experiences, how they interpret and construct their world, and the meaning they attribute to these experiences (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative design is the best approach to exploring and understanding the meanings a group of persons ascribes to their lived experiences (Creswell, 2014).

The Researcher as a Person

In a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach, the researcher is the main instrument of the study. I am a Nigerian immigrant raising three children in the United States as a single parent. My first daughter is a registered nurse. She came here when she was 12 years old. The second is a male studying for his PhD in chemical engineering, and the last child plays football at one of the universities in North Texas, and he is in his senior year in kinesiology. I know what my experiences have been. I am aware of the complexity of migration and the acculturation process. However, I did not allow my experiences or previous knowledge to preclude my judgment as I interpreted my participants' lived experiences. Instead, I focused on the meaning my participants attributed to their experiences, known as bracketing, also called *epoche*.

The concept of *epoche* requires me, as the researcher, to bracket all my preconceived ideas about the phenomenon I was investigating to enable me to understand it better through the voices of the informants or participants (Field & Morse, 1985).

Bracketing is a method used by researchers to reduce the harmful effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the study by putting aside all assumptions, previous knowledge, and biases to not confound the study results. This was accomplished by self-awareness, deep-reflections, and an honest and transparent process throughout the study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made during the study:

- Participants were honest in their responses.
- Participants cooperated and were willing to tell their stories.
- I set aside my preconceived ideas about the study topic.

Delimitations

To be included in the study, the participant was an individual who:

- Self-identifies as a Nigerian immigrant single parent.
- Has lived in the United States for at least 2 years.
- Is over the age of 18.
- Speaks and writes in English.
- Is raising at least one child in the United States.
- Is divorced, separated, widowed, or never married.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation: The process of gradual adaptation of the language, beliefs, and values of the mainstream culture through continuous interaction amongst individuals or groups (Yoon et al., 2011).

Assimilation: involves disregarding one's own culture and completely immersing in the host culture (Berry, 1997).

Integration: involves adopting the host culture while maintaining one's own culture (Berry, 1997).

Marginalization: Marginalization is one of the psychological and cultural processes an immigrant goes through to get acculturated to the dominant society. Marginalization describes a situation where an immigrant refuses or has no interest in maintaining his or her own culture, and at the same time, no interest in relating to other people in the dominant culture. Sometimes, the immigrant has lost his or her culture and is not accepted in the dominant culture (Agbemenu, 2016; Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021).

Separation: This is when an immigrant rejects the host culture and maintains his or her own culture in a foreign land (Berry, 1997).

Intergenerational Gap: The difference of opinions between immigrant parents and their children (Younger generation) in beliefs, politics, and cultural values (Chu et al., 2013)

Summary

Nigerians migrate to foreign countries like the United States for different reasons, such as for their children's education, medical treatment, for a better standard of living, or

just fleeing from the political instability in Nigeria. However, before they settle in their country of destination, they go through the acculturation process before finally integrating into the community. There are several studies on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants' parents raising their children in the United States. In the process of acculturation, they either accept or reject the dominant culture (Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021). Immigrants who accept the immigrant cultures and integrate themselves usually do better than those who do not (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009).

Studies indicate that Nigerian immigrant parents are experiencing challenges raising their children in the dominant culture because they disagree with American culture. However, the children are ready to embrace the dominant culture and move on with their lives (Patel et al., 2016). The purpose of this pilot study was to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in this dominant culture. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (2001) and the phenomenological research approach guided this study. The study will be beneficial to marriage and family therapists and other professionals working with this population (Bronfrenbrenner, 2001; Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021; Patel et al., 2016).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is abundant on the immigration challenges of other ethnic groups in the US raising their children in a new country (Adewunmi, 2015; Habecker, 2016; Onwujuba, 2015). However, there is paucity of literature on Nigerian single parents. The dearth of literature on the status of Nigerian immigrant single parents indicates how this group of immigrants is forgotten and neglected because of the stigma attached to being a single parent (Essien & Bassey, 2012). Bello et al. (2018) reported that society views single parenthood as an aberrant form of the normal family structure. Hence, different names have been used to describe single-family parents, such as "broken home," out-of-wedlock childbearing, and "fatherless homes" (Bello et al., 2018, p. 1). This study explored the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. This study will lead to an understanding of the strengths and the challenges these parents face while raising their children in the United States.

Several studies indicated that migration is a traumatic, global, and a complex phenomenon (Chu & Thelamour, 2021; Patel et al., 2016; Roubeni et al., 2017; Salami et al., 2017) and the process of relocating and adjusting to a new culture is a stressful life event (Onwujuba et al., 2015). The struggle to survive in a foreign land has many untold hardships and sufferings on immigrants and their families (Roubeni et al., 2017).

Migration can be a significant risk factor for families and couples due to unemployment, settlement issues, stereotypes, lack of immigration status, loss of social support, loss of extended family and friends from country of origin. Other stressors are loss of ethnic and cultural identity, discrimination, and financial hardships (Shalabi et al., 2015).

Slonim-Nevo et al. (2009) reported that the first 2 years are always stressful for immigrants. Many studies on immigration reported the psychological distress immigrants face while adjusting to their new destination (Adewunmi, 2015; Habecker, 2016; Onwujuba, 2015; Patel et al., 2016; Roubeni et al., 2017). Despite all these hardships and consequences, migrants still flee their countries to the United States because it appears to be a better choice. What could be responsible for this movement? This chapter includes the historical background of the migration of Nigerians to the United States, the reasons for migration, and the challenges these immigrant parents face with their children.

Nigerian Immigration to the United States: Effects of the Biafra War

The Biafra War in Nigeria between the 1960s and 1970s influenced the mass movement of Nigerian immigrants to the United States (Ogbuagu, 2013). It was a clash over economic interests, cultural values, slavery, religious tensions, and the control over the lucrative oil production in the Niger Delta-South of Nigeria (Okafor 2014). The easterners (Igbos) from the east of Nigeria and the northerners (Hausas) from the north of Nigeria were the two factions affected mainly by this strife. The Igbos living in the

northern part of Nigeria felt persecuted and were massacred in great numbers. In response to the killings of the easterners, some northerners were killed in Port-Harcourt (east) and other eastern states. The federal government intervened without success. The conflict turned into a civil war that drew the attention of the international media. The war took a toll on human lives both on the Igbo and ethnic minorities. The war lasted about 30 months (Okafor, 2014).

After and during this war, most Nigerian professionals, doctors, and lawyers started to find their way to foreign countries. The war was closely followed by the turbulent governments of self-imposed military regimes of Presidents Babangida and Sani Abacha in the late 1980s (Grieco, 2012; Okafor, 2014). Therefore, government instability and political unrest encouraged the mass exodus of most Nigerians to the United States and the United Kingdom in search of a better life for themselves and their children (Amayo 2009; Balogun, 2011; Okafor, 2014).

Reasons for Migration

Nigerian immigrants believe that the United States has more jobs and other life opportunities than their country of origin (Paat, 2013). For Nigerians, America is a land full of opportunities, especially for women. Some of the opportunities include affirmative action policies, self-employment and better job opportunities, higher education qualifications, internships, mentoring programs, and job shadowing. Nigerians believe if they work hard, they will achieve their desired goals (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009). This is especially true for highly skilled professionals such as nurses, doctors, engineers, and

science teachers who had the opportunity to flee their country with the abolishment of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 and approval of the United States Immigration Act of 1990 (Ogbuagu, 2007).

For Nigerian immigrants, some of the reasons for migration besides the Biafra War are the desire to improve the quality of life, to care for extended families through foreign employment, and better education opportunities for their children (Lersch, 2016; Onwubu, 2007). Other reasons for migration are political, religious, and general dissatisfaction with the government of Nigeria and changes in the labor force (Heaton & Hirschl, 1999). Martin and Zurcher (2008) grouped the major reasons for migration into two categories, economic and non-economic reasons. Economic reasons such as labor recruitment (pull factor), and non-economic reasons (push factors) such as unemployment, or underemployment, fleeing from war, violence, and unrest. Therefore, the main reasons behind migration are the improvement of the quality of life, standards of living, attainment of a dream, and the desire for a new experience (Martin & Zurcher, 2008; Thomas, 2011).

Nigerian Immigrants and Their Challenges: Health Problems

Research indicates that immigrants experience psychological, emotional, and other health-related challenges as they strive to adapt to their new environment. Kirmayer et al. (2011), in their study, searched and compiled literature on the prevalence risk of everyday health problems related to migration and the effect of cultural influences on health and illness. They reported that immigration trajectories have three phases: pre-

migration, migration, and post-migration. The pre-migration stage refers to the planning and the decision to travel overseas. The migration period represents the period immigrants embark on the journey to the desired destination. At the same time, post-migration refers to the settlement period when the immigrant is finally settled in the dominant culture. During these three phases of migration, immigrants experience several mental health and psychological problems depending on how they migrated, problems depending on their decision, how they migrated, and the general settlement experiences (Kirmayer et al., 2011).

While on this journey, immigrants often reported that they experience the following challenges: perceived discrimination, psychological adjustment, language difficulty, adaptation and acculturation problems, separation from families, unemployment, cultural conflicts, and loss of social support and status (Agbemenu, 2016; Nwabah & Heitner, 2009; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009).

Perceived Discrimination and Psychological Adjustment

Several research studies indicated that perceived discrimination is a significant life stressor with adverse effects on the well-being and adjustment of immigrants and their children (Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Liebkind 2001; Lee, 2005; Nwabah & Heitner, 2009; Stone & Han, 2005). In addition, Slonim-Nevo et al. (2009) reported that when people feel rejected and unwanted, they experience negative emotions and thoughts, leading to suicidal thoughts and ideation. When this happens, immigrants feel devalued, sad, and anxious and lose their sense of security. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

(1979) offers the framework to examine an immigrant's interaction with society and their immediate environment. The ecological theory states that a person or a child develops within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. For example, this includes the cultural norms of the society, the beliefs, customs, and values of the dominant culture. An immigrant who finds it difficult to adjust to the norms and beliefs of the society or environment of the dominant culture might have difficulties integrating into the society (Berry, 1979).

Hence, Slonim-Nevo et al. (2009) reported in their study that how quickly immigrants adjust in the host country depends on the degree of interaction in the community and acceptance by the host community. Therefore, the level of adjustment of immigrants will depend on how immigrants perceive the communities and their experiences.

Nwabah and Heitner (2009) conducted a study to explore migration and leadership experiences of 22 female Nigerian immigrants in leadership positions in Texas. Participants were all foreign-born, raised in Nigeria between ages 28–62 and were living in Texas at the time of the study. These immigrants held leadership positions in the United States. Most of them pursued higher education after migration to the United States. They participated in face-to-face interviews, one-on-one, and discussions about their immigration and leadership experiences. The women in this study reported they were unfairly treated because of their ethnic background. Though America is a land of opportunities, the women reported that they must adapt to American culture before they

can serve in an American workplace. As a result, the women felt discriminated against (Nwabah & Heitner, 2009).

Lack of Language Proficiency

One of the concerns of immigrants was a lack of language proficiency (Amayo, 2009; Triemstra & Monterrey, 2019). With limited English proficiency, immigrants cannot access relevant information that could help them meet their basic needs, obtain employment, adjust to society, and fully participate in the community (Agbemenu, 2016; Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009).

Agbemenu (2016) conducted a study using a literature review from 185 articles from the PubMed database on acculturation and African immigrants in the United States. The literature extended to 1990 because the significant influx of immigrants started from the 1990s. In this study, the authors measured acculturation by English language proficiency. Participants ranged from 29–55 years of age who had lived in the United States. From the data, the New Immigration Survey (NIS) revealed that 70% of the participants were Nigerians, 16% were Ethiopians, and the rest were from sub-African countries. In addition, results indicated that the immigrants were very healthy during the pre- and post-immigration days. However, during the acculturation process, one thing that led to immigrants' poor health was limited English proficiency. They could not access the necessary information they needed to get the help for health services and advancement to the next level (Agbemenu, 2016).

In confirmation of the above, Wagner (2015) reported that most immigrants and their children expressed concerns about being teased, insulted, and misunderstood because of their accent, lack of fluency in the dominant language, and ethnic background. Immigrants reported feeling traumatized by these experiences, especially when they newly arrived in the host country, thereby making the adjustment and adaptation process difficult for them (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2001; Nwabah & Heitner, 2009).

Adjustment and Adaptation

The length of stay in the host country is another factor that may affect proper adjustment and adaptation. Slonim-Nevo et al. (2009) reported that the first 2 years are always the most stressful for immigrants. The higher the number of stressful life events, the lower the level of adjustment. Furthermore, the better the relationships with citizens of the host country, the higher the level of adjustment and the lower the stress level. Research indicates that Africans who are less acculturated fare worse in health than those who are well acculturated and well-adjusted (Agbemenu, 2016).

Cross-Cultural Stressors

Research studies (Berry, 1992) show that the decision to relocate from one country to another encompasses significant changes in all aspects of one's life. For example, as immigrants migrate to other countries, they are separated from familiar places and family members at home. In addition, they must learn a new language, find a job, build a new social life, help their children adapt to their new environment, and negotiate between their old and new cultural identities. These cross-cultural stressors and

transition may lead to physical and emotional difficulties. Consequently, the immigrants may experience grief reactions, lower mental health status, feelings of marginalization, alienation, and identity confusion (Berry, 1992).

Separation from Families

Immigration is a traumatic and stressful process (Rowatt et al., 2020). When people migrate, they leave loved ones behind. As a result, the family unit is separated and broken. If there are children in the family, they are most affected by this separation. Kirmayer et al. (2011) indicated that separation from families was the most stressful experience for immigrants. These experiences lead to psychological and emotional problems. Similarly, in confirmation of the above findings, Suarez-Orozco et al. (2001) reported in their study that family separation could result in psychological, social, and academic outcomes. Also, immigrant youth with family members living in another country reported more acculturative stress, anxiety, and depression.

Patel et al. (2016) conducted a mixed-method examination of family stressors and school outcomes on new immigrant adolescents. These researchers, in their study, illustrated how individuals (immigrant children) are affected by the interactions between the characters in their immediate environment. For example, the relationship between immigrant children and their schoolteachers. Newcomer immigrants are individuals within 5 years post immigration period who have experienced acculturative stressors related to separation from loved ones, divorce, economic and employment disparities, and conflict with parents.

The quantitative analyses examined the interaction between family-level stressors: parental separation, family conflicts, and life events to predict academic achievement and externalizing problems. The qualitative analyses explored each family stressor more deeply to determine the nuances within participants' lived experiences (Patel et al., 2016)

In the interview, sixty-six high school students from 64 countries enrolled in two international public high schools in a large northeastern city. Patel et al. (2016) presented the study to the two school principals who invited all teachers and students in their classes to participate. Researchers visited participating teachers' classrooms, explaining the study to them about how youth make cultural transitions. Basic English proficiency was a requirement for participation, and data were collected in English. All data were collected in the same semester and analyzed simultaneously, and results emerged after analysis.

The results from the Patel et al. (2016) study indicated that life stressors put newcomer adolescents at risk for emotional and behavioral problems. Immigrants and their children experiencing multiple family stressors together resulted in worse outcomes, and those who migrated during the adolescents' period have poorer health outcomes. Living in a single-parent home added additional stress to the development of adolescents. The quantitative results indicated that family life events were associated with lower GPA, especially for participants who have been separated from their parents. In addition, more family conflicts were associated with more externalizing symptoms. Qualitative results

also revealed that separation from extended family networks was among the most stressful of experiences (Patel et al., 2016).

Financial Stressors (Unemployment)

Another stressor for immigrant parents was finances. This financial difficulty is a perfect example of how the ecosystem (social structure) in bioecological theory can affect immigrants and their children. Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined exosystem as “the influence of one or more settings that do not involve the developing person an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (p. 25).

Generally, most Nigerian immigrants live below the poverty level in the United States even though most are highly educated (Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba et al., 2015). They are either engaging in low-paying jobs in what is referred to as "under the table," or they can only get jobs that are rejected by the Americans, which are usually very low-paying jobs. As a result, they are underpaid and unable to meet their children's basic needs while many others are unemployed (Gordon, 1998). Thus, the socio-economic status of immigrant parents affects the well-being of their children. In applying Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory to immigrants, the exosystem indicates how social structures affect the lives of the individuals. By implication, the exosystem (social structure) clearly affects the wellbeing of immigrant children as parents are unable to provide for their children’s needs due to job loss (the social system). The children have

no direct interaction with the social system, yet they are affected by the interaction of their parents with the social system.

In another study, Heinrich (2014) investigated the impact of unemployment on children's development. Results from the study indicated that levels of life satisfaction are lower when young people perceive their parents' negative social status. Furthermore, feelings of low self-esteem and deprivation can generate harmful lifestyles and behavioral problems in the children, resulting in more severe abuse, violence, suicide, and homicidal ideations.

Generally, immigrants with low-quality education tend to be poorer and more likely to be discriminated against (Amayo, 2009). Therefore, these immigrants do not earn enough money to meet the basic needs of their children's education and health, eventually leading to poor quality education for their children.

Cultural Conflicts: Nigerian Immigrant Parenting Practices

Nigerian parents are proactive parents. They love to care for their children. To Nigerian parents, children are considered a source of wealth. They believe in children obeying their parents and observing respect for others (Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba et al., 2015). Childrearing is jointly shared within the kinship network, where children are sometimes raised by a relative other than their biological parents but still expected to obey their biological parents. Nigerian immigrant parents practice the authoritarian parenting style, also known as the "adult-centric style" (Onwujuba et al., 2015, p. 26), where children are expected to obey their parents without asking questions. The parents

demand respect from the children and consider it rude behavior when children talk back to their parents.

In socializing their children into the host culture and environment, Nigerian immigrant parents practice their own belief systems, norms, and values within the context of the larger American culture. This is an example of macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory that shows how culture or ideology shapes development. Nigerian parents believe in strict discipline for their children for fear that if these beliefs are not inculcated into their children, they might get lost in the American culture that gives excessive freedom to their children (Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021).

The overarching influence of the belief systems and ideology of the Nigerian immigrant parents in preferring their own culture in socializing their children over the United States culture cannot be overemphasized. This is evident in the daily activities of Nigerian immigrant parents' child rearing practices in which they train their children to have responsibilities in the home; they teach children to work hard, persevere in the face of adversity, and postpone gratification. The Nigerian parent emphasizes the importance of respect for elders and does not give emancipation to its youth. On the other hand, the United States culture emphasizes autonomy at an early age. The exosystem of the Nigerian culture is different from the exosystem structure of the United States (Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021).

However, when Nigerians come to the United States, they are shocked at the cultural practices of the host country. They express disdain at the excessive freedom and

independence accorded to American children, which is non-existent in African culture (Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021). For this reason, African parents find it challenging to raise their children in the United States because the children prefer to embrace American culture instead of their parents' African culture. This difference in culture has caused an intergenerational gap between African parents and their children (Adewunmi, 2015; Bledsoe & Sow, 2011; Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021; Onwujuba et al., 2015; Rasmussen et al. 2012).

Onwujuba et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine Nigerian immigrants' adaptation processes in the United States as they raise their children within the influences of two world cultures. There were 30 college-educated Nigerian participants in this study. The participants were highly educated with various occupations ranging from nurses, doctors, pharmacists, accountants, electrical engineering, and data analyst. All degrees were obtained in the United States. All the couples were dual-career couples with full-time employment, except for two who had part-time jobs. The combined income of these participants ranged between \$40,000–\$100,000. At the time of the interview, they all resided in Texas. From the participants' narratives, three themes emerged pertinent to Nigerian immigrant parenting practices: (1) Immigrant parents' socio-cultural adaptation, (2) Issues with parent-child interaction, and (3) Limited community support for childrearing.

Results from this study indicated that participants would like to negotiate a midpoint between Nigerian and American cultures for optimal adjustment by choosing

what to adopt from the American culture and what not to accept. Nigerian parents believe American culture gives confidence to their children, which the Nigerian culture lacks. Nigerian parents accepted that their children would probably adopt some aspects of the American culture because America is where they live and have friends here too. All participants agreed that there needs to be a balance of both cultures (integration) for maximum productivity to reap the benefits for both worlds. For example, the idea of encouraging children and parents to have open communication. Nigerian culture lacks this aspect of parent-child relationship because of their authoritarian parenting practices (Onwujuba et al., 2015).

Amayo (2009) conducted another study on the Nigerian immigrant parenting practices in the United States. The author highlighted the various adjustment processes the immigrants go through before they are finally integrated into the mainstream American cultural system. The researcher included Nigerian parenting practices as they struggle to raise their children in a different culture and their steps to prepare them for college. The researcher interviewed and observed the environment of nine Nigerian immigrant parents on how they prepare their children for college. Also, the researcher interviewed one school administrator and one schoolteacher to get their perspectives on how these immigrants prepare their children for college. Results indicated that: Nigerian parents are proactive parents, supervise their children, and emphasize traditional roles.

Nigerian Parents are Proactive Parents

They serve as role models for their children. Some other features of the Nigerian immigrant parents include strong parental background, early emphasis on education, close interest and monitoring of their children, culture, supportive family collaboration, and strong involvement in school activities (Amayo, 2009).

Supervision of their Children

Additional findings included regular supervision of children, paying attention to their children's school assignments and homework, making sure physical and emotional harassment at school are dealt with and resolved. In confirmation of the above findings (Ownujuba et al., 2015) reported in their study that this supervision of children does not involve only the biological parents alone, but also, the kinsmen, the extended family members, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, and in-laws because children are thought of not only belonging to the biological parents but to the kinship group. Nigerians practice collectivism, a traditional practice where children are raised by a relative other than the biological parents (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011). Most times, the supervision is not only on school activities or homework, but also, in other areas such as sending children to relatives' homes to learn about the customs and traditional practices.

Sometimes, the children do not need to travel that far because the family dwelling unit may be near cousins, aunts, and uncles. This compound becomes a unit of social and economic unity and an enlarged microsystem of development where children are supervised and taught other activities like caregiving, respect, good manners, cooking,

and moral responsibilities. Kinsmen, no matter how far related, are expected to behave like siblings by caring, sharing material resources, giving affection, and shared responsibility towards one another (Alber et al., 2010). Nigerians believe raising a child is a communal effort because the success of the child is considered the glory of the extended family (Ownujuba, 2015).

Nigerian Parents Emphasize Traditional Roles

Nigerian immigrants prefer to maintain the traditional roles of their own parents even in a foreign land because, despite their immigration experiences, they still perceive themselves first as Africans and want to maintain their cultural heritage. Consequently, their children must do the same (Amayo, 2009).

However, Yenika-Agbaw (2009) shared an alternative view by asking a question in her study: “Can African immigrants raise their American children to adjust properly and succeed in their new home without necessarily sacrificing their African cultural heritage?” (p. 4). This is a question for African parents to answer because African parents emphasize that their children, as a matter of prerogative, must share and adhere to their religious and cultural beliefs. African parents, especially immigrant parents, must realize that the world is evolving, and children are aware and recognize their own social agency from the happenings around the world and their own environment.

Therefore, African parents must refrain from dictating to their children and enforcing their traditional pre-migration customs. African parents must realize that children are not passive agents to be acted upon by adults but are much more self-

determined actors than adults generally think. African immigrant children are active and capable of defining their own identities. They control what identity they want to assume by watching how other children behave, understanding what adults expect of them, and understanding the laws that govern human behavior in their environment. Then, they can decide how to create a balance to meet their own needs and those of the dominant culture (Yenika-Agbaw, 2009).

Other Practices: Social Support

Nigerian immigrants' parents strive to maintain collectivism and extended family practices by connecting and joining African organizations, organizing language learning classes, and playing groups for membership as they raise their children. Lastly, they collaborate with other members in their various African Associations in social-cultural, educational matters concerning their children. When members are experiencing problems, especially single parents, they collaborate and come to each other's rescue (Alber et al., 2010; Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba et al., 2015).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. The study seeks to learn about their challenges and strengths, to understand what it means to raise children in a different culture and environment. However, there is a dearth of literature concerning this minority group, Nigerian immigrant single parents. This study intends to fill that gap.

Included in this chapter were a short history of Nigerian immigrants in the United States, how and when migration started, their challenges, and the effect of acculturation stress on the parents, children, and family relationships such as intergenerational gap due to differences in cultural beliefs between parents and their children. This chapter also discussed Nigerian parenting practices. Though authoritarian, they are caring and require discipline from their children and expect them to abide by traditional hard work and respect for higher authority.

Findings from this study will help policymakers, professionals, and private and public establishments plan and implement programs to meet the cultural needs of immigrants in general, particularly Nigerian single parent immigrants.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. The findings from this study will benefit mental health professionals working with this population of Nigerian immigrant single parents to understand their immigration experiences and acculturation stress to know how to intervene with culturally sensitive approaches to help the families.

I used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore and understand the meaning of this group of persons ascribed to their shared experiences (Creswell, 2014). I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory to structure the questions and analyze and interpret the meanings this group of persons ascribes to the stories they tell themselves. In this chapter, I discussed the recruitment process, the interview procedure, protection of participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Methodological Approach

The study used a qualitative research approach and a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological research methodology is an approach that deals with human experiences and seeks to understand the lived experiences of a group of persons, how they interpret and construct their world, and the meanings they attribute to these experiences (Creswell, 2014). Sometimes, and if possible, qualitative research examines

people in their natural environment to understand how they interpret their experiences and make meaning out of their world (Creswell, 2014).

However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic I interviewed the participants through Zoom instead of face-to-face. COVID-19 is a disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 that can trigger what doctors call a respiratory tract infection. COVID-19 can affect a person's upper respiratory tract (sinuses, nose, and throat) or lower respiratory tract (windpipe and lungs). It spreads the same way other coronaviruses do, mainly through person-to-person contact (Pathak, 2021).

As the researcher, I was the key instrument in this study; hence, I was very careful not to allow my personal experiences to influence the descriptions of the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 1998). In addition, the analysis of the data was done inductively with a focus on the participants' perspectives and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences. This phenomenological approach gave me an in-depth knowledge of the subjective experiences of my participants.

The Researcher as the Instrument

In a qualitative design, the researcher is the main instrument throughout all the phases of the research project (Starks & Trininad, 2007). I am a doctoral student in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Texas Woman's University (TWU). I emigrated from Nigeria, and I have lived in the United States for 14 years. Before I came to study in the United States, I was a high school French teacher. Later, I went on a diplomatic mission with my husband to India, where he served as a defense military

attaché to the Indian government from Nigeria. As a senior child in the family, I have always played the leadership role. While in the military, I was the mess president, and as a diplomat's wife, I led other defense attaché wives on various missions and taught some of them the French Language.

I had a very good life and had the opportunity of traveling to several locations such as Hong Kong, Pakistan, Mumbai, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Bangalore, Andhra Pradesh, Jaipur, China (Channel), Italy (Florence and Arezzo), Paris, and finally lived in London for some months. I did not like it there and I decided to move to the United States with my three kids who were 14, 12 and 9 years of age. I have lived in the United States as a single mother raising all three children because my husband could not join us because of numerous military obligations and postings. However, I did not allow my experiences to influence what my participants had to say or how I analyzed the data of this study.

Bracketing

Bracketing is the method used by researchers against the harmful influence or effect of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research topic (Tufford & Newman, 2010). The more researchers become more involved in exploring participants' lived experiences, as they select a topic, conduct interviews, collect data, and analyze them, the more emotionally involved they become. Sometimes, researchers might find it difficult to separate their personal experiences from those of their participants during the interview process due to the deep reflections they are engaged in while interviewing

participants. Therefore, researchers must identify and suspend their prejudices, previous knowledge, biases, assumptions, and theories to describe participants' experiences (Creswell, 2014; Drew 2004).

In addition, bracketing helps researchers protect themselves from the cumulative effects of intensely challenging emotional material by maintaining self-awareness, involving in deep self-reflections, and being as transparent as possible about their preconceptions throughout the study process not to confound the results (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Tufford & Newman, 2010).

I bracketed my own preconceptions of what I knew about this topic and my experiences and was very open to what my participants did by not being judgmental. I conducted the interview with an open mind and did not know what to expect. I listened actively without interruptions, which helped participants to voluntarily express their lived experiences. I had no invested interest.

Sampling Procedures

The participants in the study were 12 adults ages 18 and older who self-identify as Nigerian immigrants who are single parents raising their children in the United States. Participants who heard about the research from their friends called me. Using the recruitment script, (see Appendix B), I answered all their questions and set an interview appointment time convenient for them. This interview was audio recorded, and I used a code number to protect participants' confidentiality. The total time commitment for this study was about 45 minutes. The greatest risks of this type of study included potential

loss of confidentiality and emotional discomfort. I discussed these risks and the study procedures in greater detail with participants. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. I read and reviewed the informed consent form with them and allowed them to decide if they wanted to participate.

Recruitment Process

After approval, my first step in the recruitment process was to send my flyer to TWU listserv. They were the first to post my study on the school's email list to all students. The study was sent to TWU listserv one time. Then, I waited for participants to start calling me. Within 24 hours I received three emails from TWU students, but they did not qualify for the study. They said they were children of immigrants. They were single and had no children. I thanked them and asked if they could forward the study to others whom they thought would be interested. They gladly accepted and they did. The next thing I did was forward the study flyer to pastors by email. The two pastors forwarded them as well to their congregation. The flyers were given to church members. Potential participants called me through the snowballing method. The participants I interviewed told somebody else after their own interviews. A friend told a friend and she in turn told another friend. Interested participants called me and I introduced myself and read out the recruitment script to them (see Appendix B). One participant called from New York, another called me from Missouri, one called me from Georgia, one called me from Austin, two called from Houston, and others were from Dallas and Denton in Texas. Altogether, I had 14 participants, but only 12 qualified for the study. To maintain

confidentiality, all materials for the interview were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private room. The laptop for the interview was encrypted and password protected. The password for the Zoom meeting was sent to participants individually.

Interview Questions

These questions were developed using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (2001) of human development and socialization into society. This theory emphasizes the influence of social development and the integration of an individual into the society. In addition, this theory reveals how the environment affects the growth of the individual through proximal processes (daily interaction), personal characteristics or traits, the context is nested in the four structures of society, the microsystem, the mesosystem, the macrosystem, exosystem, and the chronosystems, which shows how the individual grows over time in their environment (Chu & Thelamour, 2021; Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021). I asked participants to tell their stories using these questions.

1. Please, tell me the story of how you came to the United States.
2. What has life been like for you as a Nigerian immigrant single parent?
3. What has been most difficult?
4. What has been most helpful?
5. What have you discovered in yourself while raising your child/children?
6. How has American culture influenced the way you raise your child/children.
7. What stories are you telling your family about your immigration experiences?

8. Would you say you have accomplished your dream for coming to America? If yes, how? If no, how?
9. What else would you like to say about raising your child/children as a single parent in the United States?

Protection of Participants

I started the recruitment of participants after TWU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Graduate School approved my study. I ensured that the rights of my participants were protected. I took appropriate measures to ensure that all documents were securely kept in a locked cabinet in my home. I followed all the rules of research study as required by IRB at TWU. I ensured I had the consent of my participants (see Appendix C). I protected my participants by not transcribing any personal identification such as names, dates, or places in the audio recording.

A code number was used for each participant. The major professor, a trusted co-coder, and myself were the only ones with access to the transcriptions. These persons have received training on handling human subjects in research. Confidentiality was maintained, and I locked away code numbers and audio voice recorder in a secured cabinet, and consent forms locked in a separate drawer (Creswell, 2014). I told participants that they could leave at any time, and participation was voluntary. Participants were protected by ensuring that I provided a list of counseling resources to them in case of any emotional reactions during the interview (see Appendix F).

Data Collection

There are various ways to collect data in a qualitative study. This includes email collection, observation, face-to-face interviews, telephone conversations, focus groups, public and private documentations, journals, articles, expressive arts, and audio-visual (Creswell, 2014). I used face-to-face semi-structured audio-recorded interviews through Zoom web conferencing because it helped me to capture the full meaning of what the participants were telling me. Also, the face-to face method helped me to take note of their verbal messages and body language as I listened to them (Sprenkle & Moon, 1996). The semi-structured questions were open-ended questions, and I used the interview guide (see Appendix E). As soon as participants called me, I read out the recruitment transcript to them and explained the purpose of the study. Once they agreed to participate, we fixed a time that was convenient for them for us to meet via Zoom for the interview. I informed them that they must sign the informed consent form and send it back to me before the agreed interview time and day. On interview day, I conducted interviews with them by first reading out the demographic questions to them, which they answered before we moved to the interview questions. The interview was audio recorded, and I assigned code numbers to the participants at the beginning of the interview. The demographic information form (see Appendix D), and the interview guide (see Appendix E) containing the questions I asked as well as the prompts I used for clarification are attached at the end of this dissertation.

Qualitative Data

The overall research question for this study was: What are the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents raising their children in the United States? The participants responded to demographic questionnaires before responding to eight open-ended questions for the interview. After interviewing the first five participants, I noticed a pattern in their answers. However, out of curiosity and excitement for this study I continued with the interview process, hoping to find something different. Also, I continued because I wanted to see if I would get male participants. While waiting to interview more participants, I started to listen to the audio recording of the participants I had already interviewed. I listened to these recordings several times before transcribing them verbatim. Then, I read the transcriptions several times to have a deeper understanding of what my participants were saying.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data for this study, I followed the guidelines suggested by most researchers (Miles et al., 2013). This method of reading and re-reading the transcript several times did not only help me familiarize myself with the data, but also helped me to be totally immersed in the interview transcripts. I transcribed the data verbatim (manually). I listened to each voice recording several times before I started transcription. The first step was reading the transcription for each participant several times and writing down my initial thoughts and impressions concerning each transcript. I extracted the

significant statements, phrases, and descriptions relevant to the study in a table and started to code the themes.

Then, I explored the meaning of each significant statement and started to sort them out in categories. I started organizing the themes into chunks to give me a better understanding of participants' perspectives on the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Then, I shared the transcripts with my professor. I organized and sorted the data to see how well the participants answered the questions. My advisor and I compared notes to see how well the questions were answered. Also, I shared the transcripts with my co-coder one after another in order not to overwhelm her with the volume of data. When I realized I was getting similar stories and no new stories, I knew I had reached a point of saturation. I stopped collecting data and compared notes (themes) with my co-coder. I extracted all significant statements, phrases, and descriptions directly related to the phenomenon from each transcript. This is what is known as descriptive coding. When I can show and summarize the data in a meaningful way (Miles et al., 2013).

Then, I explored the meaning of each significant statement and identified the major themes and patterns emerging from the data. This method is known as pattern coding (Creswell, 2014; Miles et al., 2013). I read repeatedly for commonalities. Then, I organized the clusters of themes to look for the most common themes amongst all participants' statements. This, I achieved by reading, re-reading, and reflecting upon the significant statements in the original transcriptions to get the meaning of participants' statements until the point of saturation. I had my co-coder do the same thing. Then we

compared themes and sorted out the major themes of each participant. All coding was done manually because I wanted to explore the different perspectives of my participants, and to familiarize myself with the data (Marshall & Friedman, 2012).

The Credibility of the Study

For this study, I established credibility through trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is truthful representation of research findings and the ability to check on the findings (Torti, 1991). I achieved this by truthfully telling participants the purpose of the study, how participants were selected, my role as a researcher and the whole research process. Also, participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and all participants' information were kept confidential.

There are four criteria for establishing credibility in a qualitative research study. These criteria are (a) triangulation, (b) member checking, (c) searching for disconfirming evidence, and (d) thick description. I used only three of these criteria in this study.

Triangulation

I employed the participation of a co-coder to validate these results in a process known as triangulation. Triangulation implies using multiple researchers to investigate data to produce comprehensive, and well-developed themes. This helps to add rigor, richness, depth, and validity to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Multiple observers, theories, methods, and materials can be used to achieve this goal. In this study, I employed the participation of my advisor and a co-coder who have experienced knowledge about qualitative research. The co-coder identified themes and patterns. Then,

I met independently with the co-coder to discuss and compare themes from the assigned transcripts. The purpose of doing this is to help in identifying emerging themes (Creswell, 2014).

Member Checking

Member checking also known as participant or respondent validation is one of methods of validating the credibility of qualitative study results. I used this method by asking members to verify the information they had shared with me to be sure I did not misinterpret their experiences and the information was accurate (Creswell, 2014). This enables shared discussions to be accurate and more discussions about the interview that could lead to deeper depth of participants' experiences, and more data (Birt et al., 2016).

Thick Description

In this qualitative study, more credibility was obtained by richly describing my participants' experiences, the personal accounts of my participants and consistently identifying themes in such a way that if the research was done by somebody else, the same results will be achieved. In addition, I used direct quotes from participants.

Finally, I tied together these transformations to make a general description of the experience in a text format. This was the textual description of what was experienced to help the reader understand better what it means to be a Nigerian immigrant single parent raising children alone in the United States (Creswell, 1998).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. I used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore and understand the meaning of this group of persons ascribed to their shared experiences (Creswell, 2014). I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory to structure the questions. I started recruitment after approval from the IRB. I interviewed my participants face-to-face through Zoom. The participants answered the demographic questions before moving on to the interview questions. Each interview was audio recorded, and it lasted 45 minutes. Altogether, I had 14 participants but only 12 qualified for the study. The remaining two were excluded because they did not meet the criteria for the study. Snowball sampling method was used. Participants referred other participants after their own interviews. I did the transcription manually after listening to the audio recording several times.

My advisor, my co-coder, and I separately read the transcriptions, analyzed them for emerging themes, and compared them. I maintained and protected the confidentiality of participants by keeping all information about the study in a secured and locked cabinet in my private study room. All the laptops were encrypted, and password protected the whole time. I maintain credibility by using triangulation, member checking, and thick description to describe my data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter comprises the results of a qualitative phenomenological study designed to explore the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. This chapter included participants' demographics, the qualitative data, the findings, and the summary of results. The research question that guided this study was: What are the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States?

Sample Description

There were 12 participants in this study. The age of the participants ranged from 30 years old to 56 years of age, and Numeric codes 01–012 were assigned to the participants. All participants were Nigerians and lived in different parts of the United States. For example, one of the participants was from New York, one was from Missouri, and one was from Atlanta. All the other participants were from Texas: Austin, Houston, Huntsville, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Denton. This information is helpful to give a better understanding of how the participants were recruited and that they came from around the United States and not just in one geographical area. The demographic information of all participants is represented in Tables 1 and Table 2.

Age of Participants

All participants were assigned code numbers. Six ($n = 6$) of the participants ranged from 30–39 years of age (50%). Three ($n = 3$) were between ages 40–49 years (25%), two ($n = 2$) were 56 years of age (16.66%), and another one ($n = 1$) was 56 years (8.33%). The average age of participants was 42.9, with a standard deviation of 8.3 years.

Number of Years in the United States

All participants had lived in the United States for at least three and half years. Five ($n = 5$) of the participants had lived in the United States between 3.5 years (41.66%), three ($n = 3$) had lived between 10–19 years in the United States (25%), and the other four ($n = 4$) lived in the United States for over 20 years, between 20–29 years (33.33%). The average number of years in the US was 15.4, with a standard deviation of 9.7 years.

Number of Children

All participants had at least one child. Altogether, there were twenty-six ($n = 26$) children. Nine ($n = 9$) were male children (34.61%), and 17 ($n = 17$) were female children (65.38%). Fifteen ($n = 15$) of the children ranged from ages 0–9 (62.50%), eight ($n = 8$) of the children ranged from ages 10–19 years (33.33%), and three ($n = 3$) of the children ranged from 20–29 years of age (25%). The average number of children was 2.2, with a standard deviation of 1. The average age of the children was 10.2, with a standard deviation of 6.5.

Marital Status

All participants were single parents. Three ($n = 3$) were single parents who had never been married (25.00%). Three ($n = 3$) of them were divorced (25.00%), four ($n = 4$) were separated from their husbands while raising their children by themselves (33.33%), one ($n = 1$) was a widow (8.33%), and one ($n = 1$) was raising the children of her deceased brother (8.33%).

Highest Level of Education

Eight ($n = 8$) had undergraduate degrees (66.66%), three ($n = 3$) were graduates and were all professionals (25.00%), and one ($n = 1$) had general education development (GED; 8.33%).

Current Income Level

Two of the participants were not working because one was a graduate student and the other had to quit her job because of childcare issues. Two participants ($n = 2$) earned \$90,000 and above (16.67%), five ($n = 5$) had a current income level of \$30,000–\$44,999 (41.66%). One participant ($n = 1$) earned \$75,000–\$89,999 (8.33%). One ($n = 1$) earned \$45,000–\$59,999 (8.33%), and the last two ($n = 2$) earned \$90,000 and above (16.67%).

Reasons for Moving to the United States

All participants had reasons for moving to the United States. Two ($n = 2$) of the participants came to the United States for educational purposes (16.66%), four ($n = 4$) moved for a better quality of life for themselves and their children (36.36%), one of the participants came through visa lottery ($n = 1$). Another moved to the US with her father

(8.33%). Also, one ($n = 1$) of the participants moved to the United States with the husband, while the last one ($n = 1$) moved to the United States because of her daughter's ill health (8.33%) and was granted asylum at the point of entry.

Religious Affiliation

All 12 participants ($n = 12$) participants were Christians from different denominations (100.00%). All information is listed in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1

Participant's Demographic Information (Age, State, Number of Children, and Educational Level)

Participant	Age	State	# of Children	Children's Age	Educational Level
P01	42	Georgia	1	5	Undergraduate
P02	39	Texas	4	9, 7, 6, 6	Master's
P03	35	Texas	3	7, 5, 4	Master's
P04	35	Texas	1	3	Undergraduate
P05	34	New York	1	5	Undergraduate
P06	56	Texas	1	18, 17	Master's
P07	35	Texas	4	10, 8, 5, 1	Undergraduate
P08	42	Texas	2	8, 6	Undergraduate
P09	48	Texas	3	21, 18, 12	GED
P010	56	Texas	2	18	Undergraduate
P011	38	Missouri	2	11	Undergraduate
P012	52	Texas	2	24, 21	Undergraduate

Table 2*Participant's Demographic Information (# of Years in the United States, and Income)*

Participant	# of Yrs. in the US	Income (\$)
P01	23	75,000 - 89,999
P02	4	Graduate student
P03	10	90,000 – and above
P04	10	Unemployed
P05	8	90,000 – and above
P06	23	30,000 – 44,999
P07	4	30,000 – 44,999
P08	31.5	30,000 – 44,999
P09	25	30,000 – 44,999
P010	16	30,000 – 44,999
P011	5	45,000 – 59,999
P012	25	60,000 – 74,999

Description of Each Participant

Participant 01

Participant 01 was a 42-year-old female who has lived in the United States for 23 years. Her mother brought her and her siblings to the United States as young children. They were running from political persecution in Nigeria after the death of her husband. She has one 5-year-old son. She holds an undergraduate degree and works with one of the IT companies in Georgia and earns between \$75,000–\$89,999. She is a Christian. She has never been married. She stated that right from the beginning, she and her boyfriend decided not to get married because it was more convenient for them to not do so. He lives in Nigeria permanently and she lives here in the United States. Occasionally, she takes the child to Nigeria to see his father.

Participant 02

Participant 02 came as a student to the United States for studies and for the education of her children. She is currently studying for her PhD. The husband lives in one of the Arab countries. She has been in the United States for 4 years raising three children by herself. Their ages are 9 (male), 7-year-old (female), followed by a 6-year-old (female), and the last child is a 6-week-old (female). She is a Christian and she is 39 years old.

Participant 03

Participant 03 was a 35-year-old female who came to Texas 10 years ago. The husband is currently incarcerated, so she is raising her children by herself. They had a

very good relationship before he was incarcerated. The children are ages 7 (male), and two females ages 5 and 4 years old, respectively. She holds a master's degree in Business Administration and currently works as a project manager in one of IT companies in the United States.

Participant 04

Participant 04 was a journalist who lives in Texas. She was married. The marriage did not work so they divorced. She stated, "It was not working, and he was not taking care of my child." Hence, she is raising her child by herself. She has a master's degree in journalism and communications. She has lived in the United States for 10 years. She is currently unemployed because she has no one to take care of her child. According to her, "I don't have any other help, there is nothing else, and I have no government assistance."

Participant 05

Participant 05 was 34-year-old young lady who lives in New York. She holds an undergraduate degree in Business Management. She works for a construction company as a manager and earns between \$90,000 and above. She has lived in the United States for 8 years. She came to the United States with her father for educational purpose. She has 3-year-old female child. The relationship with the spouse did not work so they were never married. She is raising her daughter by herself.

Participant 06

The sixth participant was 54-year-old female who came to the United States for medical reasons. She had cancer and was in treatment for couple of years. She stated she

was very happy that she is cancer free today and gives the glory to God. She has lived in the United States for 23 years. She holds a master's degree and earns between \$30,000–\$44,999. She has never been married but she is raising her late brother's two children ages 18 and 17 who recently moved to the United States after the death of their father. She has never been married.

Participant 07

Participant 07 was a 35-year-old female with four children ages 10 (female), 8 (female), 5 (male) and 1 (male). She moved to the United States because of the maltreatment she received from her husband back in Nigeria. He was unfaithful and did not care for her and the children. She has an undergraduate degree in sociology and makes between \$30,000 and \$44,999. She said because of childcare issues, she has no one to leave her children with. Therefore, she cannot work as much as she would have wanted to. She is a devout Christian.

Participant 08

Participant 08 was a single mother of two young children ages 6 and 8 years old. She was running away from the husband's infidelity and a sick child. The husband did not care about them either. According to her, he was very oppressive and cruel. She is 35 years old with an undergraduate degree. She was admitted unto the US as an asylum seeker. Due to the nature of one of the child's illnesses, she is not able to work as she would have wanted because she is the only caregiver. She does not have any support here

in the United States. She earns between \$30,000 and \$44,999. She has lived in the United States for 3.5 years.

Participant 09

Participant 09 has three children aged 21, 18, and 12. The 18-year-old is a female and is in one of the universities. The 21-year-old who is a male, is also in college, and the youngest is in high school in the United States. Her father brought her to the United States as a young gospel artist. She was married but now divorced because the husband walked away with another woman 10 years ago. She regrets she was unable to go back to school because she was raising her children. Her greatest desire is to pursue further education as soon as she can. She has her GED. She has lived in the United for 25 years.

Participant 10

Participant 10 was 56-year-old Christian female with a master's degree in psychology. She is not working full time. She earns between \$30,000–\$44,999. She is raising her daughter by herself because she is separated from her husband on mutual understanding. She is a devout Christian.

Participant 11

Participant 11 was a female undergraduate degree holder in accounting. She works in one of the accounting firms in Missouri. She is widowed. She came to the United States because of the maltreatment of her in-laws after the death of her husband. She is raising her 5-year-old son by herself. She is 38 years old and a devout Christian. She earns between \$45,000–\$59,999. She has lived in the United States for 5 years.

Participant 12

Participant 12 was a 52-year-old woman. She holds an undergraduate degree in nursing. She is working in one of the hospitals in Texas. She earns between \$60,000–\$74,999. She is Christian and raising her two children between ages 24 and 21 years old. They are both females and in college studying for higher degrees. She has lived in the United States for 25 years. She is divorced from her husband because the marriage was turbulent. She was recruited by a friend for this study.

Research Question

The research question that guided the data collection and analysis was: What are the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States? The interview questions outlined in Table 3 showed the relationship between the immigrants lived experiences and how they are raising their children in the United States.

Table 3

Relationship between Research Question and Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Questions
What are the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Please, tell me the story of how you came to the United States.b. What has life been like for you as a Nigerian immigrant single parent?c. What has been most difficult?d. What has been most helpful?e. What have you discovered in yourself while raising your child/children?f. What experiences /cultural values have influenced the way you raise your children/child?g. What stories are you telling your family about your immigration experiences?h. Would you say you have accomplished your dream for coming to America? If yes, how? If no, how?

Findings

Qualitative Data

The participants responded to some demographic questions and eight interview questions altogether. After interviewing the first five participants, I started to notice a pattern in their answers. However, out of curiosity and excitement for this study I continued with the interview process, hoping to find something different. Also, I continued because I wanted to see if I would have any male participants. While waiting, I started to listen to the audio recordings several times before transcribing them verbatim. I read the transcriptions several times to have a deeper understanding of what my participants were saying.

Saturation

I knew I had reached the point of saturation when I was no longer getting any more calls from participants and no new emerging themes. I found out the audio recordings were becoming repetitive (Creswell, 2014). I continued with transcribing more of the audio recordings verbatim and read through my transcriptions several times. This helped to familiarize myself with the data and a better understanding of participants experiences (Marshall & Friedman, 2012).

I extracted the significant statements, phrases, and descriptions relevant to the study in a table. Then, I explored the meaning of each significant statement and started to sort them out in categories. From the categories, I organized the themes into chunks for clearer understanding of participant's perspectives on the phenomenon. While I was

doing this, I sent the transcript to my co-coder to do the same thing so we could compare themes. I continued to read and to re-read the transcripts for more commonalities amongst the themes. Also, I compared themes with my advisor to find out how best the participants have answered the questions. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis. These four themes were: (1) Struggles with Childcare, (2) Sources of Help (3) Inner Strength, and (4) Cultural Values. They were also subthemes from each of the major themes. The themes and subthemes are represented in the Table 4 below.

Table 4

Representation of Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
1. Struggles with Childcare	a. Absence of Another Adult in the House b. Lack of Family Support c. Juggling Academics with Childcare
2. Sources of Help	a. Help from God b. Connecting with Others
3. Inner Strength	a. I Am a Strong Woman b. Empowerment c. Resilience
4. Cultural Values	a. Morals b. Strict Disciplinary Measures c. Respect d. Christian Values

Presentation of Themes and Subthemes

From the analysis of data, the following four themes and subthemes emerged: Struggles with Childcare, Sources of Help, Inner Strength, and Cultural Values. The subthemes from Struggles with Childcare were Absence of another adult in the house, lack of family support, and juggling academics with childcare. From the second theme of Sources of Help, the following subthemes emerged: Help from God, and connecting with others. The third theme of Inner Strength had the following subthemes: I am a strong woman, empowerment, and resilience. The fourth theme of Cultural Values had the following subthemes: Morals, strict disciplinary measure, respect, and Christian values.

Struggles with Childcare

All participants testified to the fact that life as an immigrant single parent is difficult, and challenges with childcare were a prominent theme that emerged from the data. Migrating to a foreign country for a better life, medical treatment, and other reasons has its benefits and consequences. Most of the immigrants were happy to have come to the United States for genuine reasons but, on arrival what they found was not what they expected. Immigration is a stressful and traumatic process. Apart from the four immigrant single mothers who came with their children to the United States, others had children in the United States. The participants reported that as an immigrant and raising children by themselves in a foreign country at the same time was challenging.

Yeah! So, initially, life, settling here, it wasn't easy at all. (P011)

Nigerian immigrant single parent. It is not an easy road. It it's not, it's been very very very difficult trying to raise kids in the United States. (P03)

From this first theme Struggles with Childcare, three other subthemes emerged. These were: (a) Absence of Another Adult Figure in the House, (b) Lack of Family Support, (c) Juggling Academics with Childcare.

Subtheme 1a: Absence of Another Adult Figure in the House

The findings from the study revealed that the most difficult thing for participants was not having another adult figure in the house to assist with childcare and other activities in the house. Others complained about not having assistance from the government to pay for childcare services. There was no reliable person to leave children with to go to work or go to school. They wanted to be able to care for their children by spending time, be able to work to provide basic needs but this was challenging as illustrated by one of the participants who talked about the lack of help for her daughter.

The most difficult thing is taking care of her. Actually...the most difficult is having to spend time with her with nobody to help me. Let me put it this way, having no help is the most difficult part. (P04)

The same respondent remarked on the challenges of finding someone to care for her daughter when daycare is not an option and her concerns for her daughter's protection.

So, you know, not spending time with her I work seven days a week no time to spend with her which is killing me real bad, it's so unbearable having to keep her with different people when her daycare is closed I have to look for somebody who

can watch her, friends, people who make my hair, you know, just random people, it's so scary, it's so frustrating but I just pray about it, you know, for God to protect her. Every time I can be around her...you know, that's it. Doing it by myself. (P04)

This participant expressed how difficult it was for her not having her husband around.

The most difficult thing I would say is not having someone to talk to regularly as a husband, as a father of the children. Sometimes, you know, the children want a relationship with their father but he's not here physically, and as children, you know, you want to talk to your father, you want to play games, play ball but something like that is not there. It's not there. That's the difficult thing but there's nothing I can do. (P07)

I was not prepared for that. I did not know this was what parenting was all about...Not having a dad around. I am raising a boy. I don't know how to raise a boy. I was not ready for this. It was stressful. It is tough... that aspect of not having a dad around. (P01)

Three respondents commented on the lack of a father figure resulting in them trying to fulfill the roles of both a father and mother.

You know, you're raising the child alone, there's no man, you are trying to be the mom and the dad but you can't do it. (P011)

Where the father supposed to come, I present myself as a father. Even on Father's Day, I talk to them as a father and on Mother's Day, I talk to them as a mother. I play both roles. (P09)

It is hard. The work that would have been done by two people is now being done by one person. (P01)

Subtheme 1b: Lack of Family Support

The participants expressed how difficult it was for them to work full time and raise their children at the same time. Back home in Nigeria, these mothers have aunts, cousins, family members who would be willing to take care of the children for free while they go to work but this is not the case as a single parent in the United States. The participants said it was not easy.

Very, very hard! Very hard in the sense that I don't have any family around me here, my family are all in Dallas, so raising a child by myself and working full time is a very strenuous job...it was very hard working twelve hours, sometimes 16 hours having to keep her in daycare for sixteen hours, twelve hours because I have no family to help me out take her you know, no friends nothing to take care I have to do it on my own. I have to work hard so she has a roof over her head and everything that I think she needs, pay for childcare. (P04)

Whoa I would say the biggest thing is not having my family around here to help me you know in Nigeria; I have my parents, brothers, sisters, cousins' friends people I could just drop off my children. Hmmmmmm all well, not having my

family you know being in a strange culture without my support system is hard.

(P10)

Subtheme 1c: Juggling Academics with Childcare

Most of the participants (58%) reported that having no help was the most difficult task they had to face as single parents. It was tough and challenging for them to get any assistance from anyone. They could not work as they would have wanted. There were no reliable people to take care of their children. The data revealed that the participants had a difficult time juggling their own academics with those of their children. For example, most of the immigrant parents were international students themselves. They must maintain good academic standing for themselves or else they might fall out of status and face immigration issues. Maintaining their own status and ensuring that their children do the same thing was the most difficult thing for some of the immigrant single mothers.

Having to juggle academics and the children. Keep in mind that they are still very young and need direction. You have to ensure they comply in their school, do their homework, they don't come home with bad reports, have to keep up with their own academics and keep up with mine. Not just their academics, even home duties, and home training. It's challenging I must say. I must be very truthful, it's challenging juggling academics with theirs. You have to ensure they're ok and you don't get into trouble because of them. Because it's a different ball game here from where I'm coming from. (P02)

Raising kids and go to school I had to take care of the child and go to school. As a single parent, that is the hardest part, be the father, be the mother, you know everything, just try and balance everything. It is hard, but you got to do what you gotta do. It was very challenging for me and I'm still doing it. (P03)

One respondent commented on the challenge of fitting their education or work around their child's schedule....while I can get back on my feet and do some one or two things and maybe finish school or something or get a better job but it's hard like everything, I have to do has to be around my child schedule. I've gotten good opportunities, but I don't have any help to help me you know. (P012)

Sources of Help

The researcher inquired from the participants about what has been most helpful as single parent. Most of the participants reiterated that due to number and the intensity of the challenges they experienced, it was only through the intervention and the grace of God that they were able to pull through difficult times. Some of the participants reported they had to find a way to connect with other people, especially immigrants like themselves. The following subthemes emerged from this theme: (a) Help from God, and (b) Connecting with Others.

Subtheme 2a: Help from God

With this sub-theme, 68% participants reported that if it was not for the intervention of God, they would not have made it. All participants except two of them said having faith in God was their greatest source of help.

It's quite tough, being here alone you must take all the decisions, be proactive, you have to always think ahead, it's not really been a smooth ride but with God on my side I've been able to scale through many huddles. (P02)

God! Nothing else has been helpful, nothing else. Because I'm working hard uhm I can't say there's anything helpful. I don't have any government assistance. I've tried to get government assistance financially. It's hard, you know, I'm not making so much so there's nothing helpful really, it's just God who just helps you know. (P04)

The help from God has really helped me and made me what I am today. Help from God has helped me to be a strong woman. Knowing that I just look back and I thank God I am able to train the kids and I am still doing it. What else? Well, I pray I pray to God like I said God has been my backbone. (P03)

Subtheme 2b: Connecting with Others

Results indicated that some of the participants believed the help of neighbors was important too. They connected with others to get help when needed the most. They reported that it was necessary to connect with others; whether they were good or bad people, or bad neighbors, it really did not matter. What is important is to differentiate between good and bad people, people you can trust. Since there are no family members around, it makes sense to connect with others to get the help needed.

One of the participants reported, "One thing that really helped is connecting with people and I have tried to be positive...people could trust you; people could

believe in you and yeah that was really helpful, human connection. I know there are some connections, but you have to filter it, there's good and bad people. They treat you but you still meet good people who would really connect and make things easy for you, yea people at the end of the day. (P011)

These three reported how the help of neighbors, friends, and church members was very useful to them, especially, at a time they were experiencing financial crisis.

I was struggling to pay house rent but I know some of my friends stood by me, they really did good, but I thank God I am settled now. At least whatever my kids want, I can do for them. (P07)

The helpful thing is I'm having friends you know, like the lady who does my hair she watches her for me when like, that's just about the only helpful thing I have. I don't have any other help, there's nothing else. (P04)

The availability of very good friends, church members. I could call them up at any time and they always respond. People, resources, and networking were very important. (P02)

There were other participants who normally do not ask for help. However, as they began to experience difficulties while raising their children, they had no choice but to ask for help when needed.

I guess alright I can't do this. Most of all of I am the kind of person who does not ask for help. I like doing things myself. I had to learn to ask for help so I was

never used to asking for help but finding yourself in that situation you had to ask for help. (P10)

One other participant said, as the children were growing up, she started to receive help from them, which a source of relief for her.

Now that they are growing, I am a little bit relieved. Because when they are young, they have to take this one here, this one there. But now that they are grown, they are helping me do some of the work. Where I cannot go they are helping me to be there too. It is a little bit of a relief. (P09)

The participants discussed how the church was very helpful in helping them with the difficulty, they were experiencing as single parents.

Like I said, the church. Our whole family and I say the church. Our pastor really loves them, they are very active in church and our pastor really loves them so working with the church. (P06)

Inner Strength

Most participants discussed how difficult it was being a single mother and an immigrant raising children in the United States. The researcher asked participants what they have discovered about themselves in the process of being a single mother and an immigrant. All the women ($n = 12$) found that they could do things they never thought they could do. In addition, the participants discovered remarkable things about themselves as they raised their children in a foreign land. Three subthemes emerged from

this major theme of inner strength: (a) I am a Strong Woman, (b) Empowerment, and (c) Resilience.

Subtheme 3a: I Am a Strong Woman

Most participants stated they never realized they had so much strength. They were amazed to see what they could accomplish. Some of them said they never knew how much commitment was involved in taking care of a child, and others said, it was a difficult task not having anyone to talk to, to help in decision making. They must make decisions by themselves. They realized that they had the inner strength that needed to be explored.

Wow! A lot! You know, I tell women “You don't know you have an inner strength until something disastrous happens” I really don't wish you know, for people to discover their inner strength due to disaster, no! It should not be so.
(P011)

Oooh hmmm ha! I've discovered I'm the strongest woman on earth! Because if anybody had told me this is how my life would be when I was in Nigeria living very big, living rich! Having a driver, a cook, cleaning everything I would have said it's a lie, I can't do it. I can't do it so I cannot. No way, for what? You never know how strong you are until you're faced with your problems. That's one thing I can say, I just realized how strong I am. (P04)

I discovered I am a strong woman I did not think I could do it. With three kids? no I didn't, this must be a joke. I mean I'm, then back home in Nigeria they used

to call me paperless because I did not like stress, I don't like anything stressful.

Living in the US with no help, has made me very strong. (P03)

This respondent discovered that life was not about her anymore. She knew that something had to change that the life she lived before had to give way for her to accommodate somebody else. She developed patient along the way.

Maybe because I had a child at the age of 37. I was thinking that because I am older, I will have that patient to take care of a child. But at the same time, I realized that I could share... Before my child, I lived my life the way I thought best. I did not care. There was no consideration for anybody. I didn't care... I do not want to share. I lived life without consideration for others. When I had a child, I learned that life is not about me anymore. I learned that there is a little human being that depends on me. This is what I discovered about myself. (P01)

Subtheme 3b: Empowerment

The women in this study were amazed and perplexed about what they could do without their spouses. Nigeria is a patriarchal society where men are the bread winners, and the head of the family. The women are subjective to them, and they demand obedience. Hence, women are mostly home makers whose primary duties are to take care of the children and their husbands. Husbands provide the needs of their wives. The women never needed to work. On arriving to America, they realized that the situation

was different. In speaking about their empowerment, some women commented on their ability to do the “impossible.”

Hmm I discovered that I could do all things if I set my heart to do it. Before now I never thought I'd be able to juggle those activities even till my late father died he kept wondering “how is she coping with all these?” that when I was at home. I appeared to be very fragile and suddenly, he hears I'm taking care of kids all alone in a strange country that “how is she doing it?” There's an adage which says, “You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only option you have” and I think that played out in my situation. (P02)

Hmmm I've realized that I can do anything. Every limit I've ever set for myself, this situation has helped me throw it out the door. I can do anything! Funny enough this morning on my way back from dropping her off at school, I don't know why but I was telling myself “Wow! You're a phenomenal woman. You're a powerhouse! Only you can handle this child, taking care of her!” I've learnt there is absolutely nothing I cannot do. No matter how hard it is. The word “impossible” does not exist with me and that's what I've learnt from this experience and that's what I tell everybody, after the rain comes the rainbow and I feel I'm in my rainbow moment now where a painful experience has become one of the most eye-opening experiences. (P05)

One respondent commented on her empowerment specifically in the context of being in the United States and how she thought there were more possibilities for her in the United States over Nigeria.

Ah! I really noticed a lot because there are some things that I'd feel like in Nigeria I can't do, I'm doing it here. I pay rent, I got a car for myself, in my wildest dream I don't think I can do such a thing in Nigeria. I can be able to say "Ok, this is what I can send to my family and they're comfortable" I can't do all that in Nigeria but here I can do more than that here in the United States. (P07)

Subtheme 3c: Resilience

Another respondent stated, she was amazed how much she could accomplish for herself and her children in the absence of her husband. She was determined not to disappoint herself and her children. She focused on her goals which led to more self-confident. She was resilient after her ex-left her for another woman.

What I discovered! First and foremost, when my ex-left, I thought I could not do anything but after some years. I can see now that I can do a lot of things by myself, with focus, determination. Determination but my determination is that my kids be where they are supposed to be. That way I can have more freedom! And I feel more confident in myself than when their father was with me. (P09)

One of the participants who had lost her husband stated that women in similar situations should not be discouraged.

For single moms over there, it could be frustrating, it could be a lot. Do not waste your life trying to figure it out. You can turn back and not just sit there... You have a life; you have a purpose. You can still achieve everything while raising your kids. I just want to tell you. It can be hard, but you can do it. There is still hope to find love again, find your purpose, find joy, and find happiness. Do something you love to do, touch lives ...while you keep taking care of your children. (P011)

Cultural Values

Some aspects of the cultural differences between Nigeria collectivist culture and American's individualist culture have been of great concern to immigrants in general, and Nigerian parents. In this study, the researcher wanted to find out how these Nigerian immigrant single parents were handling this aspect of raising children alone in a foreign culture. Nigerian parents take the issue of respect and disciplined very seriously because they believe if they do not teach children these values, the children might bring disgrace to themselves, the family, and the society. When the participants responded to the questions, "What cultural values and experiences influence the way you raise your children or child? Most of them stated that they would prefer to raise their children the way their mothers raised them the Nigerian way, which is totally different from the American culture. They attributed their success in life to the values instilled in them by their parents. They complained about the American culture where children are given too

much freedom. From this fourth theme, Cultural Values, one can distinctively hear the voices of the participants and the emphasis on moral values, strict disciplinary measures, respect, and Christian values.

Well, I do not fancy the way the kids are raised here. I noticed certain things the kids do here that I could not do when I was younger. For example, if my mother tells me to do something, I dare not question her, but I find my children questioning me. “Why must it be that way?” “Why can’t we just have peace?” “Why can’t we just wake up and lazy around?” Lazy around?” No! You can’t lazy around about. You must be productive. These are cultural differences I do not like. (P02)

I know culture here in America is totally different from where I come from. You know, they say charity begins at home. Not to say that their culture is bad, but I can see why the kids turn out the way they are because one is alone as a single mum. So, my cultural values I tend to impose on her so that she will not go way ward or astray. (P04)

Subtheme 4a: Morals

The participants believed they needed to raise their children the way they were raised in their pre-immigration days because of the moral principles in the Nigerian culture. They insisted that children are not mature enough to decisions on their own in a foreign culture for fear of going astray. The participants do not believe in early emancipation of their children as practiced in American culture. Nigerian parents believe

they are there to guide their children until they are matured enough to take care of themselves.

When you move here from back home and you come here it's different, its different, but it's a good thing we still have values, morals, and all of that, irrespective of the environment, as an African mother raise by African parents, I still have these morals. I must be able to inculcate these morals, especially morals, you must respect people. You must understand that if you want freedom but there's price to pay for freedom. (P011)

Most especially the way we were raised in Nigeria, that moral lesson, and seeing the way people train their children here and allow their children to grow up, I can't train my children that way, no. I must train them the way we were trained in Nigeria. (P07)

I know culture here in America is totally different from where I come from. You know, they say charity begins at home. Not to say that their culture is bad, but I can see why the kids turn out the way they are because one is alone as a single mum. So, my cultural values I tend to impose on her so that she will not go way ward or astray. (P04)

It's not because I'm trying to be mean, it's not because I'm trying to bring my African morals, but that moral has also helped me as a person, and I strongly believe that that moral will also help you irrespective of the fact that we are on American soil. (P011)

Subtheme 4b: Strict Disciplinary Measures

All participants stated they believe in strict disciplinary measures by which they were raised, and they are determined to instill or pass on the same disciplinary measures unto their children. Nigerian immigrant single parents believe they are successful in life because of the strict discipline enforced by their own parents.

My mother was a very strict woman. She was paramilitary. When we were growing up. We thought she was our stepmother. She told me that the house we had was for her and not for me. She will say I want to train girls who can stand on their own. My mother will seat us in the morning. You will get up and do your chores... irrespective of your age, she is coming back from work, and everything is in order... She does not want to hear stories. (P08)

I'm a Nigerian and we are mostly uncertain. I mean that was the problem, life is more promising, but I had to let my children know that mean back talk is not acceptable. (P010)

I may not be flogging my children but that little fear I had to put it in them so they can take one or two things out of it. That's the only thing. The way the children talk back to their parents, my children can never do that. The way they're being saucy. I didn't train my children that way. (P07)

They must know the culture and they must be disciplined. (P03)

Subtheme 4c: Respect

Nigerian immigrant single parents, and Nigerian parents in general take the issue of respect very seriously. In the Nigerian culture, you are expected to respect your elders. Even if that person is a minute older than you. Automatically, you are bound to give that person the respect he or she deserves. Therefore, coming to America, seeing children call their parents and older or elderly persons by name is considered the highest level of disrespect. Talking back when an older person is talking to you is seen as very disrespectful as well. All participants touched on the issue of respect except one who said she does not mind her child expressing herself because she wants her to have a voice, to be able to stand for herself.

I teach my child to respect elders. It is still here in the U.S kids are taught to express themselves. In our culture it is considered being rude... expressing yourself comes across as being rude... I will teach my child to express yourself but will remind them you are a Nigerian. You are a Nigerian and I still want you to maintain your culture. (P01)

Though we're living in America, we were brought up in Nigeria and respect is a big thing with us, be respectful of people, being on time, available, another thing, timed, courteous, Be respectful and courteous towards people development. All those are values we learned at home. Respecting not just your elders, but people in general whether they are older or younger than you. (P06)

In terms of respect and children talking back to their parents, only one of the participants had a different view. She stated that she does not mind her child talking back to her because she wants to train her to have a voice of her own. She insisted that though she was well trained by her mother. She refused to train her child the same way. She has decided to train her child differently.

To be honest with you, I'll say none. I'm trying to raise her differently from the way my mom raised me. My mom did not raise me badly at all, she raised me very well, and the only thing I'm trying to do is make sure she (my daughter) has a voice. African mom's resort to "shut up! Keep quiet! Don't talk back to me!" but I allow my daughter to express herself so that she's able to talk to me even if she's mad. I don't want her to think "oh I can't talk to my mom" that's what I'm teaching her. I'm just trying to train her to know that she has a voice because during therapy I realize that was something that made me stay in my relationship just a little bit longer, allowing someone to take my voice from me and not being able to speak up for myself, even at work, in life. I want her to know she can always speak up for herself. (P05)

One other participant disagreed with the opinion of children having a voice.

What kind of voice do children need to have when they do not know what is right for them at such an early age? Nigerians do not believe in the early emancipation of their children. For fear that they might make costly mistakes that will ruin their lives and future. (P011)

Subtheme 4d: Christian Values

For Nigerian parents, Christianity is a big issue. Many believe in the omnipotence of God. They believe that without God, nothing can be achieved in life. Christian Nigerians parents, including single ones, quote the bible, which says, “Train a child the way he should go and when he is grown, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Therefore, it is not surprising that they want their children to imbibe the same Christian values that they hold. The participants had the following to say:

I was raised in the Christian way. For my children, I am training them that way, to make sure they read the Bible, the scriptures. We worship together. We pray together. We have a fear of God. So, when they are leaving the part that God has destined for them. They need to know, I need to go back. (P08)

I do not use any culture other than the Bible, than God. Because if I want to teach my children my culture, where I come from, they will not understand. And if I focus on American culture alone, I am going to mislead them. And they do not have a father that can tell them when they do something wrong. Don't do this or do not move like this. So, I use the Bible as my guide. (P09)

One of the participants appealed to Nigerian immigrant mothers to hold on to their Christian values and ensure that their children turn out great.

Hold on to the values you have. You know your Christian values. Make sure that your children turn out great because of your Christian values. These are work

ethic and charity, they say, begins from home. Be kind, Christian values, church, kindness, be nice to people. (P06)

Other Contrary Views

Despite the general opinion amongst Nigerian immigrant single parents and Nigerian immigrant parents in general, a few parents still believe the contrary. Even though Nigerian immigrant single parents detest some aspects of the American culture, some of the participants still think they could accept some other elements of the American culture they feel is good for them and reject the negative aspects. Two participants proposed that parents choose those aspects of the American culture they think are suitable for their children's growth and development and leave the others they do not like or want their children to imbibe.

I have been able to learn here to take the good and leave the bad. Every country is the same thing. In Nigeria, too, you accept the good; you leave the bad. So, you don't have to take everything, so I take the good part of it, and I filter it or like, you know what, I don't need this I don't need that. I choose which aspects of the culture would make me a better person. So, for me the culture and the moral are very key. (P011)

The second participant also believed that it does not make sense to force children to imbibe the Nigerian culture in a foreign country because they no longer live in Nigerian. They left Nigeria many years ago. Why not give the children a chance to make their own

choices? For this participant she has decided to adjust to the American culture so she can have peace in her home because of her own experiences.

When it comes to culture, we have two different cultures, we have emerged them where they live, and trying to get your culture to them is a challenge, a lot of challenge. A lot of crying and answering questions, mummy what's wrong with it? It has been a battle. Once a while I seat back, I say God you gave me these children, I cannot take them back to Nigeria, this is where they live... and I try to adjust. (P012)

There were aspects of the Nigerian culture that were not addressed. One of the participants spoke extensively about the issue of shame and stigma. Nigerian culture frowns at the prospect of a woman divorcing her husband or raising her child children by herself. Nigerian is a patriarchal society where the man is the head of the family and authority figure in the home. However, the women in this study have broken that taboo, the stigma of shame by deciding to stick it out by themselves, and to raise their children without their husbands. One of the participants stated, she knows better now that it does not matter what anyone thinks about her situation. She is happy to accept her situation and to see her child as a blessing and nothing else, not a thing to be ashamed of.

The beginning was hard for me because of the whole stigma that comes with being a single parent, I wish I knew better, I wish I knew what I know now that the most important thing is being a mom. Whether single mom or with a husband, the blessing is the child. (P05)

My Reflections about the Study

One of the qualities of qualitative study is the ability of the researcher to reflect on his or her experiences throughout the process of the study. At the beginning of the study, it was hard to get participants because I kept waiting for somebody to call me from the flyers that was sent out but there was none. The first few calls I received were from the general emails that were sent from the school listservs; and they did not qualify for the study. I requested them to share the email with their parents. They said they would.

I felt disappointed when I did not hear from anyone. Then when I started receiving calls, the participants were not qualified for the study. Anyway, I waited for the right person to call. When I started getting participants who qualify, scheduling became difficult because it was difficult to get the right time that worked for us. It was like a miracle when I started receiving calls, the people I interviewed, referred other persons to me as well. It was an interesting experience. The participants were eager to share their stories. I guarded myself so I did not put on my counseling hat while I was asking the interview questions. I tried to just listen as much as I could. After hearing the stories of these ladies, I was very touched. Some of them, to be honest, I really cried because they were crying too. As I listened to the stories of these ladies, it was like I was seeing myself in their experiences. At that point I remembered I needed to bracket my own experiences concerning the phenomenon I was investigating by pulling myself and not let my emotions take control of me.

My perspective about single parenting changed when I asked the women “What did you discover about yourself while raising your children?” The more I listened to their stories, the more I felt empowered by what they were saying. I never knew single parents had so much strength in them. Despite their experiences, they were ready to keep bouncing back, it didn’t really matter to them what they were going through at that time. This study and the experiences of these women have changed my concept of what it truly means to be a single parent, an immigrant, raising children in foreign country. It is just a lot to go through. However, I admired their courage and what they had to tell other ladies, “Not to ever give up.” The road might be rough, but wait, though it tarries, it must surely come.

I appreciate these women and the impression they have made in my life. I am seriously thinking of starting a single parent’s group where ladies will serve as a source of support for each other. Women need groups like that. The women are doing an amazing job. Though it is hard raising children, they realize it is what it is, so they must do their best every time. The more I listened to the tapes, the more I heard the voices of empowerment. I will keep hoping and praying the ladies will not forget how strong they truly are.

Summary

This chapter presented the results from the phenomenological study of the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological theory guided the study. Twelve participants took part in this study. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. My advisor and my co-coder were the only ones who had access to the transcription, and they compared notes with me. Four themes and subthemes emerged from the data which helped to give a better and deeper understanding of what it means to be a Nigerian immigrant single parent raising children in a different culture and environment

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. A phenomenological approach and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological theoretical framework guided this study. I conducted a semi-structured audio-recorded face-to-face interview using Zoom web conferencing with 12 participants. I administered demographic questionnaires (see Appendix D) and eight interview questions to the participants (see Appendix E). The interview was audio-recorded on a password-protected and encrypted laptop. The interview lasted for 45 minutes. I listened to the audio-recorded conversation several times, and all interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed for themes. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected.

In this chapter, the findings are discussed, and conclusions drawn. Implications and limitations are noted, along with recommendations for future research, marriage and family therapists, and other mental health professionals working with this population. The research question that guided this study was: What are the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant raising their children in the United States? Four themes emerged

from this research question. These were: (a) Struggles with Childcare, (b) Sources of Help, (c) Inner Strength, and (d) Cultural Values.

Some of the themes from the analysis were consistent with previous findings concerning immigrants' experiences in a foreign land, and others were not. In confirmation of prior studies, the participants in this study stated the following reasons for coming to the United States: (a) education for themselves and their children, (b) better quality of life for themselves and their children, (c) medical treatment, (d) change of location, (e) fleeing from family oppression and maltreatment, (f) government political instability, and (g) religious unrest (Marchetti-Mercer, 2016; Onwubu, 2007; Paat, 2013). Whatever the reason for relocation, immigration is a traumatic and stressful adventure (Slonim-Nevo et al., 2009).

In addition, due to Nigeria's economic hardship and political instability, Gramlich (2020) reported that many Nigerians have considered leaving their country of origin. In a survey, 45% of Nigerian adults said they planned to move to another country sometime within the next five years. However, the participants in this study stated they are here in the United States because of the reasons above and are ready to work hard to create a better quality of life for themselves, their children, and their families back home no matter what it takes (Gramlich, 2020).

Discussion of Themes and Subthemes

The data collected from the participants are presented and discussed below. The data was pooled into emerging themes and subthemes as discussed in Chapter 4.

Struggles with Childcare

In this study, childcare services were a huge concern for all participants who stated that taking care of their children was a struggle. As immigrants and single mothers, it was not easy to pay for childcare services. Most of the participants reported a lack of government assistance. Others have not regularized their immigration documents to get good jobs. Therefore, they could not work a salaried or good-paying job to pay for childcare services. Instead, they worked under the table jobs as well (Onwujuba et al., 2015). Consequently, they were not able to meet their children's needs. The socioeconomic status of the immigrant parents affected the well-being of the children (Gordon, 1998; Onwujuba et al., 2015).

Except for immigrants who migrated to the United States as asylum, most immigrants have no work permit or access to other benefits like child assistance benefits. Immigration laws on the legal status, designations, and visas significantly affect family compositions, education, healthcare, housing, employment opportunities, and settlement in the United States (Onwujuba & Nesteruk, 2021).

Absence of Another Adult in the House

One of the most significant challenges the women in this study experienced was the absence of another adult in the house. The women expressed the painful process of having to make decisions by themselves. Some of the participants lamented the absence of a reliable person to stay with the children, the lack of a dad to play games with the children, the lack of a role model, and supervision for boys. One of the participants

confessed that she never realized how difficult it was to be a parent. She was asking herself. “How do I raise a son?” Others said they missed their husbands, somebody to talk to, share house chores and bills with, and encourage them when they are not doing well. Sometimes, single mothers cannot afford to take on full-time employment because of role overload.

Heinrich (2014) investigated the impact of unemployment or low-paying jobs on child development. Results indicated that levels of life satisfaction are lower when young people or children perceive their parents' negative status. Also, in a recent study, findings indicated that poorer mental health among single mothers attributed to socioeconomic stress. Single mothers experience more financial anxiety, depression, sadness, and overall fatigue exacerbated by working low-paying jobs to afford daycare for their children (Whistenhunt et al., 2019).

Research findings indicate that single parents experience more significant hardship than traditional families, higher rates of suicide, and other mental health issues (Meier et al., 2016). In this study, one of the participants narrated her experiences when her child was sick and admitted to the hospital. After a week, the child was not getting better. She had no one else to take care of her second son. The frustration of her situation was so overwhelming that she contemplated suicide. She said, “I better end it all by just driving off the bridge.” As she was thinking these thoughts, her 6-year-old son, who was with her, said, “Mummy, do you know I love you?” At that point, she regained

consciousness of her thoughts. These are some of the stories from single mothers all over the world, especially immigrants.

Lack of Family Support

Most of the women in this study expressed frustration with the lack of family support. Some of them wished they could bring their family with them to the United States for childcare purposes. This issue of childcare services is not peculiar to only Nigerian immigrant single parents. Amayo (2009) reported in his study how Nigerian immigrants in general expressed concerns about childcare services. Nigerian immigrants will either bring in their aunts/uncles from Nigeria to babysit for them, or they will employ the services of young adults who have finished high school to babysit. This method of service is considerably cheaper than paying for childcare services elsewhere. In other extreme cases, husbands and wives may decide that one of them will work while the other will stay at home to take care of the children. Single mothers do not have the same opportunity, and family members are not available to fill that void.

Driver and Amin (2019) reported that social and family support are protective factors against mental health stress in their study. Perceiving the availability of support during stressful times helps reduce stress, facilitate adjustment to life circumstances, improve psychological well-being, and reduce depression and anxiety often associated with immigrants. These findings confirm the results of this study. Some of the participants who had both social and family support reported that they fared better than those who did not (Driver & Amin, 2019).

Juggling Academics with Childcare

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explicitly explained how the ecosystem affects a child's development. In his bioecological theory, Bronfenbrenner proposed how individuals grow and develop within a nested set of structures that can influence their development. The level of integration of individuals into society will depend on the level of interaction within the environment they live.

For example, the exosystem represents the parents' workplace even though the child seldom goes there. Whatever happens at the workplace will affect the child because the parent works there. For instance, if a single mother's job offers childcare services, both the child and the mother will benefit from these services. Hence, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1979) guided this study because it helped to buttress the importance of the interaction and collaboration between the individuals (single mothers) and their environments.

The exosystem represents neighborhoods, extended family members, school boards, mass and social media, government, and social agencies. Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicated that the environment in which an individual lives affects the individual affects just as the individual affects the environment. Therefore, an individual's interaction with their environment will determine their level of growth and development. By implication, this means that single mothers need to make considerable efforts to interact with their communities by reaching out to organizations and helping agencies in the exosystems in order to meet their needs. Furthermore, this type of networking can facilitate collective

parenting, buffer against the negativity associated with the oppositional subculture, reinforce family values, lower behavioral problems, and negative influences from the dominant culture (Paat, 2013).

The majority of the participants expressed concerns about how difficult it was to raise a child in a new environment without jobs and childcare facilities. In this study, one of the participants had to quit her job to stay home to take care of their children. Another expressed concerns about how difficult it was to juggle academics with childcare. Using Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979), he explained how single mothers are affected by several nested structures in society. Therefore, all the networks in the exosystem can come together collectively to find a solution to this phenomenon. As the women work hard to raise trustworthy and reliable citizens, government, communities, social and financial institutions should take up the responsibility to provide services for these single parents raising children by themselves.

Sources of Help

In this study, I wanted to find out what was helpful to participants by asking, "What was helpful?" All respondents stated that God was their most significant source of strength. They reiterated that the power to raise their children successfully was from God. Nigerians are God-loving and fearing people who believe that God controls the universe and all the affairs of man. With God, everything is possible. Hence, Nigerians call on God to intervene in their lives whenever they are passing through difficult times. This faith in God was evident in all the participants' answers in this study. This result is

consistent with comments made by another African immigrant parent (participant) in another study that “My decisions are inspired by my Christian beliefs” (Amayo, 2009, p. 89).

Help from God

Faith in God is evident in the lifestyle of almost all Nigerians. Nigeria is the seventh most populous country of the world, with 206 million people. The population is almost evenly split between the Muslims (50%) and Christians (48.1%). Nigeria is the world's fifth-largest Muslim population (90 million) and the world's sixth-largest Christian population (87million). They have the ultimate belief in the intervention of God (Christians) and Allah (Muslims) in all their endeavors. In this study, all the participants’ believed God was interested in their affairs, and their success depended on Him. The wisdom, strength to overcome obstacles, and knowledge to accomplish their dreams without their husbands came from God (Gramlich, 2020; Habecker, 2016). In addition, the participants made references to their pastors (God’s elect) on earth and how they were so helpful.

Connection with Others

When people migrate, families are separated. The loss of contact and relationship with family while striving to settle in a foreign land is always a stressful experience (Rowatt et al., 2020). According to Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, stressors directly impact every member of the system, especially children. These stressors affect children's social, physical, mental, and school functioning when they realize parents

cannot cope (Patel et al., 2016). Hence, the women in this study stated that connecting with others was of tremendous help to them. Some of them indicated how the church members, the pastor, and friends rescued them when they could not pay their rent.

Connecting with others helped negate the effects of stress and childcare experiences by immigrants. Onwujuba et al. (2015) indicated that Nigerian parents join several African organizations and clubs to overcome stressors. They share and exchange ideas about what is going in society. These organizations plan childcare services, children's education, learning the English Language, and other activities. As a collectivist culture, Nigerians believe they are each other's keepers, especially in a foreign land. They understand the relevance and the importance of collaboration suggested by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory by taking advantage all the nested structures in the exosystem as coping mechanisms (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2001).

Inner Strength

The women in this study said they never knew they could handle raising children independently. It was beyond their wildest imagination that they would do this, even in a foreign land, without an adult partner. Nigerians believe in cultural collectivism and extended family practices where child-rearing is considered the job of the whole community and not just for single parents alone. In Nigeria, childrearing is a jointly shared affair between a man and a woman (Onwujuba et al., 2015).

I Am a Strong Woman

Nigeria is a patriarchal society where men are the head of the family, and the women are generally cared for by their husbands. The men are the breadwinners while the women nurture and care for the children. Women are homemakers (Amayo, 2009; Onwujuba et al., 2015).

In all honesty, Nigerian men are caring. The majority of the men, if they could afford it, prefer that their wives do not have to work. They are providers because they take their traditional roles very seriously. Because the women have been spoiled by their husbands, it was very challenging when they found themselves in difficult circumstances, like immigration and raising children by alone. They found themselves coping and raising children by themselves; they were amazed. Hitherto, this is something they never thought could ever happen. The women discovered something new about themselves. They could survive the pressures, society's demands, and raise children in a new environment without help from husbands and extended family members. To the women, this is an extraordinary achievement. Now, they know they can achieve anything they set their hearts to do. One woman said, "I can do the impossible."

Empowerment

All the participants in the study had one thing or the other to say to the women who are single mothers that they should never underestimate the power they have and the influence they have over their children. To the Nigerian woman, there is no emancipation age for their children until they are fully matured and ready to stand on their own feet

(Onwujuba, 2015). The women stated that if children were left by themselves without supervision, they could bring shame to the family if they fall through the cracks.

Nigerian parents will prefer to support their children to develop personally, financially, socially, and professionally to the extent that is mutually responsible (Amayo, 2009).

The women in this study were exemplary in their determination not to let themselves and their children down in the face of adversities. They realized that if they do not help themselves, no one will. They picked up themselves with courage and did the best they could for themselves and their children. One of the participants said when her ex-husband left her and walked away with another woman, she did not know what to do. She could not pay her rent and she was financially stranded. She had an accident with her car. She was confused and lost. She would cry every day. But one day, she was in the shower crying because she did not know what to do. Then, she heard an inner voice asking her “Why are you crying?” The voice was telling her “Suppose you were a man with three children, and you lost your wife, who will take care of the three kids? Will you leave your kids starve to death? So, now you are both the man and woman of the house. You are playing both roles now. So, pick up yourself and do what is necessary for you and your kids to survive.” Immediately, she stopped crying and started to plan the next move to take. After that day, she never cried again. Her self-esteem and confidence rose to a higher level.

Sometimes, adversity happens to bring out the best in you. The women in this study said, they never knew they were strong until they found themselves alone. Some of

them were in abusive relationships. The men did not care for them and their children. They had to escape from the oppressive environment they found themselves. They took charge of their own lives and succeeded without their husbands. The researcher is not any way endorsing divorce or separation of families. However, these women found themselves in an unhealthy environment, they had to make a choice to free themselves and their children from continuous abuse and take charge of their lives.

Samuel-Dennis et al. (2013) defined empowerment as personal control over decisions in all domains of life. For women who have been exposed to any kind of violence, empowerment is the ability to successfully access skills and use available resources for effective coping and personal development. This is what the women in this study have exhibited. One of the participants said, “Determination, determination, to get my kids to where they are supposed to have kept me on. Now, I feel more confident about myself without my ex-husband.” She can provide for her children’s need and take good care of herself and children.

The women in this study are calling on other single mothers to be proactive like the Nigerian women in taking care of their children, so that domestic violence, rape, and other different types of abuse will be eradicated from our society. The result from this study serves as source of empowerment to encourage all single mothers to never to give up, to realize that they are powerful and phenomenal women with extraordinary strength, capable of doing and achieving anything they make up their minds to do. In fact, one of the women said, women are strong beings with strength, but the Nigerian single women

are “extra.” They possess extra strength. This report is consistent with another research study which indicated that sensitive and responsive parenting has a long-lasting impact on children’s overall health, educational success, psychological well-being, behavioral functioning, and social adjustment in the society (Salami et al., 2017).

Resilience

One thing that stood out in this study, which I did not find in the other studies, was the issue of resilience amongst single immigrant parents. These participants were amazed at how they were able to bounce back from all the adversities they experienced: divorce, separation, oppressive relationships, and traumatic immigration experiences. The way they successfully rebuilt their lives was transformative. I asked the women, “What have you discovered about yourself raising your children or child by yourself?” They said, they discovered that they could do anything, and that they were strong and powerful women with extraordinary strength and courage. They bounced back from adversities. These women did not know they were endowed with such power and strength.

In addition, the women in this study confirmed the stigma attached to being a single mother today. The findings from the study are consistent with previous studies, which indicate that single mothers are not respected in the society. Single mothers face rejection and discrimination from society, culture, and religion (Essien & Bassey, 2012). However, the women in this study are not deterred. For example, the women described how they dealt with cultural holidays like Mother’s and Father’s Day. One mother said, “On Father’s Day, I tell them happy Father’s Day and on Mother’s Day, I tell them happy

Mother's Day. I talk to them both as a father and a mother. I play both roles." In all her sufferings, another participant said, the hardest part was the stigma attached to being a single parent, but she was able to overcome. She reiterated that whether a single mom or dad, the job is tough, but the child remains a blessing. She said that "on Mother's Day, nobody will say single mothers raise your hand. Every woman who has a child is a mother. It does not matter whether you are a single mother or a mother with a husband. A mother is a mother." This participant's lived experiences confirmed the results from the study conducted by Daryanani et al. (2016) that "single mothers are not inherently inferior parents relative to cohabiting mothers, rather their parenting practices are often compromised by a myriad of demands and stressors" (p. 1414).

Finding themselves in a foreign land alone, these single mothers had to do what they needed to do and adjusted to their circumstances. They must become role models for their children, work hard to educate themselves, retrain themselves for jobs they already have degrees for, and get demanding jobs that would enable them to care for their children. This study indicates that Nigerian immigrant single parents are proactive parents. They care for, protect, and supervise their children (Amayo, 2009).

Cultural Values

In this study, 90% of the participants were concerned about the way children are raised in the United States compared to the Nigerian collectivism, where everybody helps to raise the child (Onwujuba, 2015). The United States practice individualistic culture where autonomy is accorded to the individual at the young age of 18. The participants

disagree with this aspect of American culture where children are allowed to express themselves and call their parents by name. Nigerian immigrant parents, like other African immigrants, fear that the values they have taught their children may be lost if they are given excessive freedom, or if they allow their children to mingle with other non-African friends. They discourage their children from American hip-hop culture, and to ensure that their children are sufficiently Africanized, they use transitional time outs where children are sent to relatives or grandparents to be trained the African way (Habecker, 2016; Yenika-Agbaw, 2009). Parents are sometimes torn between two worlds as they struggle to balance both cultures while rearing their children in a different socio-cultural context (Li, 2009).

Morals

The participants emphasized that they are raising their children the way their parents raised them because the way they were raised has contributed to their success in life. One participant said she was very willing to send her children back home to learn some morals if they do not abide by instructions. When they turn 18, they can come back to study here. Therefore, it is either they abide by the rules or go back to Nigeria. This confirms previous research findings that indicate that Nigerian parents send their children back home to learn the Nigerian culture before coming back to the United States (Bledsoe & Sow, 2011).

Strict Disciplinary Measures

In this study, Nigerian immigrant single parents strove to maintain some aspects of their own culture by following the way their mothers trained them because they do not want their children to end up on the streets in the long run. These women believe in strict discipline while the children are still young, so that America does not suffer for the consequences of unruly behavior in the future. The findings in this study are consistent with the findings from other studies that Nigerian parents practice an authoritarian parenting style not only with the attempt to shape, control, and evaluate the behaviors and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set of standards of conduct, but also, for the preservation of order and a traditional structure that is highly valued (Habecker, 2016; Onwujuba et al., 2015).

Children will not feel secure with a parent who is easily overwhelmed, confused and who cries over any act of misbehavior from his or her child. Instead, when parents apply discipline and restrictions without violence in ways that helps the child understand the consequences of their actions, then valuable lessons are learned. The children do not see these limits as punishment, but as a way of molding and building character in the society (Ginott, 1969).

Respect

Nigerians come from an “adult-centric” (Onwujuba et al., 2015) culture. Children are expected to greet their parents, elders, and all authority figures, even if that person is just a day older in age, social, educational, and marital status. This might be difficult for

other cultures to accept. Hence, Nigerian immigrant single parents preferred to adhere to these traditional ways of raising their children back home where children show respect for elders by not talking back at them, or interrupting others when they speak. Nigerians see giving too much freedom to children as excessive and unacceptable. For example, Nigerian immigrant parents are not comfortable with their children calling them by their first names or talking back when they are corrected. It is considered a sign of disrespect and disregard for higher authority (Adewunmi, 2015; Onwujuba, 2015).

Christian Values

The participants in this study indicated how the Christian values they learned while growing up and being taught by their mothers was very helpful in surviving hardship. Hence, they are adamant in ensuring they instill the same values into their children to help them face any kind of adversity that would come their way. This finding confirms the results from initial study which indicated that African parents living in more individualistic Western societies often look up to African immigrant churches to provide a community of mentors and support along with spiritual guidance. In addition, African parents socialize their children into churches as a form of security, to teach them to turn to God as their primary source for coping with challenges, for better understanding of themselves, and for future endeavors. Therefore, church is a form of social support for other activities and rites of passage like birthday celebrations, child dedication, naming ceremonies, birth, and death ceremonies (Habecker, 2016). Nigerians use church as coping mechanism for stressful periods of their lives, especially immigrant single parents,

to alleviate sufferings and barriers that makes it possible for them to become more effective mothers in the good of society.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. The study provided an understanding of how Nigerian immigrant single parents are navigating the process of raising their children in a bi-cultural environment. Nigerian immigrant single parents preferred to raise their children in the culture in which they were raised. The parents insisted that their children must imbibe their own culture even though the children may prefer American culture.

The participants gave cogent reasons for insisting their children learn their own culture. For example, the participants believe that giving autonomy to children at a young age is detrimental. They emphasized that children should not be left to make their own decisions before they are ready to do so.

All participants in this study agreed and testified that immigration is a stressful and traumatic process. In addition, raising children in the United States as single parents is extremely difficult and challenging, but they will not give up until they accomplish their purpose for coming to the United States. However, they need the support of the federal and state governments, public and private agencies, and the communities, to provide them with childcare services that are affordable to enable them to have time to be productive in the society.

Finally, the women in this study discovered in themselves strength they never imagined they had. The challenges they faced raising their children in a foreign land brought out the best in them. The participants were grateful to discover their strength and they are encouraging other women not to look down on themselves in times of adversity. They encourage other women to be resilient because single mothers are women with extraordinary strength.

Implications of this Study

The result from this study reveals that Nigerian immigrant single parents are struggling with childcare opportunities, so they could not work and provide for their children. It is one of the greatest challenges preventing single mothers (not only Nigerians) from being productive citizens in the society. In addition, the findings shows that it is time to eradicate the stigma attached to single parents in general. These women reestablished from their narratives that single mothers are strong women who are just overburdened with too many demands. Instead of the stigma attached to their status and family structure, society should find a solution to alleviate their sufferings.

For the society at large, the women reiterated that immigration is an issue in the country right now. Immigrants are already here; the situation is not going to get any better any time soon. America has always been and will continue to be the home of immigrants. Therefore, why not provide services for immigrants, especially single mothers so that they could work and contribute to paying taxes to the United States

government? Endless waiting to establish the appropriate reform is not doing any good to the society and the people. The time to act is now.

Implications for Federal Government, States and Agencies

I implore the federal government to intensify their efforts in providing for childcare services for single mothers. I am aware that the Biden Administration is professing solutions to childcare services and child credit. Other private and government agencies, churches, private organizations, and philanthropist organizations can do more to alleviate the sufferings of immigrants with special attention to immigrant single mothers, and all immigrants in general. These single mothers are suffering from immigration issues, acculturation, and then, rearing their children by themselves at the same time can be overwhelming.

The federal government, the society as whole and the various communities in which single mothers live should endeavor to come to the aid of these minorities, especially, the Nigerian immigrant single mothers, to alleviate their sufferings and reduce barriers that will make it possible for them to become more effective mothers in the good of society. The federal government, both private and public sectors, should collaborate in partnership programs to help resolve the issues of childcare services. The federal government should create a special program through The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to grant working permits to single immigrant parents to enable them work and provide for their children instead of depending on taxpayers' money.

Implications for Marriage and Family Therapists and Other Mental Health

Professionals

From the lived experiences of participants in this study and recent happenings in the society concerning immigrants, it is evident that immigration is a difficult and stressful process. Combining these traumatic experiences with raising children in a different social cultural context can be challenging and traumatic. By implication, marriage and family therapists (MFTs) working with Nigerians in general, Nigerian immigrant parents, and Nigerian immigrant single parents should have a working knowledge of the immigration process of acculturation.

MFTs should take into consideration where these immigrants who came to the United States are in their immigration process. Marriage and family therapists working with this population should understand that the concept of believing and relying on God to intervene in their affairs is supreme and paramount with Nigerians. Nigerians are ardent and devout Christians or Muslims depending on what religion they choose. They put God first in everything. Ethnic membership is important to Nigerians. Cultural values such as respect and not calling an elderly person by first name is important.

To effectively work with this group of persons, MFTs and other mental health professionals will need to be culturally sensitive to the needs of these immigrants. This will require MFTs to work on their biases, have genuine interest in these groups of clients by understanding their world, allowing them to make their own decisions, and being warm and affectionate towards them. Nigerians generally do not like going for

therapy, but how MFTs interact and encourage them can make a great difference in their lives.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this qualitative study is the researcher who serves as the human instrument. Therefore, it is not possible to eradicate all biases and prior experiences that would affect the results of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The results of this study cannot be generalized to other minority groups who are immigrants or single parents from other countries and living in the United States because their experiences might be different. A mixed–method research study might show a different result too.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers might replicate this study by exploring the lived experiences of the children raised by Nigerian immigrant parents in the United States. This study can also be extrapolated to lived experiences of male, single, Nigerian, immigrant parents and more diverse nationalities of single immigrant parents living in the United States.

Summary

This chapter included the findings, conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. This study examined the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. I used the phenomenological approach for this qualitative study. The approach deals with human experiences and how humans interpret and construct their world. The theoretical

framework that guided this study was Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. In applying this concept to this study, 12 women participated and revealed their lived experiences. These women acknowledged the truth that their immigration experiences and raising children by themselves was challenging. However, through these difficult experiences, they discovered their own strengths and never gave up. They urged other single women not to underestimate the strength and power endowed in them as women who are phenomenal and strong.

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APPENDIX A

Research Flyer

**A STUDY ABOUT NIGERIAN IMMIGRANT
SINGLE-PARENTS IN THE U.S.**

**ARE YOU A NIGERIAN IMMIGRANT SINGLE PARENT RAISING?
YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES?**

If yes, then this study is for you.



**Greatestjoswill.wordpress.com.
happyhomeparentcoaching.com**

Are you 18 or older, have been in the

U.S. at least two years, can speak English, and are a single parent raising a child here?

Would you please tell me your story?

I am Florence Osuofa, a student at Texas Woman's University, and I am conducting a study on Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. I am hoping you will agree to talk with me in a confidential, audio-recorded conversation by telephone or Zoom, lasting about 45 minutes. Participation is voluntary and your name will not be used. My hope is that you will share your experiences of raising your children by yourself in this country.

I am eager to hear your story!

If you think you might be interested in talking with me, please phone me, **Florence Osuofa**, at **940-594-6744** or email me at fosuofa@twu.edu and I'll tell you more and answer any questions you may have. I look forward to hearing from you. My research advisor is Linda Brock, PhD, at 940-898-2713 or LBrock@twu.edu As with any electronic submission, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions

APPENDIX B

Telephone Call Recruitment Script

Initial Telephone Call Recruitment Script

“Hello, [caller asks for researcher]. I’m Ms. Florence Osuofa. Thank you for responding to my flyer. I’m a doctoral student in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Texas Woman’s University where I am completing this research project as part of my degree.

“The purpose of this research is to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. I am interested to learn about what life is like for you as a single parent.

“If you agree to participate, I will interview you either on the telephone, or on Zoom (whichever you choose), at a time that’s convenient for you. Our conversation will last about 45 minutes.

I will use a code number to protect your confidentiality and I will be the only one to know your name. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

“What questions do you have so far? (All questions will be answered by the researcher).

“Would you like your story to be part of my study? (If the potential participant says yes, a time for the interview will be scheduled). If you give me your email address, I will send you the consent form to read, sign, and email back to me before we begin our conversation. “Thank you for your time. I look forward to meeting with you on the date and at the time we have agreed upon.” (Will re-state time and place).

(If a potential participant says no, he or she will be asked if they know of anyone who might be willing to be part of the study and if so, I will ask the participant to pass the recruitment email and/or flyer and my phone number to that person). “Thank you for taking the time to talk with me.”

“There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.”

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

APPENDIX D

Demographic Questions

Demographic Information

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. The purpose of this research is to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single parents raising their children in the United States. Once you finish these questions there will be eight open-ended questions for you to complete regarding your experiences of being a single parent.

Please complete the following information

1. Current age _____
2. Gender _____
3. Amount of time living in the United States _____
4. How many children are currently living with you? _____
5. What are their ages? _____
6. Are they male or female? _____
7. What is your current marital status?
 - a. Single
 - b. Divorced
 - c. Separated
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Never married.

8. What is your highest level of education?
- Less than high school diploma or GED High school diploma or GED
 - Two years of college or specialized training school
 - More than two years of undergraduate course work
 - Undergraduate degree
 - Graduate coursework
 - Graduate degree
9. What is your occupation or your current job?
-

10. What is your current annual income?
- Under \$15, 999
 - \$16, 000-\$29, 999
 - \$30, 000-\$44, 999
 - \$45, 000-\$59, 999
 - \$60, 000-\$74, 999
 - \$75,000-\$89, 999
 - \$90,000-and above
11. What is your reason for moving to the United States?
-

12. What is your religious affiliation?

- Christian?
- Muslim?
- Atheist?
- Other?

APPENDIX E

Interview Script

Interview Guide

Participant's Numerical Code _____ Male ____ Female _____

Interview Date: _____

“Thank you for agreeing to be part of my study.” (Pause) “The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of Nigerian immigrant single-parents living in the United States. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. “What questions do you have about the study?”

“You may take as many breaks as you need. With your permission, I’ll audiotape our conversation to make sure it is accurate.” (Pause) This is to enable me to grasp every piece of our conversation.

“Before we Start, would you please read the consent form and sign it for me if you agree to participate in this study? “Do you have any questions about the consent form?” (Pause).

If the participant says no, then we can continue with the interview. If yes, then I will answer participants' questions.

“If you notice, there is a space at the bottom of the consent form that asks for your mailing address if you would like a summary of the study results. Please sign your initials on pages 1 and 2, and date.

“I will begin by asking for some background information. If anything I ask you is not clear, please let me know. If you are uncomfortable answering any of my questions, please let me know, too.”

(Questions will be answered by researchers if any). (The researcher will obtain demographic information that the participants are willing to provide. Upon completion, the researcher will begin with the interview questions).

“We have finished the background information. We will now move on to the interview questions. I encourage you to speak freely and openly to elaborate as much as you are comfortable with.”

Interview Questions

1. Please, tell me the story of how you came to the United States.
2. What has life been for you as a Nigerian immigrant single parent has been.
3. What has been most difficult for you and your children.
4. What has been most helpful?
5. What have you discovered about yourself while raising your children?
6. What experiences/cultural values have influenced the way you raise your children/child?
7. What stories are you telling your family about your immigration experience?
8. Would you say you have accomplished your purpose for coming to America? If yes, how? If no, why not?
9. What else would you like to say about raising your child/children as a single parent in the United States?

APPENDIX F

Counseling Resources

COUNSELING RESOURCES

Mental Health Resources Referral List.

TWU Counseling and Family Therapy Clinic

Human Development Building, Room #114

Phone number: 940-898-2600

Email: twucounselingclinic@gmail.com

Denton County MHMR

Crisis Hotline: 1800-762-0517

<http://www.dentonmhmr.org>

AAMFT Therapist Locator

www.therapistlocator.net

https://www.aamft.org/imis15/AAMFT/Content/Directories/Find_a_Therapist.asp

American Counseling Association

800-347-6647

<https://www.counseling.org/aca-community/learn-about-counseling/what-is-counseling>

Psychology Today

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

Resources for Single Moms

<https://spaoa.org/>; www.nbcdi.org; www.parentswithoutpartners.org; www.bbbsa.org.

www.carlpickhardt.com; www.gbca.org; www.naccrra.org.

www.parentsanonymous.org;

<http://www.singlemom.com/resources>

<https://www.washtenaw.org/1059/SMILE-Program> (Divorcing and Separating mothers)