

NEGOTIATING STIGMA: MEDIA, SOCIETY AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD IN KERALA

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DECLARATION

I, **MS. SATHY DEVI V S** do hereby declare that the Dissertation Titled **NEGOTIATING STIGMA: MEDIA, SOCIETY AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD IN KERALA** is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the Department of Sociology, Loyola College of Social Sciences (Autonomous), University of Kerala during the year 2024-2026 towards partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before any University or anywhere else.

Thiruvananthapuram

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled **NEGOTIATING STIGMA: MEDIA, SOCIETY AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD IN KERALA** is a record of genuine work done by **MS. SATHY DEVI V S**, fourth semester Master of Sociology student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that it is hereby approved for submission.

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ABSTRACT

The family is one of the most important social institutions and plays a significant role in the social, emotional and psychological development of individuals. In recent years, changing social conditions, urbanization, migration, increasing divorce rates, widowhood and changing personal choices have contributed to the growing number of single-parent households. Although single-parent families have become more visible in contemporary society, they continue to experience social stigma, discrimination, and negative stereotypes. At the same time, media has emerged as a powerful social institution that shapes public attitudes and influences people's understanding of different family structures. Against this background, the present study, "Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala," was undertaken to examine how media and society influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households and to understand the extent of stigma associated with these families.

The study adopted a quantitative research approach with a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The research was conducted among 80 postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram, selected through the purposive sampling method. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic questions, multiple-choice questions, five-point Likert scale statements, and open-ended questions. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, tables, and graphs were used to interpret the quantitative data, while responses to open-ended questions were analysed thematically to provide a deeper understanding of students' views.

The findings of the study reveal that postgraduate students generally have positive and inclusive perceptions towards single-parent households. Most respondents acknowledged that single-parent families are capable of providing love, care, emotional support, and a healthy environment for children. However, the study also found that social stigma continues to exist, particularly towards single mothers, who are perceived to experience greater social judgment, discrimination, and financial challenges because of traditional gender norms. Respondents also believed that children from single-parent households may experience stereotypes, social exclusion, and discrimination in educational and social settings.

The study further highlights that media plays a significant role in shaping public attitudes towards single-parent households. Positive and realistic portrayals in television, films, newspapers, and social media were found to encourage greater understanding and acceptance, whereas stereotypical and negative portrayals reinforce existing prejudices. The findings also indicate that social media has become an important platform for creating awareness, promoting family diversity, and encouraging discussions that challenge traditional stereotypes.

The study concludes that although educated youth in Kerala demonstrate greater acceptance of single-parent households, social stigma and traditional cultural beliefs continue to influence public perceptions. The research emphasizes the need for awareness programmes, inclusive educational initiatives, responsible media representation, supportive government policies, and community participation to reduce stigma and promote equality and social inclusion. By examining the relationship between media, society, and students' perceptions, this study contributes to the sociological understanding of changing family structures and provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, media professionals, and social workers. It also highlights the importance of fostering a society where all family forms are respected and valued with dignity, irrespective of their structure.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Family is considered one of the most important social institutions in every society. It plays a major role in shaping the personality, values, behaviour, and emotional development of individuals. Traditionally, the family has been understood as a social unit consisting of two parents and their children living together and sharing responsibilities. For many years, the two-parent family was socially accepted as the "ideal" family structure across cultures and societies (Murdock, 1949; Giddens & Sutton, 2021). However, rapid social changes, modernization, urbanization, changing gender roles, migration, and economic pressures have transformed the structure and meaning of family life throughout the world (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). As a result, different forms of family structures have emerged, including single-parent households, blended families, live-in relationships, and child-headed households (Cherlin, 2010).

Globally, single-parent households have become increasingly common in contemporary society. A single-parent family refers to a household in which one parent is responsible for raising children due to reasons such as divorce, separation, death of a spouse, migration, non-marital childbirth, abandonment, or personal choice (Amato, 2005). According to international studies, the number of single-parent families has risen significantly in both developed and developing countries. In countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, single-parent households represent a major proportion of family structures. Social researchers point out that economic independence, women's empowerment, legal acceptance of divorce, and changing social attitudes have contributed to the growth of single-parent families worldwide (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; UNICEF, 2021).

Although single-parent households are becoming socially visible and increasingly common, these families often continue to face stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Society frequently views single-parent families as "incomplete," "unstable," or "less ideal" compared to two-parent families. Such negative perceptions affect both parents and children emotionally, psychologically, socially, and economically (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Single parents often struggle with financial stress, balancing employment and childcare responsibilities, emotional loneliness, and social judgment. Children from single-parent households may also experience prejudice, bullying, lack of emotional support, and social isolation in schools and communities (Amato, 2005). In many societies, especially those with

traditional cultural values, stigma surrounding single parenthood remains deeply rooted (Ganong & Coleman, 2017).

At the global level, media has become a powerful force in shaping public opinion and social attitudes regarding family life. Television, cinema, newspapers, advertisements, and social media platforms strongly influence how people understand and perceive family structures (McQuail, 2010). Media representations of single-parent families can either challenge stereotypes or reinforce negative social attitudes. In many films and television programmes, single parents are portrayed as emotionally weak, economically unstable, or socially problematic. At the same time, modern media has also started presenting strong and independent single parents who successfully manage family responsibilities. Therefore, media plays a dual role in influencing public perceptions of single-parent households (Hall, 1997).

In the Indian context, family has traditionally been regarded as the foundation of social and cultural life. Indian society highly values marriage, parenthood, and family stability (Uberoi, 2006). Traditionally, joint families and two-parent households have been socially accepted as the ideal forms of family organization. However, due to social and economic transformation, India has witnessed an increase in single-parent households over the past few decades. Rising divorce rates, migration for employment, domestic violence, marital conflicts, widowhood, and changing personal choices have contributed to the growth of single-parent families in both urban and rural areas (Desai & Andrist, 2010).

Despite these changes, Indian society often continues to attach stigma to single parenthood, especially towards single mothers. Single parents may face criticism, social isolation, moral judgment, and discrimination from relatives, neighbours, educational institutions, and workplaces (Patel, 2005). Women who raise children alone are often blamed for family breakdowns and may face emotional and financial burdens. Children from single-parent families may also experience discrimination, stereotypes, and social pressure in schools and peer groups (Amato, 2005). In conservative communities, single parenthood is sometimes associated with failure, instability, or moral weakness (Patel, 2005).

Indian media also plays an important role in shaping perceptions about single-parent families. Films, television serials, and digital media often portray single parents either as victims deserving sympathy or as individuals facing constant struggle and sacrifice. While recent media representations have become more progressive and inclusive, stereotypical portrayals still

continue in many forms of popular culture (Hall, 1997). Social media discussions and digital platforms have also influenced young people's understanding of family diversity and social acceptance (Jenkins, 2006).

Students and young people form an important section of society because their attitudes reflect ongoing social changes. Their perceptions are shaped by family background, peer interaction, education, media exposure, and cultural values (Bandura, 2001). Compared to older generations, many young people today show greater acceptance towards different family forms, including single-parent households. However, stigma and misconceptions may still exist among students due to traditional beliefs and social conditioning. Understanding students' perceptions is important because they represent the future social attitudes of society.

In Kerala, family continues to occupy a central place in social and cultural life. Kerala is widely recognized for its high literacy rate, social development, and progressive indicators compared to many other Indian states. However, Kerala has also experienced significant social transformation in recent years, including changes in marriage patterns, family relationships, migration, and gender roles (Government of Kerala, 2021). Increasing rates of divorce, separation, migration to Gulf countries, widowhood, and changing personal choices have contributed to the rise of single-parent households in the state.

Even though Kerala is considered socially progressive, single-parent families often continue to experience stigma and social judgment. Society still tends to idealize the traditional two-parent family structure, while single-parent households are sometimes viewed with sympathy, suspicion, or criticism (McLellan, 2024). Single mothers, in particular, may face social pressure, economic insecurity, and emotional stress (Carney et al., 2003). Children from such families may also experience feelings of exclusion, low self-esteem, or negative labelling in educational and social settings (Amato, 2005).

Media culture in Kerala, including Malayalam cinema, television serials, online platforms, and social media, significantly influences public understanding of family structures. Some Malayalam films and serials portray single parents positively as independent and resilient individuals, while others continue to reinforce traditional stereotypes and emotional suffering associated with single parenthood. These representations influence how students and society perceive single-parent households (Hall, 1997; McQuail, 2010).

Today, single-parent families have become more common than before, and they exist in different forms, including households headed by mothers, fathers, grandparents, or guardians. However, life in a single-parent household can be stressful for both the parent and children. The single parent may struggle with managing childcare responsibilities, employment, household work, emotional wellbeing, and financial burdens. Following separation or divorce, family income and resources may reduce significantly, affecting the quality of life and opportunities available to children (Amato, 2005). In addition to economic difficulties, single-parent families may also face emotional strain, social isolation, parenting stress, and lack of community support (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Single-parent families therefore experience many pressures and challenges that other family structures may not face. These challenges are not only personal but also social, cultural, and institutional in nature. Society's perceptions, media portrayals, and social attitudes together influence the experiences and identity of single-parent households (Goffman, 1963).

The study "**Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala**" attempts to understand how students perceive single-parent households and how media and societal influences shape these perceptions. The study seeks to explore the existence of stigma, the role of media representations, and the changing attitudes of young people toward family diversity in contemporary Kerala society. This study is important because it contributes to a better understanding of social attitudes toward single-parent families and helps promote social awareness, inclusion, and acceptance.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Family is regarded as the foundation of society and plays a vital role in shaping an individual's personality, emotional well-being, values and social behaviour. Traditionally, society has viewed the two-parent family as the ideal family structure, where both parents share the responsibilities of nurturing and raising children. However, rapid social, economic, and cultural changes have significantly transformed family structures across the world. Urbanization, industrialization, migration, increasing divorce rates, widowhood, separation, changing gender roles, and individual choices have contributed to the emergence of diverse family forms, among which single-parent households have become increasingly common (Giddens & Sutton, 2021).

A single-parent household refers to a family in which one parent assumes the primary responsibility for raising one or more children due to circumstances such as divorce, separation, death of a spouse, migration, adoption, abandonment, or personal choice. Although the number of single-parent households has increased globally, these families continue to face numerous social, emotional, and economic challenges. In many societies, the traditional belief that a family should consist of both a mother and a father continues to influence public opinion. As a result, single-parent families often experience prejudice, discrimination, social exclusion, and negative stereotyping (Goffman, 1963).

In India, the family occupies a central position in social and cultural life. Marriage and the two-parent family are generally regarded as the ideal social arrangement. However, changing social realities have led to a gradual increase in single-parent households across the country. Divorce, separation, widowhood, migration for employment, domestic violence, and changing personal choices have contributed to this trend. Despite these changes, many single parents, particularly single mothers, continue to experience social criticism, economic hardship, emotional stress, and discrimination because of deeply rooted patriarchal values and traditional gender expectations (Patel, 2005).

Kerala has witnessed considerable social transformation over the past few decades. The state is known for its high literacy rate, better educational opportunities, improved health indicators, and progressive social development. However, Kerala has also experienced changes in family patterns due to increasing divorce rates, migration to Gulf countries, delayed marriages, widowhood, and changing attitudes toward marriage and family life. Consequently, the number of single-parent households has increased in both urban and rural areas. Despite Kerala's progressive image, many single-parent families continue to experience stigma, social judgment, and limited acceptance within society (McLellan, 2024).

Media has become one of the most influential institutions in shaping people's attitudes, beliefs, and understanding of social issues. Television, newspapers, films, digital media, and social networking platforms continuously present information about family life and relationships. These representations can influence public opinion by either challenging existing stereotypes or reinforcing them. Positive media portrayals can encourage acceptance and empathy towards single-parent families, while negative or stereotypical portrayals may strengthen prejudice and discrimination (McQuail, 2010). With the rapid growth of digital media, young people are

increasingly exposed to different perspectives on family diversity, making media an important factor in shaping their perceptions.

Students, particularly postgraduate students, represent an important section of society because they are exposed to higher education, critical thinking, social interaction, and diverse forms of media. Their opinions often reflect changing social values and can influence future societal attitudes. Understanding students' perceptions of single-parent households is therefore important because it helps assess the extent to which traditional stigma continues to exist among educated youth and how media and society contribute to shaping these perceptions.

Although several studies have examined single-parent families, most have focused on the economic, psychological, or developmental challenges experienced by parents and children. Comparatively fewer studies have explored how media representations and societal influences shape students' perceptions of single-parent households, particularly in the context of Kerala. This gap highlights the need for research that examines the relationship between media exposure, societal attitudes, and the perceptions of educated young adults toward family diversity.

Against this background, the present study, "Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala," seeks to examine how media and society influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households. The study explores the persistence of social stigma, the impact of media portrayals, and the level of acceptance among educated youth. It also aims to contribute to a better understanding of changing family structures and promote greater awareness, social inclusion, and respect for family diversity.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the fields of Sociology, Media Studies, Gender Studies, and Family Studies by providing insights into the changing perceptions of young people toward single-parent households. The study may also assist educators, policymakers, media professionals, and social workers in developing awareness programmes, promoting positive media representation, and formulating policies that support single-parent families. Ultimately, the research emphasizes that every family, regardless of its structure, deserves equal dignity, respect, and acceptance within society.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Family is one of the most influential social institutions in human society. It provides emotional security, social identity, economic support, protection, and socialization for individuals. Traditionally, society recognized the two-parent family, consisting of a mother, father, and children, as the most ideal and socially accepted family structure. However, social transformation, modernization, globalization, urbanization, migration, changing gender roles, and technological development have significantly changed family structures across the world. As a result, different forms of families, especially single-parent households, have become increasingly visible in contemporary society.

Single-parent households refer to families in which one parent alone takes responsibility for raising children due to reasons such as divorce, separation, death of a spouse, migration, abandonment, unmarried parenthood, or personal choice. In the modern world, single parenting is no longer a rare social phenomenon. It has become part of everyday social reality in both developed and developing societies. Today, many children are raised by single mothers, single fathers, grandparents, or guardians due to changing family conditions and social circumstances.

Although society has changed considerably, traditional ideas about family continue to dominate social thinking. In many societies, including India and Kerala, the two-parent family is still considered the “normal” and “ideal” family structure. Because of this, single-parent households are often viewed differently and negatively. Society may label such families as incomplete, unstable, emotionally weak, or socially problematic. These attitudes create social stigma and discrimination against single parents and their children. The experience of stigma can affect their emotional well-being, confidence, identity, social relationships, and quality of life.

In the present technological world, media has become one of the strongest forces influencing public understanding and social attitudes. Television, cinema, newspapers, online platforms, social media, YouTube, Instagram, and digital communication technologies constantly shape how people think about relationships, marriage, parenthood, and family life. Media does not simply reflect reality; it also constructs social reality by creating meanings, stereotypes, and cultural expectations. Therefore, public understanding of single parenting is increasingly shaped by technological and media influences.

In many films, serials, advertisements, and online discussions, single-parent families are represented in emotional and stereotypical ways. Some media portrayals present single parents

as victims, helpless individuals, or socially burdened people who struggle to raise children alone. In contrast, modern digital media also presents strong, independent, and successful single parents who challenge traditional social norms. Because of these mixed representations, society develops both positive and negative attitudes toward single-parent households.

The technological world has also transformed social interaction and communication among young people. Students today spend a large amount of time engaging with digital media and online platforms. Their understanding of family structures, relationships, and social values is strongly influenced by what they watch, read, and discuss through media. Compared to older generations, postgraduate students may show more acceptance toward changing family forms because of higher education, exposure to diverse viewpoints, and access to information through technology. However, despite this exposure, traditional cultural beliefs and social stereotypes may still influence their perceptions toward single-parent households.

In the Indian context, family continues to hold deep cultural, religious, and emotional significance. Marriage and parenthood are socially respected institutions, and family honour is strongly connected to social identity. As a result, single parenting is often viewed through moral and cultural judgments. Single mothers especially face criticism, blame, sympathy, and social exclusion. Society frequently questions their morality, parenting ability, and social status. Children from single-parent households may also experience emotional stress, social isolation, teasing, or discrimination in educational and social spaces.

Kerala is widely known for its high literacy rate, educational development, social awareness, and progressive social indicators. However, Kerala society still maintains strong traditional values related to marriage, parenthood, and family life. During recent decades, Kerala has witnessed increasing rates of divorce, separation, migration, widowhood, and changing family relationships, leading to a visible rise in single-parent households. At the same time, the rapid growth of digital technology, social media culture, and media consumption has transformed social interaction and public opinion among young people in Kerala.

Even though Kerala is considered socially progressive, single-parent households continue to face stigma and social judgment. Society often compares such families with the traditional two-parent model and may consider them socially incomplete or emotionally disadvantaged. Single parents face multiple struggles such as balancing employment, childcare, financial responsibilities, emotional stress, and social expectations. Children from such households may also experience psychological pressure, loneliness, insecurity, and exclusion.

Media representations in Malayalam cinema, television serials, social media discussions, and digital content also influence public understanding of single parenting in Kerala. Some media representations create sympathy and awareness, while others reinforce stereotypes and negative social attitudes. As postgraduate students are highly exposed to digital media and technological culture, their perceptions toward single-parent households are likely influenced by both media representations and societal values.

Although several studies have examined single parenting, family structure, stigma, and child well-being in different social contexts, there is limited research focusing specifically on how media, society, and technological culture influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. There is also insufficient understanding regarding how educated youth negotiate traditional social stigma within a technologically advanced and media-driven society.

Therefore, the present study titled “Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students’ Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala” seeks to understand how students perceive single-parent households in the context of changing social realities and technological influence. The study attempts to examine the role of media, digital culture, and societal attitudes in shaping perceptions toward single parenting. It also aims to explore how stigma continues to exist, transform, or be challenged within contemporary Kerala society. Through this study, the researcher hopes to contribute to a deeper sociological understanding of family diversity, media influence, social acceptance, and the lived realities of single-parent households in the modern technological world.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study titled “Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students’ Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala” is socially and academically significant because it focuses on an important contemporary social issue that is increasingly visible in modern society. Single-parent households are becoming more common due to divorce, separation, death, migration, and changing social relationships. Even though society is changing, single-parent families still face stigma, discrimination, emotional stress, and social misunderstanding. Therefore, this study is important in understanding the social realities and perceptions surrounding single-parent households in Kerala.

This study is significant because it helps to understand how media and society shape students' attitudes towards single-parent families. In today's technological world, media has become a powerful influence on young people's thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions. Television, cinema, social media, and digital platforms constantly present different images of family life. These representations can either challenge social stereotypes or strengthen negative attitudes toward single-parent households. By studying media influence, this research helps to understand how public opinion and social understanding are constructed in contemporary society.

The study is also important because it focuses on postgraduate students, who represent educated youth and future society. Students' perceptions reflect changing social values, cultural beliefs, and technological influences. Understanding their attitudes toward single-parent households helps to identify whether stigma still exists among educated young people or whether social acceptance is increasing. The findings of the study may help educational institutions and policymakers develop awareness programmes promoting equality, empathy, and social inclusion.

Another significance of the study is that it contributes to the sociological understanding of changing family structures in Kerala. Traditionally, Kerala society considered the two-parent family as the ideal family structure. However, social transformation has created different forms of families, including single-parent households. This study helps to examine how these changing family forms are understood and socially accepted in contemporary Kerala society.

The study is also important for understanding the lived realities and challenges faced by single-parent households. Social stigma can affect the emotional well-being, confidence, social identity, and relationships of both parents and children. By exploring students' perceptions and social attitudes, the research highlights the need for social support, emotional understanding, and inclusive attitudes toward single-parent families.

Academically, this study adds to the existing literature on family sociology, media studies, stigma, and social perception. While many studies focus on the economic or psychological problems of single-parent families, fewer studies examine the relationship between media influence, societal attitudes, and students' perceptions in the Kerala context. Therefore, this research fills an important research gap and contributes to sociological knowledge regarding family diversity and social change.

The findings of the study may also help social workers, educators, counsellors, policymakers, and media professionals better understand the experiences of single-parent families. It can

encourage media organizations to portray single-parent households in a more realistic and positive manner instead of reinforcing stereotypes and negative social images.

Finally, this study is significant because it promotes awareness about social stigma and encourages the development of a more inclusive and accepting society. By understanding the experiences and perceptions related to single-parent households, society can move towards greater empathy, equality, and respect for diverse family structures in the modern technological world.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Family remains one of the most influential social institutions responsible for socialization, emotional development, economic security, and cultural transmission. Although the traditional two-parent family has long been regarded as the normative family structure, rapid processes of modernization, urbanization, migration, changing gender roles, globalization, and demographic transitions have contributed to the emergence of diverse family forms. Among these, single-parent households have become increasingly visible across societies. Despite their growing prevalence, they continue to encounter stereotypes, discrimination, and social stigma. Public perceptions of single-parent households are shaped not only by cultural beliefs and institutional practices but also by media representations that influence how these families are understood and evaluated. This chapter reviews the existing literature under major thematic areas relevant to the present study.

2.2 Growth and Changing Nature of Single-Parent Households

The literature indicates that single-parent households have become increasingly common across both developed and developing societies. Changes in marriage patterns, divorce rates, widowhood, migration, non-marital childbirth, and individual life choices have contributed to this demographic transformation.

McLellan (2024) demonstrates that the increasing visibility of single-parent families in Britain during the 1990s also generated organized resistance against social stigma. Through the work of the Single Parent Action Network (SPAN), single mothers collectively challenged welfare stereotypes and advocated recognition of caregiving as socially valuable labour. The study argues that activism played an important role in reshaping public narratives surrounding single-parent households.

Similarly, Kikwale et al. (2025) found that while communities in Tanzania increasingly accepted single-parent families, concerns persisted regarding children's emotional wellbeing and educational outcomes. Their mixed-method study suggests that although societal attitudes are gradually becoming more inclusive, traditional assumptions continue to influence community perceptions.

Together these studies indicate that the emergence of single-parent families is no longer an exceptional phenomenon but a significant social reality requiring new social and policy responses.

2.3 Social Stigma and Societal Perceptions of Single-Parent Households

One of the dominant themes in the literature concerns the persistent stigma experienced by single-parent families.

McLellan (2024) argues that stigma surrounding single motherhood was reinforced through welfare policies and political discourse that portrayed single mothers as economically dependent and socially irresponsible. Activist movements challenged these negative stereotypes by promoting alternative understandings of family diversity.

Elegbe (2025), through an analysis of the Nigerian film *Maami*, illustrates how popular culture portrays children from single-parent households as vulnerable to poverty, emotional distress, social isolation, and limited life opportunities. The study shows that media narratives often reinforce traditional ideals of the two-parent family while portraying single-parent households as socially disadvantaged.

Likewise, Wijesekera (2022) found that children living in single-parent families in Sri Lanka frequently experienced psychosocial difficulties, emotional insecurity, and reduced parental support. The study emphasizes that these challenges are often intensified by societal attitudes rather than family structure alone.

These studies collectively suggest that stigma remains embedded within cultural expectations regarding marriage, parenting, and family life. Rather than recognizing family diversity, societies frequently evaluate single-parent households against traditional family norms.

2.4 Psychological Well-being and Child Development

A substantial body of literature examines children's emotional, behavioural, and psychological development within single-parent households.

Gunarathna et al. (2025), using children's drawings and qualitative interviews, observed that children from dual-parent families displayed greater emotional stability than children from

single-mother households. However, the authors recommend counselling interventions rather than attributing developmental differences solely to family structure.

Similarly, Froelich and Gerstein (2024) demonstrate that parenting stress, household chaos, and socioeconomic pressures significantly influence parenting quality. Their findings indicate that children's behavioural outcomes are affected by multiple interacting family stressors rather than by single parenthood itself.

Coba-Rodriguez and Lleras (2022) further found that irregular maternal work schedules negatively influenced preschool children's cognitive and emotional development, highlighting employment conditions as an important mediating factor.

Overall, these studies suggest that children's wellbeing is influenced by broader contextual factors such as parenting stress, economic insecurity, and social support, rather than merely by the absence of one parent.

2.5 Educational Outcomes among Children from Single-Parent Families

Educational achievement has received considerable attention within research on single-parent households.

Yoda (2012) reported that children from single-parent families in Japan generally experienced lower educational attainment, particularly regarding higher education enrolment. However, the study argues that economic disadvantage alone cannot fully explain these differences.

Hawkins (2020) similarly concluded that adolescents from two-parent households often benefit from stronger parental supervision, higher living standards, and greater educational support.

In contrast, Oriola (2025) presents a different perspective. Studying Nigerian university students from single-parent backgrounds, the research found high levels of academic engagement, learning interest, and psychological wellbeing, demonstrating that supportive environments can enable successful educational outcomes irrespective of family structure.

These contrasting findings indicate that educational achievement depends not solely on family composition but also on parental support, institutional assistance, socioeconomic resources, and individual resilience.

2.6 Economic Challenges and Household Well-being

Economic vulnerability is one of the most consistently reported challenges facing single-parent households.

Talib et al. (2020) found that most Malaysian single mothers belonged to lower-income groups, while household income significantly influenced life satisfaction.

Similarly, Kocağ (2023) demonstrated that single parenthood substantially increases poverty risk, with education, employment, and demographic characteristics further influencing economic wellbeing.

Brown (2000) reported comparable economic disadvantages among single-father households in the United States, including lower income, reduced educational attainment, and greater dependence on welfare support.

Hilario et al. (2024) also identified financial stress, inadequate income, and limited financial literacy as major barriers affecting Filipino single parents.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that financial insecurity remains a major structural challenge for many single-parent households and significantly shapes family wellbeing.

2.7 Family Support Systems and Parenting Practices

Several studies emphasize that parenting quality depends more on support systems than on family structure itself.

Bae and Chin (2011) found that Korean single-parent families living within three-generation households experienced fewer material hardships because grandparents provided both financial and emotional support.

Similarly, Zerr et al. (2019) showed that extended family members, particularly grandmothers, significantly reduced children's risk of maltreatment within single-mother households.

Thomas et al. (1996) demonstrated that non-resident fathers positively influenced behavioural outcomes among adolescents in certain family contexts.

Harrison et al. (2021) further illustrated how single fathers actively socialize children through responsibility sharing, household management, and independent decision-making.

These findings suggest that supportive family networks and positive parenting practices substantially moderate the challenges associated with single parenthood.

2.8 Social Policy and Institutional Support

The literature consistently highlights the importance of institutional interventions.

Ukwishaka et al. (2025) found that parenting interventions in Rwanda produced equally positive outcomes for both single- and dual-caregiver households, demonstrating that inclusive family programmes can overcome structural disadvantages.

Berger et al. (2008) similarly reported that housing assistance improved residential stability and reduced economic hardship among low-income single mothers.

These findings reinforce the argument that supportive public policies can substantially improve family wellbeing irrespective of household composition.

2.9 Media Representation and Public Perception

Although relatively fewer studies directly examine media representations, existing literature highlights its powerful influence on societal attitudes.

Elegbe (2025) demonstrates how cinema reproduces stereotypes associating single-parent families with poverty, emotional suffering, and social disadvantage. Conversely, McLellan (2024) illustrates how advocacy movements attempted to reshape these dominant narratives by promoting positive representations of single-parent families.

These studies indicate that media functions both as a producer and a challenger of stigma. Since media significantly influences public understanding, examining students' perceptions alongside media exposure becomes particularly relevant in the contemporary context.

2.10 RESEARCH GAP

The reviewed literature predominantly examines the economic conditions, psychological wellbeing, educational outcomes, parenting practices and policy challenges experienced by single-parent households across different countries. Most studies focus on children or parents themselves, while comparatively little attention has been paid to how young adults perceive single-parent families.

Although a few studies discuss stigma and media representation, there remains limited research examining the interaction between media exposure, societal attitudes, and students' perceptions. Furthermore, very few studies are situated within the Indian context, particularly Kerala, where rapid social change coexists with strong family values and cultural expectations.

The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining how media representations and societal influences shape students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. By focusing on stigma negotiation within contemporary educational settings, the study contributes to a deeper sociological understanding of changing family norms, media influence, and public attitudes.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is the systematic framework that guides the entire research process. It explains the methods and procedures adopted by the researcher to collect, analyse and interpret data in order to achieve the objectives of the study. A well-planned research methodology ensures that the study is conducted in a scientific, logical, and ethical manner, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings. It provides a clear understanding of how the research was designed, how participants were selected, how data were collected, and how the findings were analysed.

The present study, titled "Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single-Parent Households in Kerala," adopts a quantitative research approach to examine how media and societal influences shape postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households. The study follows a descriptive cross-sectional research design, as it aims to collect data from respondents at a single point in time and systematically analyse their attitudes, opinions, and perceptions regarding single-parent families.

The study was conducted among 80 postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, using a purposive sampling method. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic questions, multiple-choice questions, Likert scale statements, and open-ended questions. Secondary data were gathered from books, journals, research articles, government reports, and other authentic academic sources to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the study.

To ensure the quality of the research instrument, a pilot study and a pre-test were conducted before the final data collection. The collected data were coded, classified, tabulated, and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, tables, and graphs were used to interpret the findings, while qualitative responses obtained from open-ended questions were analysed thematically to provide a deeper understanding of students' perceptions.

This chapter presents the overall methodological framework of the study, including the research strategy, research design, study area, population, sample, sampling method, sample size, variables of the study, operational definitions, tools for data collection, pilot study, pre-test,

methods of data collection, ethical considerations, techniques of data analysis, and limitations of the study. Together, these components provide a clear explanation of the procedures followed to ensure that the research findings are valid, reliable, and relevant to the objectives of the study.

3.2 TITLE OF THE STUDY

NEGOTIATING STIGMA: MEDIA, SOCIETY AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD IN KERALA

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.3.1 GENERAL RESEARCH QUESTION

How do media representations and societal attitudes influence students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala?

3.3.2 SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. How do students perceive single-parent households in Kerala?
2. What role does media play in shaping students' attitudes toward single parenting?
3. Is there any difference in perception based on gender or background of students?
4. How do social norms in Kerala influence students' views on single-parent families?

3.4 APPROACH OF THE STUDY

The present study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of media and society on postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the study seeks to measure attitudes, perceptions, and levels of stigma using standardized variables that can be statistically analysed. Rather than exploring individual narratives, the research aims to identify patterns and trends in students' perceptions across a defined population.

The choice of a quantitative approach is justified by the objectives of the study, which focus on assessing the extent to which media exposure and societal attitudes shape perceptions of single-parent households. Since these variables can be operationalized into measurable indicators, quantitative research provides an objective and systematic means of collecting comparable data from a relatively large number of respondents.

Furthermore, postgraduate students represent an educated section of society that is regularly exposed to both traditional and digital media. Examining their perceptions through quantitative

methods enables the researcher to determine the prevalence of specific attitudes and identify broader social patterns. The use of numerical data also enhances objectivity by minimizing researcher bias and facilitating statistical interpretation.

Thus, the quantitative approach is well suited to the present study because it provides reliable empirical evidence for understanding contemporary perceptions of single-parent households and the social factors influencing those perceptions.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employs a descriptive cross-sectional research design. A descriptive design is appropriate because the study seeks to describe existing perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding single-parent households without manipulating any variables or establishing causal relationships. It enables the researcher to present a systematic account of the current level of acceptance, stigma, and media influence among postgraduate students.

The study is cross-sectional because data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. Since perceptions regarding family structures are shaped by prevailing social and cultural contexts, collecting data at one time provides an accurate representation of students' existing opinions. A longitudinal design was not considered necessary because the study does not seek to examine changes in perceptions over time.

The descriptive cross-sectional design also offers practical advantages. It facilitates data collection from a relatively large number of participants within a limited period, allows comparison across demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and media exposure, and provides a comprehensive picture of prevailing attitudes within the study population.

Accordingly, the descriptive cross-sectional design is appropriate for achieving the objectives of the present study by providing a systematic framework for examining the relationship between media exposure, societal influences, and students' perceptions of single-parent households.

3.6 RESEARCH METHOD

The study follows the survey method, using a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The survey method is appropriate because it enables the

collection of standardized information from multiple respondents, thereby ensuring consistency in measurement and facilitating statistical comparison.

A structured questionnaire comprising close-ended questions was administered to 80 postgraduate students selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire included items relating to respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, media exposure, perceptions of single-parent households, and attitudes towards stigma and social acceptance. The use of close-ended questions ensured uniformity in responses and enabled efficient coding and quantitative analysis.

Following data collection, the responses were checked for completeness, coded, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, tables, and graphical representations, were employed to summarize and interpret the data. These techniques facilitated the identification of dominant trends and variations in students' perceptions.

The survey method was selected because it allows data to be collected efficiently from a defined population while maintaining objectivity and reliability. Although structured questionnaires provide limited opportunities for respondents to elaborate on their views, they are appropriate for studies that seek to quantify attitudes and compare responses systematically. Consequently, the survey method provides a reliable and scientifically sound procedure for examining the influence of media and society on students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.

3.7 STUDY AREA

The present study was conducted among postgraduate students in Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, was selected as the study area because it provides a suitable social and educational environment for examining students' perceptions of single-parent households. The city is one of the major educational centres in the state and is home to several universities, autonomous colleges, government institutions, and private educational institutions that attract students from different districts of Kerala as well as from other states.

Thiruvananthapuram has a diverse student population representing different social, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds. Students studying in the city come from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas, bringing with them a variety of experiences, values, and perspectives.

This diversity makes the study area particularly appropriate for understanding how different social backgrounds influence students' perceptions of single-parent households.

Another important reason for selecting Thiruvananthapuram is its high level of exposure to both traditional and digital media. As the capital city of Kerala, it has widespread access to newspapers, television channels, radio, online news portals, social media platforms, films, and other digital communication technologies. Students in the city are active users of media and are frequently exposed to information, discussions, and portrayals of changing family structures, gender roles, parenting practices, and social issues. Since the present study focuses on the influence of media on students' perceptions, selecting a study area with extensive media exposure was highly relevant.

The city is also characterized by a relatively high literacy rate, better educational opportunities, and increased awareness of contemporary social issues. Educational institutions in Thiruvananthapuram regularly organize seminars, workshops, awareness programmes, and academic discussions on topics related to family, gender, social justice, and human rights. Such academic exposure encourages students to think critically about social issues and may influence their attitudes towards diverse family forms, including single-parent households.

In recent years, Kerala has witnessed noticeable changes in family patterns due to factors such as divorce, separation, migration, widowhood, adoption, and changing social values. Consequently, single-parent households have become increasingly visible in society. However, despite these changes, social stigma and stereotypes surrounding single-parent families continue to exist. Studying students in Thiruvananthapuram provides an opportunity to understand whether the younger, educated generation holds more inclusive attitudes or continues to reflect traditional societal beliefs.

The researcher selected postgraduate students from educational institutions within Thiruvananthapuram because they are expected to possess a higher level of educational awareness and greater exposure to media than many other population groups. Their opinions are valuable in understanding how education, media exposure, and social interaction contribute to the formation of perceptions regarding single-parent households.

The study area was therefore considered appropriate because it offered easy access to the target population, ensured the availability of respondents with diverse backgrounds, and provided a relevant setting for exploring the relationship between media, society, and students'

perceptions. Conducting the study in Thiruvananthapuram also enabled the researcher to collect reliable data within the available time and resources.

Overall, Thiruvananthapuram serves as an ideal study area for the present research due to its educational significance, social diversity, cultural inclusiveness, and widespread media accessibility. These characteristics make it possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households and the factors that shape these perceptions in the contemporary social context of Kerala.

3.8 VARIABLES

Variables are the measurable characteristics or factors that help the researcher understand the relationship between different aspects of a study. In the present research, the study examines how media influence and societal influence affect students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. Therefore, media influence and societal influence are treated as the independent variables, while students' perception towards single-parent households is considered the dependent variable.

3.8.1: Independent variables

1. Media Influence

Media influence refers to the role played by different forms of media in shaping students' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding single-parent households. In contemporary society, media has become one of the most powerful sources of information and socialization. Through television programmes, films, newspapers, magazines, online news portals, social media platforms, web series, advertisements, and digital content, individuals are continuously exposed to different portrayals of family life and social relationships. These portrayals influence how people understand and evaluate various family structures, including single-parent households.

In the present study, media influence is considered an independent variable because it is assumed to affect students' perceptions of single-parent families. Media has the ability to shape public opinion by presenting either positive or negative representations of single-parent households. Positive portrayals that depict single parents as responsible, resilient, caring, and capable individuals can encourage acceptance and reduce social stigma. Such representations

help students recognize that successful parenting depends on love, care, responsibility, and emotional support rather than the number of parents in a family.

On the other hand, media can also reinforce stereotypes when it portrays single-parent families as broken, unstable, problematic, or socially undesirable. Repeated exposure to such negative representations may influence students to develop biased attitudes and misconceptions about single-parent households. Sensational news reporting, misleading information, and unrealistic portrayals can further strengthen prejudice and discrimination within society.

The increasing use of social media has expanded the influence of media beyond traditional communication channels. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and X provide opportunities for people to share personal experiences, create awareness, participate in discussions, and challenge traditional stereotypes. At the same time, these platforms can also spread misinformation, fake news, and negative opinions that may influence public perceptions. Therefore, media influence in this study includes both traditional media and digital media, recognizing that each plays a significant role in shaping students' understanding of single-parent households.

For the purpose of this research, media influence was assessed through respondents' opinions regarding media exposure, media representation of single-parent families, the role of social media, and the extent to which media affects their perceptions and attitudes.

2. Societal Influence

Societal influence refers to the impact of social norms, cultural values, traditions, family beliefs, peer groups, educational institutions, religious values, and community attitudes on students' perceptions of single-parent households. Society plays a vital role in shaping individuals' beliefs and behaviours from childhood through continuous social interaction and socialization. People's understanding of family, marriage, parenting, and gender roles is largely influenced by the society in which they live.

In the present study, societal influence is treated as an independent variable because social attitudes and cultural expectations significantly affect how students perceive single-parent families. Kerala, although known for its high literacy rate and social development, still reflects certain traditional values regarding marriage and family life. In many communities, the two-parent family continues to be viewed as the ideal family structure, while single-parent households may sometimes face misunderstanding, prejudice, or social stigma.

Family members, relatives, friends, teachers, neighbours, and community members often influence students' opinions by sharing their beliefs and experiences. Students may develop positive attitudes when they grow up in environments that promote equality, inclusion, and respect for diverse family structures. Conversely, they may develop negative perceptions if they are repeatedly exposed to stereotypes, discrimination, or traditional beliefs that portray single-parent households as incomplete or socially undesirable.

Peer groups and educational institutions also contribute to societal influence. Through classroom discussions, seminars, social interactions, and academic learning, students are exposed to different viewpoints that may challenge or reinforce their existing beliefs. Educational institutions often promote values such as equality, human rights, and social justice, which can encourage greater acceptance of diverse family forms.

Societal influence also includes the role of cultural expectations regarding gender and parenting. In many cases, single mothers and single fathers may experience different forms of social judgment due to prevailing gender norms. Such societal expectations can influence how students perceive the abilities, responsibilities, and challenges of single-parent families.

For the purpose of this study, societal influence was measured through respondents' views on social acceptance, cultural beliefs, family values, peer influence, community attitudes, and the level of stigma associated with single-parent households.

3.8.2: Dependent variable

1. Students' Perception of Single-Parent Households

The dependent variable in the present study is students' perception of single-parent households. A dependent variable is the outcome or response that is influenced by one or more independent variables. In this research, students' perceptions are expected to be influenced by media representations and societal factors. Therefore, the study examines how these external influences shape the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of postgraduate students towards single-parent families in Kerala.

Students' perception refers to the way postgraduate students think, feel, understand, and evaluate single-parent households. It includes their attitudes, beliefs, level of acceptance, opinions, and understanding regarding families headed by either a single mother or a single father. These perceptions are formed through personal experiences, family upbringing,

educational exposure, media consumption, social interactions, cultural values, and community beliefs.

In recent years, the concept of family has undergone significant changes due to factors such as divorce, separation, widowhood, migration, adoption, and changing social values. As a result, single-parent households have become an increasingly visible part of society. However, despite these social changes, many single-parent families continue to experience stigma, discrimination, stereotypes, and social exclusion. Understanding students' perceptions is therefore important because today's students represent the younger generation, whose attitudes will influence the future social acceptance of diverse family structures.

In the present study, students' perception includes several dimensions. These include their level of acceptance of single-parent families, beliefs about the parenting abilities of single parents, opinions regarding the challenges faced by single-parent households, attitudes towards children raised in single-parent families, and perceptions about the social stigma associated with single parenthood. The study also examines whether students believe that single parents are capable of providing emotional care, financial support, moral guidance, and a healthy family environment for their children.

Another important aspect of this variable is the stigma associated with single-parent households. Stigma refers to the negative attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and social judgments directed towards individuals because they belong to a particular social group. In many societies, including parts of Kerala, single-parent families may face criticism due to traditional beliefs about marriage and family life. Such stigma can influence how people interact with single-parent families and may affect their opportunities for social participation and acceptance.

The study also considers students' willingness to support equal rights, dignity, and social inclusion for single-parent families. Positive perceptions are reflected in attitudes that recognize single-parent households as equally valuable and capable of providing a nurturing environment for children. Negative perceptions, on the other hand, may involve viewing single-parent families as incomplete, unstable, or less capable compared to two-parent families.

Students' perceptions are not formed in isolation but are continuously shaped by their interaction with family members, peers, educational institutions, media, and society. Exposure to positive media representation, inclusive education, and supportive social environments may encourage students to develop empathetic and accepting attitudes. Conversely, traditional

beliefs, social stereotypes, and negative media portrayals may reinforce prejudice and discrimination against single-parent households.

For the purpose of this study, students' perception was measured using a structured questionnaire containing close-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire assessed respondents' opinions regarding the parenting abilities of single parents, social acceptance, stigma, media representation, challenges faced by single-parent families, and measures to promote greater social inclusion. The responses collected from the participants provide valuable insights into the overall perceptions of postgraduate students towards single-parent households in Kerala.

Overall, students' perception of single-parent households serves as the central dependent variable of this research because it represents the outcome that is influenced by both media influence and societal influence. By analysing this variable, the study seeks to understand whether postgraduate students hold positive, neutral, or negative attitudes towards single-parent families and how these perceptions contribute to either reducing or reinforcing social stigma. The findings of the study provide important insights into the changing attitudes of young people and contribute to a better understanding of social acceptance and family diversity in contemporary Kerala.

3.9 HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis is a tentative statement that predicts the relationship between two or more variables. It provides a direction for the research and serves as a basis for collecting and analysing data. A hypothesis is developed based on existing literature, theoretical understanding, and the objectives of the study. In quantitative research, hypotheses are tested using statistical analysis to determine whether the proposed relationships between variables are supported by the collected data.

The present study examines how media influence and societal influence shape postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. Based on the objectives and variables of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated.

3.9.1: Null Hypothesis-H₀

- The null hypothesis assumes that there is no significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between media influence and postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between societal influence and postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.
- H₀₃: There is no significant association between the socio-demographic characteristics of postgraduate students and their perceptions of single-parent households.

3.9.2: Alternative Hypothesis-H1

The alternative hypothesis assumes that a significant relationship exists between the variables.

- H1: There is a significant relationship between media influence and postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between societal influence and postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.
- H3: There is a significant association between the socio-demographic characteristics of postgraduate students and their perceptions of single-parent households.

The hypotheses are developed based on the assumption that students' perceptions of single-parent households are not formed independently but are influenced by various social factors. Media, through television, films, newspapers, and social media platforms, continuously presents information and representations about different family structures. These portrayals may shape students' attitudes either positively by promoting acceptance or negatively by reinforcing stereotypes and stigma.

Similarly, society influences students through cultural values, family beliefs, peer interactions, educational institutions, and community attitudes. Traditional norms regarding marriage and family may contribute to negative perceptions of single-parent households, while changing social values and increased awareness may encourage greater acceptance and inclusion.

The study also considers that socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, religion, and family type may influence how students perceive single-parent families. Students from different backgrounds may have varying experiences, levels of awareness, and attitudes toward family diversity.

By testing these hypotheses, the study aims to determine whether media and societal influences have a statistically significant impact on postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent

households in Kerala. The results will help explain whether these factors contribute to reducing stigma and promoting social acceptance or whether they continue to reinforce traditional stereotypes.

3.10 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Operational definitions provide clear and specific meanings of the key concepts used in a research study. They explain how important terms are understood and measured within the context of the research. Defining these concepts operationally helps avoid ambiguity, ensures consistency in data collection and analysis, and enables readers to clearly understand the scope of the study. In the present study, the key concepts include students' perception, social stigma, and single-parent household, which are defined based on the objectives of the research and the variables used for analysis. These operational definitions provide a common framework for interpreting the findings and understanding the relationship between media, society, and students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.

3.10.1. Students' Perception

In the present study, students' perception refers to the attitudes, opinions, beliefs, understanding, and level of acceptance that postgraduate students hold towards single-parent households. These perceptions are shaped through various factors such as personal experiences, family upbringing, educational background, cultural values, social interactions, and exposure to different forms of media. Students may develop positive, negative, or neutral perceptions depending on the information and experiences they receive from their surroundings.

Students' perceptions include their views regarding the parenting abilities of single parents, the emotional and social well-being of children living in single-parent families, the challenges faced by such families, and the level of social acceptance they deserve. It also reflects whether students consider single-parent households as equal to other family structures and whether they support the inclusion and dignity of these families within society.

For the purpose of this study, students' perception was measured through a structured questionnaire that assessed respondents' attitudes towards single-parent households, their level of acceptance, opinions about social stigma, and their understanding of the influence of media and society on these family structures.

3.10.2. Social Stigma

In this study, social stigma refers to the negative attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, and social judgments directed towards single-parent households because they differ from the traditional two-parent family structure that is often considered socially ideal. Social stigma may arise from cultural beliefs, social norms, religious values, family expectations, and long-standing societal assumptions regarding marriage, parenting, and family life.

Single-parent families may experience criticism, social exclusion, humiliation, isolation, and unequal treatment simply because they do not conform to conventional family expectations. In many situations, single mothers and single fathers may face assumptions that they are incapable of raising children effectively or that their families are incomplete or unstable. Such stigma not only affects parents but can also influence the emotional well-being, confidence, and social experiences of their children.

In the context of this research, social stigma includes respondents' perceptions regarding discrimination, prejudice, lack of social acceptance, negative societal attitudes, and the challenges faced by single-parent households because of existing social beliefs and stereotypes.

3.10.3. Single-Parent Household

A single-parent household refers to a family in which one parent assumes the primary responsibility for raising and caring for one or more children without the continuous presence of a spouse or partner. Single-parent households may arise due to various circumstances, including divorce, separation, widowhood, the death of a spouse, migration, adoption, abandonment, or personal choice. Regardless of the reason, the single parent performs multiple roles by providing emotional care, financial support, guidance, protection, and socialization for the children.

In contemporary society, single-parent households have become increasingly visible due to changing family patterns, social transformations, and evolving cultural values. Despite this growing acceptance, many single-parent families continue to face economic challenges, social discrimination, emotional stress, and limited support from society. However, research has shown that the well-being of children depends more on the quality of parenting, emotional support, and a nurturing environment than on the number of parents in the household.

For the purpose of this study, a single-parent household refers to any family in which a single mother or a single father is primarily responsible for the upbringing and care of their child or children. The study examines postgraduate students' perceptions of these families, the influence of media and society on those perceptions, and the extent to which stigma affects the social acceptance of single-parent households in Kerala.

These operational definitions provide a clear conceptual foundation for the study and ensure that the key terms are understood consistently throughout the research. They also establish the basis for analysing how media and societal influences shape postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households and the stigma associated with them.

3.11 SAMPLE

The sample refers to the group of individuals selected from the target population to participate in a research study. Since it is often not possible to collect data from every member of the population, a representative sample is chosen to obtain reliable and meaningful information. The quality of the sample plays an important role in determining the accuracy and credibility of the research findings. Therefore, selecting an appropriate sample is essential for achieving the objectives of the study.

In the present study, the sample consisted of 80 postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram. These respondents were selected because they met the objectives and requirements of the research. The study focuses on understanding students' perceptions of single-parent households and examining how media and society influence these perceptions. Therefore, postgraduate students were considered the most suitable participants for the research.

Postgraduate students represent a group of educated young adults who are exposed to diverse social, cultural, and educational environments. They regularly engage with contemporary social issues through classroom learning, academic discussions, seminars, workshops, social interactions, and digital platforms. This exposure enables them to develop informed opinions about social changes, family structures, gender roles, and social justice. As a result, they are more likely to provide thoughtful and meaningful responses regarding the issue of single-parent households.

Another important reason for selecting postgraduate students is their high level of media exposure. In today's digital age, postgraduate students actively use newspapers, television,

films, online news platforms, and especially social media such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and X. These media platforms continuously present information, discussions, and representations of different family structures, including single-parent households. Since the present study examines the influence of media on students' perceptions, selecting respondents who regularly interact with different forms of media was considered appropriate.

Postgraduate students also come from diverse social, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds. Many students studying in Thiruvananthapuram originate from different districts of Kerala, bringing with them varied family experiences, values, and perspectives. This diversity enriches the study by allowing the researcher to understand perceptions across different social backgrounds rather than limiting the findings to a single community or locality.

The sample included students belonging to different family types, including joint families, nuclear families, and single-parent families. This diversity enabled the researcher to capture a broader range of opinions and experiences regarding single-parent households. Students who have personal experience with different family structures may offer unique perspectives, while those without direct experience can reflect the influence of media and societal attitudes on their perceptions.

The selected sample of 80 postgraduate students was considered adequate to meet the objectives of the study within the available time, resources, and research scope. The sample size allowed the researcher to collect sufficient quantitative data for statistical analysis while ensuring effective management of data collection and interpretation.

The respondents voluntarily participated in the study after providing informed consent. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher clearly explained the objectives of the research, assured participants of confidentiality, and informed them that participation was entirely voluntary. This ethical approach helped create a comfortable environment for respondents to express their genuine opinions and experiences.

Overall, the selected sample was appropriate for the present study because postgraduate students possess the educational background, media exposure, social awareness, and critical thinking necessary to examine the influence of media and society on perceptions of single-parent households. Their responses provide valuable insights into the attitudes of educated youth towards changing family structures and contribute significantly to understanding the extent of social acceptance and stigma associated with single-parent households in Kerala.

3.12 SAMPLING SIZE

Sampling is the process of selecting a group of participants from the target population to represent the entire population in a research study. Since it is often difficult and time-consuming to collect data from every individual in the population, researchers select a sample that can provide reliable and meaningful information. A carefully selected sampling method helps ensure that the findings of the study are relevant, accurate, and capable of addressing the research objectives.

The present study employed a purposive sampling method to select the respondents. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are deliberately chosen based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the objectives of the study. In this method, the researcher uses judgment to identify individuals who are most capable of providing meaningful information related to the research problem.

Purposive sampling was considered the most appropriate method for this study because the research specifically focuses on postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. The researcher intentionally selected postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram as they possessed the characteristics required for the study. These students were expected to have adequate educational exposure, awareness of contemporary social issues, and regular interaction with different forms of media, making them suitable participants for examining perceptions towards single-parent households.

One of the main reasons for selecting purposive sampling was that postgraduate students are more likely to have developed informed opinions through their academic learning, social interactions, and media exposure. They regularly engage with discussions related to family, gender, social change, human rights, and cultural diversity, enabling them to provide thoughtful and informed responses. Their educational background allows them to critically analyse social issues and express their perceptions regarding changing family structures.

Another reason for using purposive sampling was the nature of the research objectives. The study does not attempt to generalize the opinions of the entire population of Kerala. Instead, it seeks to understand the perceptions of a specific group postgraduate students who are considered particularly relevant to the research topic. Therefore, selecting respondents who met the inclusion criteria was more appropriate than using random sampling methods.

The respondents were selected from different postgraduate programmes and educational institutions in Thiruvananthapuram to ensure diversity in terms of gender, religion, family background, and socio-cultural experiences. This diversity helped the researcher obtain a broader understanding of students' perceptions while maintaining the focus on the target population.

A total of 80 postgraduate students were included in the sample. Before collecting the data, the researcher approached eligible participants, explained the purpose and objectives of the study, assured them that their responses would remain confidential, and informed them that participation was entirely voluntary. Only those students who willingly agreed to participate and provided informed consent were included in the study. This ensured that the research was conducted according to accepted ethical principles.

The purposive sampling method also offered several practical advantages. It enabled the researcher to identify respondents who possessed relevant knowledge and experiences related to the research topic. It reduced the time and resources required for data collection while ensuring that the selected participants could provide meaningful information. Since the study specifically aimed to understand students' perceptions rather than represent the entire population statistically, purposive sampling was the most suitable and effective approach.

However, like other non-probability sampling techniques, purposive sampling has certain limitations. Since participants are selected based on the researcher's judgment rather than random selection, the findings cannot be generalized to all postgraduate students or the entire population of Kerala. Nevertheless, the method provides rich and reliable information from participants who are directly relevant to the objectives of the study, thereby strengthening the overall quality and usefulness of the research.

In conclusion, the purposive sampling method was the most appropriate choice for the present study because it enabled the researcher to select respondents who were knowledgeable, socially aware, and actively exposed to media and contemporary social issues. The method ensured that the data collected were directly relevant to the research objectives and contributed to a comprehensive understanding of how media and society influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.

3.13 SOURCE OF DATA

The present study is based on both primary data and secondary data. The use of both sources enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive information about the research problem and strengthened the overall quality and credibility of the study. While primary data provided first-hand information directly from the respondents, secondary data offered theoretical and conceptual support for understanding the topic.

3.13.1. Primary Data

Primary data refers to the original information collected directly by the researcher from the respondents for the specific purpose of the study. In the present research, primary data were collected from 80 postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling method, as they were considered suitable for examining students' perceptions of single-parent households.

The primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed according to the objectives of the study. The questionnaire included socio-demographic questions, multiple-choice questions, Likert scale statements, and open-ended questions related to media influence, societal attitudes, social stigma, and students' perceptions of single-parent households. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, obtained informed consent from all participants, and assured them that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic purposes. The information collected through the questionnaire served as the main source of data for statistical analysis and interpretation.

The questionnaire consisted of different sections to collect comprehensive information from the respondents:

- Section A: Socio-demographic details, including age, gender, religion, educational status, and type of family.
- Section B: Questions related to respondents' media exposure, including their use of television, newspapers, films, online media, and social media platforms.
- Section C: Statements measuring students' perceptions of single-parent households using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

- Section D: Questions related to societal attitudes, social stigma, acceptance of single-parent households, and respondents' opinions regarding the role of media in shaping perceptions.
- Section E: Open-ended questions that allowed respondents to express their personal views, suggestions, and opinions regarding the challenges faced by single-parent families and possible measures to reduce social stigma.

3.13.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to information that has already been collected, published, or documented by other researchers, institutions, or organizations. In the present study, secondary data were collected to provide theoretical background, conceptual understanding, and empirical support for the research. These data helped the researcher review existing knowledge on single-parent households, media influence, social stigma, family diversity, and students' perceptions.

The secondary data were collected from a variety of reliable sources, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, dissertations, government publications, census reports, reports of international organizations, newspapers, magazines, official websites, and other academic publications. Relevant information was also gathered from online academic databases such as Google Scholar, research repositories, and institutional websites. These sources were used primarily for preparing the introduction, review of literature, theoretical framework, and research methodology, as well as for supporting the interpretation of the findings.

The use of both primary and secondary data enhanced the reliability, validity, and comprehensiveness of the study. Primary data provided direct evidence regarding postgraduate students' perceptions, while secondary data offered a broader academic perspective and helped place the findings within the existing body of sociological research. Together, these two sources contributed to a more systematic and meaningful understanding of how media and society influence students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.

For the present study, secondary data were collected from various academic and authentic sources, including:

- Books on sociology, family studies, media studies, and research methodology.

- Peer-reviewed journal articles related to single-parent households, media influence, social stigma, and students' perceptions.
- Research dissertations and theses.
- Government reports and publications.
- Reports published by national and international organizations.
- Census reports and statistical publications.
- Reputable online databases and academic websites such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and institutional repositories.

3.14 TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

The success of any research study largely depends on the selection of an appropriate data collection tool. A well-designed research instrument helps the researcher collect accurate, reliable, and relevant information that addresses the objectives of the study. The choice of the data collection tool should be based on the nature of the research problem, the research design, the characteristics of the respondents, and the type of data required. In quantitative research, structured questionnaires are widely used because they enable the researcher to collect standardized information from a large number of respondents in a systematic and objective manner.

In the present study, a Self-administered questionnaire was used as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire was specifically prepared by the researcher after reviewing relevant literature, previous studies, and the objectives of the research. It was designed to collect information regarding postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households and to examine how media and society influence these perceptions. The questionnaire ensured that all respondents were asked the same set of questions, thereby maintaining consistency and improving the reliability of the data collected.

The questionnaire was simple, clear, and easy for the respondents to understand. It was prepared in English using straightforward language to avoid confusion and encourage honest responses. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants, assured them that their responses would remain confidential, and

informed them that participation was completely voluntary. This helped create a comfortable environment in which respondents could express their opinions freely.

The questionnaire consisted of different sections to obtain comprehensive information from the respondents. The first section collected socio-demographic information, including age, gender, religion, educational status, and type of family. These variables helped the researcher understand the background characteristics of the respondents and examine whether demographic factors influenced their perceptions.

The second section included multiple-choice questions related to media exposure, sources of information, and general awareness of single-parent households. These questions provided an understanding of the respondents' level of exposure to different forms of media and their familiarity with the research topic.

The third section consisted of Likert scale statements, where respondents indicated their level of agreement on a five-point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. These statements focused on issues such as media influence, societal attitudes, social stigma, parenting abilities of single parents, and the acceptance of single-parent households. The Likert scale enabled the researcher to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions in a systematic and quantifiable manner.

The final section included open-ended questions, allowing respondents to express their views, experiences, and suggestions in their own words. These questions provided deeper insights into the challenges faced by single-parent families, the influence of media on public perceptions, and measures that could help reduce stigma and promote greater social acceptance. The open-ended responses complemented the quantitative findings by providing richer explanations and diverse perspectives.

Overall, the structured questionnaire proved to be an effective and appropriate tool for collecting data in the present study. It enabled the researcher to gather comprehensive information on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, their perceptions of single-parent households, the influence of media and society, and their suggestions for reducing stigma. The data collected through the questionnaire formed the basis for statistical analysis and interpretation, contributing significantly to the achievement of the research objectives.

3.15 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an important stage in the research process because it helps the researcher organize, interpret, and present the collected data in a meaningful way. After collecting information from the respondents, the data must be systematically classified, coded, and analysed to identify patterns, relationships, and trends that address the research objectives. Proper data analysis enables the researcher to draw valid conclusions and present findings in a clear and scientific manner.

In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative data obtained through the structured questionnaire were analysed using appropriate techniques. Quantitative data were analysed using statistical methods, while the responses to open-ended questions were analysed through thematic interpretation to provide a deeper understanding of the respondents' views.

3.15.2 Analytic Strategy

The data collected from the 80 postgraduate students were first checked for completeness and accuracy. The responses were then coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. SPSS was selected because it is one of the most widely used statistical software packages in social science research and provides accurate and efficient data management and analysis.

The analysis mainly focused on descriptive statistical techniques, which were appropriate for achieving the objectives of the study. The following tools were used:

3.15.3 Frequency Distribution

Frequency distribution was used to determine the number of respondents belonging to each category. It helped summarize the responses and understand the distribution of variables such as age, gender, religion, family type, and students' opinions regarding single-parent households.

3.15.4 Percentage Analysis

Percentage analysis was used to convert the frequency of responses into percentages, making the data easier to understand and compare. It was applied to describe socio-demographic

characteristics and respondents' perceptions regarding media influence, societal attitudes, stigma, and acceptance of single-parent households.

3.15.5 Tables

The analysed data were presented using statistical tables. Tables helped organize the data systematically and enabled easy comparison between different variables. They also made the findings clear, concise, and easy to interpret.

3.15.6 Graphs and Charts

Different types of graphs and charts were used to present the findings visually. Graphical representation made the data more attractive and understandable by illustrating trends and patterns in respondents' opinions. Bar graphs and pie charts were mainly used to present socio-demographic details and respondents' perceptions.

3.15.7 Likert Scale Analysis

The study included five-point Likert scale statements ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. These responses were analysed using frequencies and percentages to measure students' attitudes and perceptions regarding single-parent households, media influence, societal attitudes, and social stigma.

3.15.8 Thematic Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Although the study primarily followed a quantitative approach, the responses obtained through open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis. Similar responses were grouped into common themes such as financial challenges, social stigma, media influence, awareness, social acceptance, and policy support. This analysis provided deeper insights into the opinions and suggestions of the respondents and supported the quantitative findings.

3.16 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study conducted before the main research to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of the research design, data collection tools, and research

procedures. It helps the researcher identify potential problems, improve the research instrument, and ensure that the study can be carried out smoothly. Conducting a pilot study is an important step in quantitative research because it enhances the reliability and validity of the research instrument before the actual data collection begins.

In the present study, a pilot study was conducted among a small group of postgraduate students who possessed characteristics similar to those of the respondents selected for the main study. The participants of the pilot study were not included in the final sample. The primary objective of conducting the pilot study was to assess the suitability of the structured questionnaire and to identify any difficulties that respondents might experience while answering the questions.

During the pilot study, the researcher examined whether the questions were clear, simple, and easy to understand. Special attention was given to the wording, sequence, and relevance of the questions related to media influence, societal attitudes, social stigma, and students' perceptions of single-parent households. The pilot study also helped determine whether the questionnaire adequately covered the objectives of the research and whether the response options were appropriate.

The pilot study provided an opportunity to identify ambiguities, confusing statements, repetitive questions, and any technical or practical difficulties that could affect the quality of data collection. Feedback received from the participants helped the researcher revise the questionnaire by improving the wording of certain questions, simplifying the language wherever necessary, and arranging the questions in a more logical order. These modifications enhanced the clarity, readability, and overall effectiveness of the research instrument.

The pilot study also enabled the researcher to estimate the approximate time required to complete the questionnaire and to ensure that the questionnaire was neither too lengthy nor difficult for the respondents. This helped reduce respondent fatigue and improved the likelihood of obtaining complete and accurate responses during the main survey.

Furthermore, the pilot study allowed the researcher to evaluate the overall feasibility of the research process, including obtaining informed consent, administering the questionnaire, maintaining confidentiality, and managing the collected data. It provided valuable practical experience that helped the researcher conduct the final data collection in a systematic and organized manner.

Overall, the pilot study played a significant role in improving the quality of the research. It ensured that the questionnaire was reliable, understandable, and aligned with the objectives of the study. By identifying and correcting potential problems before the main survey, the pilot study enhanced the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the data collected from the 80 postgraduate students included in the final research.

3.17 PRETEST

A pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted before the final data collection to evaluate the quality, clarity, and suitability of the research instrument. A pre-test is an important step in quantitative research as it helps the researcher determine whether the questionnaire is easy to understand, relevant to the research objectives, and capable of collecting accurate and meaningful information from the respondents.

In the present study, the pre-test was carried out among a small group of postgraduate students who possessed characteristics similar to those of the target population. The respondents who participated in the pre-test were not included in the final sample of the study. The main purpose of conducting the pre-test was to identify any difficulties that respondents might face while answering the questionnaire and to ensure that all questions were clear, simple, and logically arranged.

During the pre-test, the researcher carefully examined the clarity of the language, the relevance of each question, the sequence of the questionnaire, and the appropriateness of the response options. Particular attention was given to the questions related to media influence, societal attitudes, social stigma, and students' perceptions of single-parent households. The researcher also observed whether the respondents interpreted the questions in the intended manner and whether any questions created confusion or misunderstanding.

Based on the feedback received during the pre-test, necessary modifications were made to improve the quality of the research instrument. Some questions were reworded to make them easier to understand, unnecessary or repetitive items were revised, and the order of certain questions was rearranged to ensure a smooth flow of responses. These improvements enhanced the clarity, readability, and overall effectiveness of the questionnaire.

The pre-test also helped the researcher estimate the average time required to complete the questionnaire and ensured that the instrument was convenient and respondent-friendly. This

reduced the possibility of incomplete responses and improved the accuracy of the data collected during the main survey.

Overall, the pre-test significantly strengthened the quality of the research instrument by ensuring that it was clear, relevant, reliable, and appropriate for the objectives of the study. It increased the validity of the questionnaire and contributed to the collection of accurate and dependable data from the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the final study.

3.18 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical considerations are an essential part of any research study as they ensure that the rights, dignity, privacy, and well-being of the participants are protected throughout the research process. Following ethical principles helps establish trust between the researcher and the participants and enhances the credibility and integrity of the study. In social science research, maintaining ethical standards is particularly important because the study involves collecting information directly from individuals about their opinions, attitudes, and experiences.

In the present study, appropriate ethical principles were followed at every stage of the research. Before collecting the data, the researcher clearly explained the purpose, objectives, and significance of the study to all the participants. The respondents were informed that the research was conducted purely for academic purposes as part of the postgraduate dissertation and that the information collected would be used only for research purposes.

Informed consent was obtained from every participant before administering the questionnaire. The respondents were provided with sufficient information about the nature of the study, the type of questions included in the questionnaire, and the expected time required to complete it. Only those students who voluntarily agreed to participate were included in the study.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. The respondents were informed that they had the freedom to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without providing any reason and without facing any negative consequences. They were also informed that they could choose not to answer any question if they felt uncomfortable.

The researcher ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. No names, roll numbers, or any other personal identifying information were collected in the questionnaire. The responses were kept strictly confidential and were used only for academic analysis. The information collected was stored securely, and only the researcher had access to the data. The

findings were presented in the form of tables, graphs, and percentages without revealing the identity of any individual respondent.

Special care was taken to respect the dignity and privacy of every participant throughout the research process. The questionnaire was designed to avoid offensive, discriminatory, or sensitive questions that could cause emotional discomfort or embarrassment. Respondents were encouraged to answer honestly and freely without any pressure or influence from the researcher.

The researcher also ensured that the principle of non-maleficence was maintained throughout the study. This means that the research did not cause any physical, psychological, social, or emotional harm to the participants. The study focused only on understanding students' perceptions of single-parent households and did not involve any form of intervention or risk.

The principle of beneficence was also considered by ensuring that the findings of the study could contribute to a better understanding of social attitudes towards single-parent households. The research aims to promote awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage greater acceptance of diverse family structures in society.

Finally, the researcher-maintained honesty, transparency, and academic integrity throughout the research process. The data collected from the respondents were analysed objectively without manipulation or misrepresentation. Proper acknowledgment and citation were given to all books, journal articles, reports, and other scholarly sources used in the study to avoid plagiarism and maintain academic ethics.

Overall, the study was conducted in accordance with the accepted ethical principles of social science research. By ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, respect for participants, and academic integrity, the researcher maintained high ethical standards throughout the research process. These ethical considerations enhanced the reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study while protecting the rights and welfare of all participants.

3.19 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every research study has certain limitations that may influence the scope and generalization of its findings. Identifying these limitations helps provide a realistic understanding of the research and guides future researchers in conducting more comprehensive studies. Although every effort

was made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the study, the present research has the following limitations.

The study was conducted only among postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram. Therefore, the findings represent the perceptions of this specific group of students and cannot be generalized to all students in Kerala or to the wider population. Students from other districts or educational backgrounds may have different experiences and opinions regarding single-parent households.

The sample size of the study was limited to 80 respondents. Although this sample size was adequate for the objectives of the present research, a larger sample covering more educational institutions and districts could provide a broader understanding of students' perceptions and improve the generalizability of the findings.

The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a structured questionnaire. While this method allowed the collection of measurable and comparable data, it did not provide opportunities to explore respondents' personal experiences, emotions, or deeper meanings in detail. A qualitative or mixed-method approach involving interviews or focus group discussions could provide richer insights into students' perceptions and experiences.

The research followed a cross-sectional research design, which means that data were collected at a single point in time. As a result, the study reflects students' perceptions only during the period of data collection. Since attitudes and perceptions may change over time due to social change, media exposure, or personal experiences, the findings cannot capture these changes over a longer period.

The study mainly focused on the influence of media and society on students' perceptions of single-parent households. However, several other factors such as personal experiences, religious beliefs, family relationships, psychological factors, socioeconomic status, educational background, and individual values may also influence perceptions. These factors were beyond the scope of the present study.

The data were collected through self-reported responses, which depend on the honesty and understanding of the participants. Some respondents may have provided socially desirable answers instead of expressing their actual opinions, especially because the topic relates to social attitudes and stigma. Such response bias may have influenced some of the findings.

The study examined students' perceptions of single-parent households rather than the actual experiences of single parents or their children. Therefore, the findings reflect the views of postgraduate students and should not be interpreted as representing the lived experiences of single-parent families themselves.

Although the study considered the role of media, it did not examine the influence of specific media content, individual media platforms, or frequency of media exposure in detail. Future studies may explore how particular forms of media, such as television, films, newspapers, or social media platforms, differently influence public perceptions of single-parent households.

The study was conducted within the limited time frame available for the postgraduate dissertation. Due to time and resource constraints, the researcher was unable to include a larger geographical area or conduct follow-up studies that might have provided additional insights.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the influence of media and society on postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge by highlighting the role of media representations, societal attitudes, and stigma in shaping perceptions of diverse family structures. The findings can serve as a foundation for future research involving larger samples, different population groups, comparative studies, and qualitative investigations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of single-parent households and their social acceptance.

3.20 CONCLUSION

The methodology adopted for the present study provided a systematic and scientific framework for achieving the objectives of the research. Since the study aimed to examine the influence of media and society on postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala, a quantitative research approach with a descriptive cross-sectional research design was considered the most appropriate. This approach enabled the researcher to collect measurable data from respondents and analyse their attitudes, opinions, and perceptions in an objective and reliable manner.

The study was conducted among 80 postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram, who were selected using the purposive sampling method. A structured questionnaire served as the primary tool for data collection and included socio-demographic details, Likert scale statements, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. The

questionnaire helped gather comprehensive information regarding students' perceptions, media influence, societal attitudes, and the stigma associated with single-parent households.

Throughout the research process, ethical principles such as informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for the rights of participants were strictly maintained. The collected data were organised, coded, and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages, tables, and graphs were used to interpret the findings, while the responses to open-ended questions provided additional insights into students' opinions and experiences.

Although the study has certain limitations, including a relatively small sample size and its focus on postgraduate students in Thiruvananthapuram, the adopted methodology ensured that the research objectives were achieved in a systematic, reliable, and ethical manner. The methodological framework provided a strong foundation for understanding the relationship between media influence, societal influence, and students' perceptions of single-parent households.

Overall, the methodology adopted in this study ensured the collection of valid and meaningful data, contributing to a better understanding of the stigma surrounding single-parent households and the role of media and society in shaping students' perceptions. The findings generated through this methodological process provide valuable insights for future research, educational institutions, policymakers, and social workers working towards promoting social inclusion, equality, and acceptance of diverse family structures in Kerala.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Data analysis is one of the most important stages of any research because it helps transform the collected information into meaningful findings. It involves organizing, classifying, summarizing, and interpreting the data in order to answer the research objectives and draw valid conclusions. The process of data analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns, trends, relationships, and variations within the collected data, thereby providing a clear understanding of the research problem.

The present study, "Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single Parent Household in Kerala," aims to examine how media and society influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households. To achieve this objective, primary data were collected from 80 postgraduate students in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, using a questionnaire. The questionnaire included questions related to respondents' socio-demographic profile, media exposure, perceptions of single-parent households, social stigma, media representation, and attitudes towards diverse family structures.

After the completion of data collection, the responses were carefully checked, coded, classified, and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The use of SPSS helped ensure accuracy in data management and statistical analysis. The study mainly employed descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, tables, and graphical representations, to summarize and present the data in a clear and systematic manner. These statistical tools made it easier to understand the distribution of responses and identify the overall perceptions of the participants.

4.2 DECLARATION OF CONSENT

Before collecting the data, informed consent was obtained from all the respondents to ensure that the study followed ethical research practices. The participants were clearly informed about the purpose and objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their personal information, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. Only those students who willingly agreed to participate were

included in the research. The informed consent process ensured transparency, protected the rights of the participants, and promoted the collection of honest and reliable responses.



Figure 4.1 Declaration of Consent

Analysis

The finding indicates that all respondents participated in the study with a proper understanding of its objectives and purpose. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher explained the aim of the study, the nature of the questions, and assured the participants that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic research. As a result, all participants were able to provide informed consent and respond to the questionnaire with clarity and confidence.

The fact that 100% of the respondents understood the purpose of the study enhances the reliability and credibility of the data collected. When participants clearly understand why the research is being conducted, they are more likely to provide thoughtful, accurate, and honest responses. This also reflects that ethical principles of social research, such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and transparency, were properly followed throughout the data collection process. Overall, the findings suggest that the respondents were well informed about the study, which strengthens the quality of the research and increases confidence in the validity of the findings obtained from the survey.

The graph shows the respondents' understanding of the purpose of the study before participating in the survey. The findings reveal that 100% of the postgraduate students (80

respondents) reported that they understood the purpose of the study. None of the respondents indicated that they were unaware of the objectives or purpose of the research. This demonstrates that every participant had a clear understanding of the research before providing their responses.

The finding indicates that all respondents participated in the study with a proper understanding of its objectives and purpose. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher explained the aim of the study, the nature of the questions, and assured the participants that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for academic research. As a result, all participants were able to provide informed consent and respond to the questionnaire with clarity and confidence.

The fact that 100% of the respondents understood the purpose of the study enhances the reliability and credibility of the data collected. When participants clearly understand why the research is being conducted, they are more likely to provide thoughtful, accurate, and honest responses. This also reflects that ethical principles of social research, such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and transparency, were properly followed throughout the data collection process.

Overall, the findings suggest that the respondents were well informed about the study, which strengthens the quality of the research and increases confidence in the validity of the findings obtained from the survey.

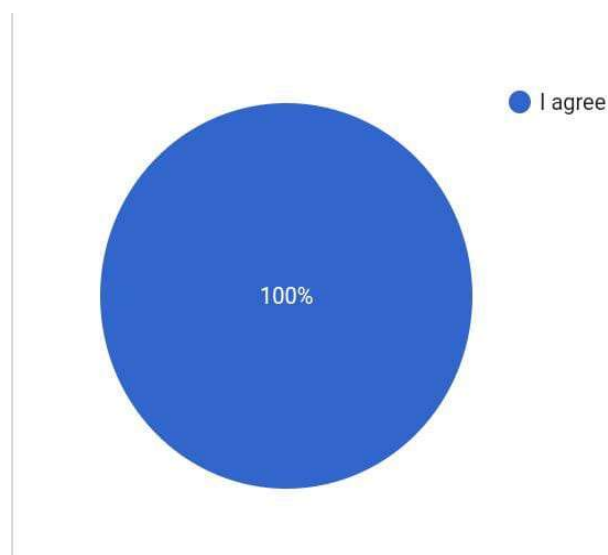


Figure 4.2 Voluntary consent

The second graph illustrates the respondents' voluntary consent to participate in the study. The findings reveal that **100% of the postgraduate students (80 respondents)** voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. None of the respondents reported that they were unwilling or forced to take part in the study. This indicates that every participant willingly provided their consent before responding to the questionnaire.

The finding shows that all respondents participated in the research based on their own free will after being informed about the purpose and nature of the study. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher explained the objectives of the research, assured the participants that their responses would be kept confidential, and informed them that their participation was entirely voluntary. The respondents were also made aware that they had the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

The fact that 100% of the respondents voluntarily consented to participate reflects that the researcher followed the ethical principles of social science research, particularly informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for the rights of the participants. Since the respondents willingly agreed to participate, the information collected can be considered more genuine and reliable, as the responses were provided without any pressure or coercion.

Overall, the findings indicate that the study was conducted in accordance with accepted research ethics and that all participants actively and voluntarily contributed to the research. This strengthens the credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the data collected and enhances the overall quality of the study.

Understanding Regarding The Confidentiality Of Their Personal Responses

The third graph presents the respondents' understanding regarding the confidentiality of their personal responses during the study. The findings show that 100% of the postgraduate students (80 respondents) stated that they understood their personal information and responses would remain confidential. None of the respondents expressed any concern or lack of understanding regarding the confidentiality of the data collected. This indicates that all participants were fully

aware that the information they provided would be kept private and used only for academic research purposes.

The findings indicate that every respondent clearly understood that their personal responses would remain confidential throughout the research process. Before administering the questionnaire, the

researcher informed the participants that their names and personal identities would not be disclosed and that the information collected would be used solely for academic purposes. This assurance helped create a sense of trust and encouraged the respondents to answer the questions honestly and without hesitation.

The fact that 100% of the respondents acknowledged the confidentiality of their responses demonstrates that the researcher followed the ethical principles of social science research, particularly maintaining privacy, confidentiality, and respect for participants' rights. Ensuring confidentiality is essential in research because it protects respondents from any potential social or personal risks and promotes openness in sharing their genuine opinions.

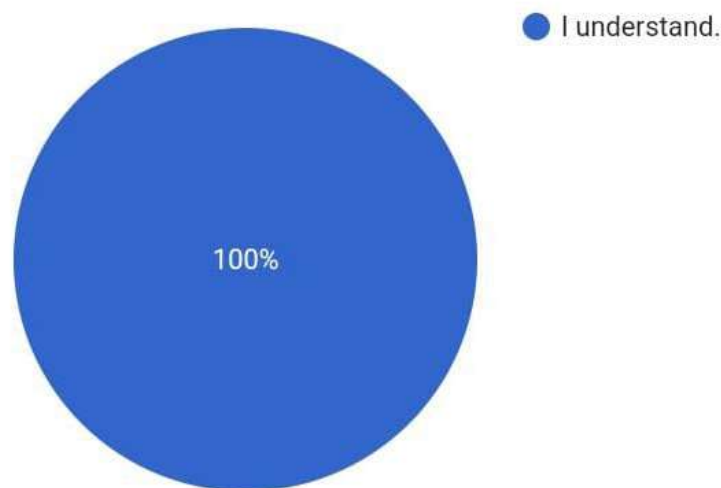
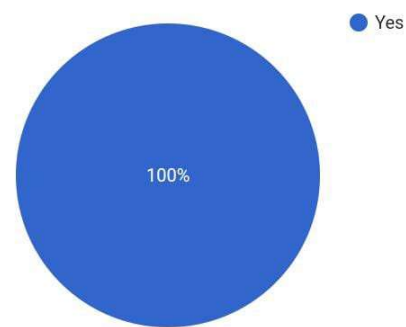


Figure 4.3 Awareness of their right to withdraw

The fourth graph presents the respondents' awareness of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process. The findings reveal that 100% of the postgraduate students

(80 respondents) understood that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished. None of the respondents reported any lack of awareness regarding this right. This indicates that all participants were fully informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue their involvement without any obligation or negative consequences.

The findings indicate that every respondent was aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher clearly explained that participation was entirely voluntary and that respondents were free to refuse answering any question or discontinue their participation whenever they wished, without facing any penalty or disadvantage. This ensured that participants made an informed decision to take part in the research.

The fact that 100% of the respondents understood their right to withdraw demonstrates that the researcher followed the fundamental ethical principles of social science research, particularly respect for participants' autonomy and voluntary participation. Informing participants about their freedom to withdraw protects their rights, promotes transparency, and ensures that no respondent feels pressured or compelled to continue in the study.

Overall, the findings suggest that the research was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards. By ensuring that every participant understood their right to withdraw at any time, the researcher created a respectful and trustworthy research environment. This strengthened the ethical integrity of the study and contributed to the collection of genuine, reliable, and unbiased data.

4.3 SECTION A -SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents provides essential background information about the participants included in the study. It helps in understanding the characteristics of the sample and offers context for interpreting the research findings. In the present study, socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, educational status, type of family, and other relevant characteristics were collected from the respondents. These variables help explain how different social and personal backgrounds may influence students' perceptions of single-parent households. The analysis of the socio-demographic profile also ensures that the study represents participants from diverse backgrounds, thereby improving the reliability and validity of the research findings.

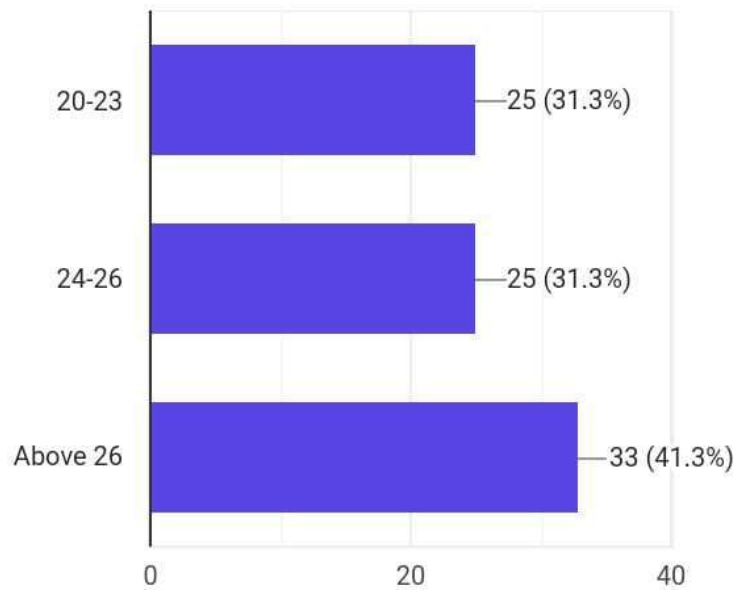


Figure 4.4 Age Distribution of Respondents

The graph represents the age distribution of the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study. Among the respondents, the highest proportion belonged to the above 26 years age group, with 33 respondents (41.3%). The age groups 20–23 years and 24–26 years had equal representation, with 25 respondents each (31.3%).

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents were above 26 years of age, suggesting that a significant portion of participants were mature postgraduate students who may have greater exposure to social issues, media discussions, and changing family structures. The balanced participation of students from different age groups provides diverse perspectives on media influence, societal attitudes, and perceptions toward single-parent households in Kerala.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

The graph presents the gender distribution of the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study. The majority of the respondents were female, with 50 participants (62.5%), followed by male respondents, with 29 participants (36.3%). Respondents identifying as other genders represented 3.8% (3 participants) of the total sample.

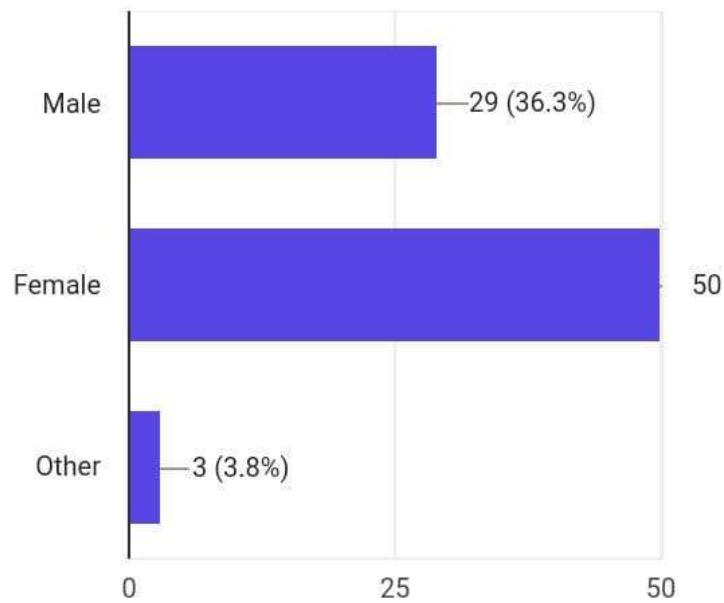


Figure 4.5 Gender Distribution of Respondents

The findings show that female respondents formed the largest proportion of the study participants. The inclusion of respondents from different gender categories provides varied perspectives on media influence, societal attitudes, and perceptions toward single-parent households. The higher participation of female students may contribute valuable insights, particularly regarding social stigma, family expectations, and changing views on diverse family structures in Kerala.

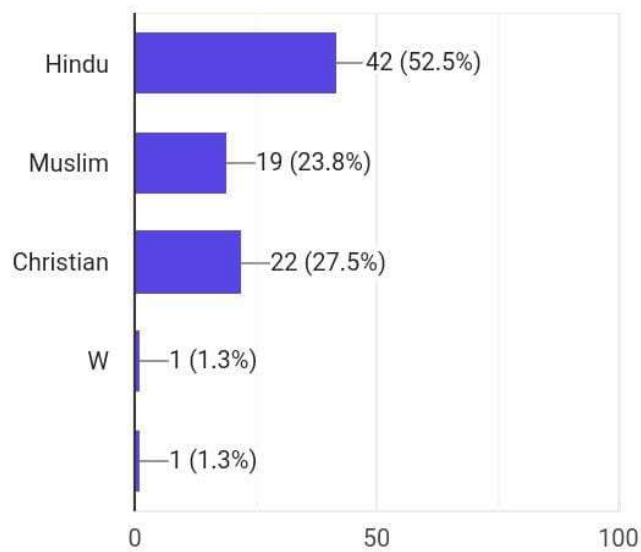


Figure 4.6 Religion Distribution of Respondents

Analysis

The graph represents the religious background of the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study. The majority of respondents belonged to the Hindu community, with 42 participants (52.5%). This was followed by Christian respondents, with 22 participants (27.5%), and Muslim respondents, with 19 participants (23.8%). A small proportion of respondents belonged to other categories, representing 1.3% each.

Interpretation

The findings indicate that the study included respondents from different religious backgrounds, allowing the research to capture diverse social and cultural perspectives. Since religious and cultural values can influence ideas about family structure, marriage, and parenting, the inclusion of participants from different communities helps in understanding varied perceptions and attitudes toward single-parent households in Kerala.

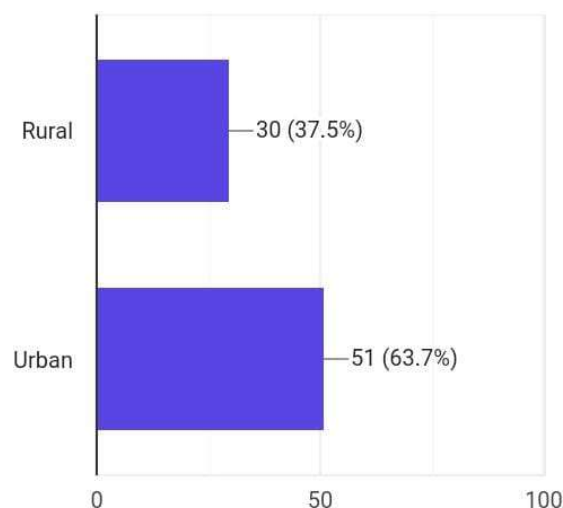


Figure 4.7 Place of Residence of Respondents

Analysis

The graph presents the place of residence of the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study. The majority of respondents belonged to urban areas, with 51 participants (63.7%), while 30 respondents (37.5%) were from rural areas.

Interpretation

The findings show that a larger proportion of participants were from urban backgrounds. Urban students may have greater exposure to diverse family structures, media platforms, and changing social perspectives, which can influence their attitudes toward single-parent households. The inclusion of both urban and rural respondents helps the study understand differences in social experiences and perceptions regarding single-parent families in Kerala.

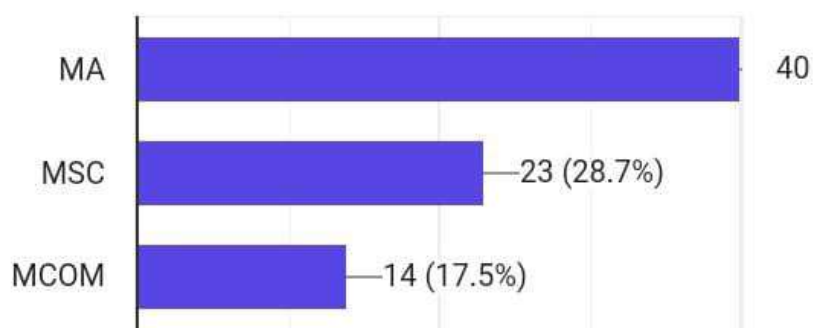


Figure 4.8 Educational Qualification of Respondents

The highest proportion of respondents were MA students, with 40 participants (50%), followed by MSc students, with 25 participants and MCom represented 15 participants (17.5%).

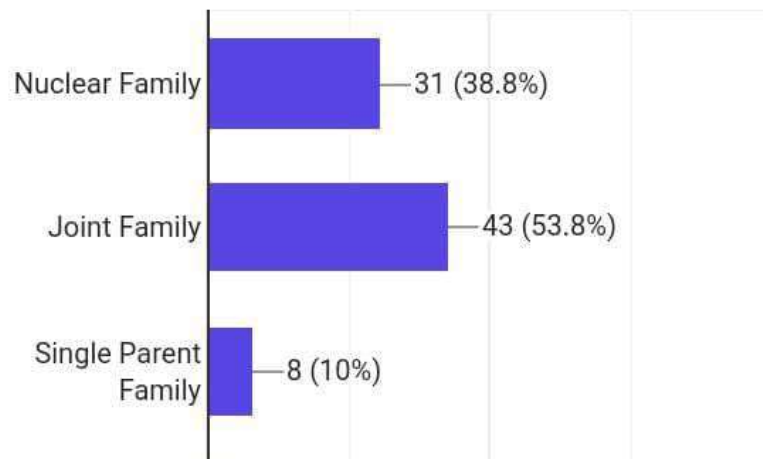


Figure 4.9 Family types distribution

The figure presents the distribution of respondents according to their family type. Out of the 80 postgraduate students, 43 respondents (53.8%) belong to joint families, making it the largest category. 31 respondents (38.8%) belong to nuclear families, while 8 respondents (10%) belong to single-parent families.

The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents come from joint families, followed by nuclear families, while only a small proportion belong to single-parent families. This suggests that traditional family structures continue to be common among the postgraduate students included in the study. At the same time, the presence of respondents from single-parent families reflects the increasing diversity of family forms in contemporary society. The inclusion of students from different family backgrounds provides a broader perspective on perceptions of single-parent households and strengthens the relevance of the study by representing varied family experiences.

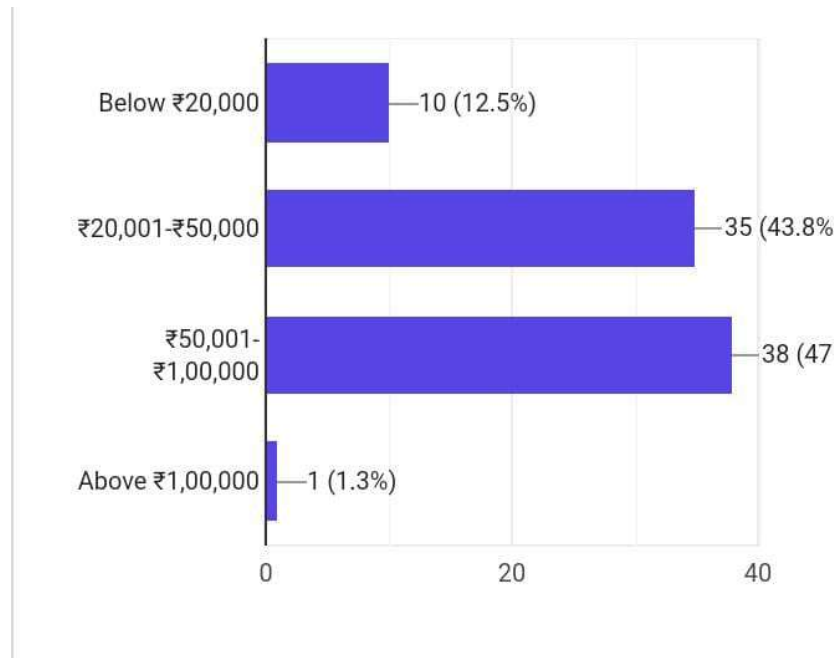


Figure 4.10 Family Monthly Income of Respondents

The graph shows the family monthly income distribution of the 80 respondents who participated in the study. The highest proportion of respondents belonged to the income category of ₹50,001–₹1,00,000, with 38 participants (47.5%). This was followed by respondents from the ₹20,001–₹50,000 income group, with 35 participants (43.8%). A smaller percentage of respondents belonged to families earning below ₹20,000, with 10 participants (12.5%), while only 1 respondent (1.3%) belonged to the above ₹1,00,000 income category.

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents came from middle-income backgrounds. Economic background can influence access to education, media exposure, and social experiences, which may shape students' understanding and attitudes toward single-parent households. The participation of students from different income groups provides varied perspectives on how social and economic factors relate to perceptions of family structures in Kerala.

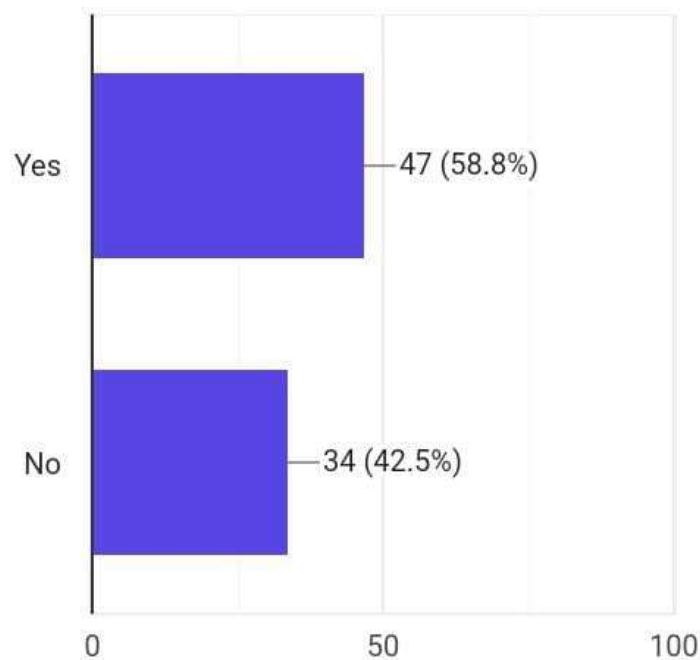


Figure 4.11 Respondents' Personal Contact with Individuals from Single-Parent Households

The graph represents whether the 80 respondents personally know someone from a single-parent household. The findings show that the majority of respondents, 47 participants (58.8%), reported that they personally know someone from a single-parent family. Meanwhile, 34 participants (42.5%) stated that they do not personally know anyone from a single-parent household.

The findings indicate that more than half of the respondents have personal exposure or interaction with individuals from single-parent households. Such personal experiences may contribute to greater understanding, awareness, and acceptance of different family structures. However, the presence of respondents without direct contact also highlights the importance of media and social influences in shaping perceptions toward single-parent families in Kerala.

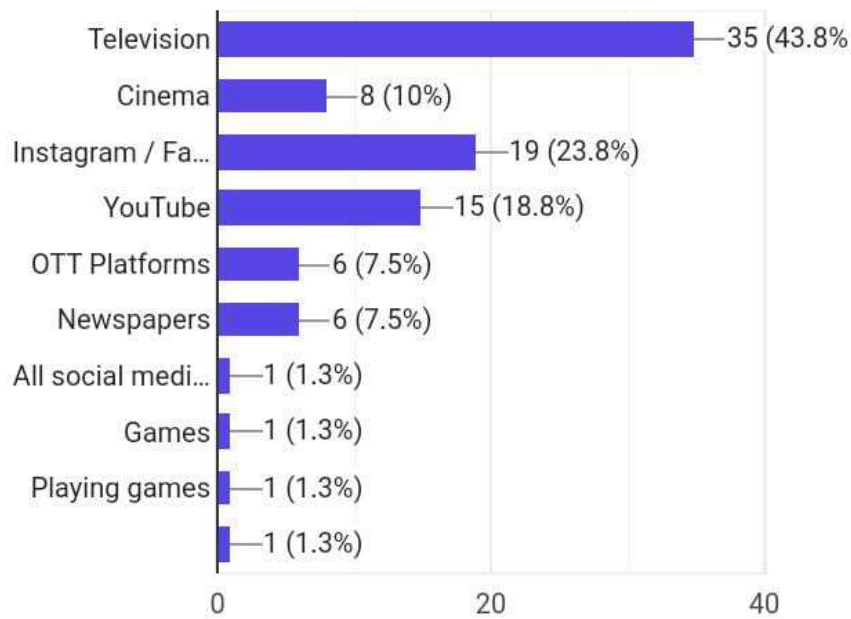


Figure 4.12 Main Source of Media Exposure among Respondents

The graph represents the main sources of media exposure among the 80 respondents. The findings show that television was the most commonly used media source, with 35 respondents (43.8%) reporting it as their primary source of exposure. This was followed by Instagram/Facebook, with 19 respondents (23.8%), and YouTube, with 15 respondents (18.8%). A smaller proportion of respondents reported cinema (8 respondents, 10%), OTT platforms (6 respondents, 7.5%), and newspapers (6 respondents, 7.5%) as their main media sources. Other sources such as social media in general and games accounted for a very small percentage (1.3% each).

The findings indicate that television and digital platforms are the major sources through which students receive information and representations about social issues, including single-parent households. The higher use of television and social media platforms suggests that these mediums may significantly influence students' attitudes, awareness, and perceptions of diverse family structures. Since media can present both positive and negative portrayals, respondents' exposure to different platforms may play an important role in shaping acceptance or reinforcing stigma toward single-parent families in Kerala.

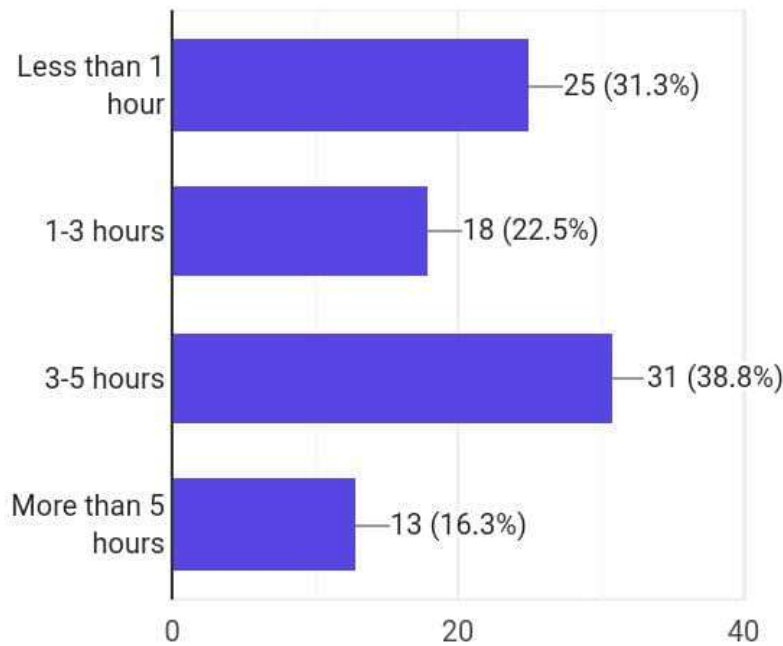


Figure 4.13 Average Daily Social Media Usage of Respondents

The graph represents the average daily social media usage among the 80 respondents. The findings show that the highest proportion of respondents, 31 participants (38.8%), used social media for 3–5 hours per day. This was followed by 25 respondents (31.3%) who used social media for less than 1 hour daily. About 18 respondents (22.5%) reported using social media for 1–3 hours per day, while 13 respondents (16.3%) spent more than 5 hours daily on social media.

The findings indicate that most respondents have regular exposure to social media platforms, with a considerable number spending several hours online each day. This suggests that digital media may play an important role in shaping students' awareness, opinions, and attitudes toward social issues, including single-parent households. Increased exposure to online content can influence perceptions by either promoting acceptance of diverse family structures or reinforcing existing stereotypes, depending on the nature of media representation.

4.4 SECTION B: PERCEPTION TOWARD SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLD

This section analyses the perceptions of postgraduate students towards single-parent households in Kerala. Perception refers to the attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and level of acceptance that individuals hold regarding single-parent families. Understanding these perceptions is important because they influence social interactions, inclusion, and the extent to which stigma is attached to diverse family structures. The findings presented in this section examine respondents' views on the parenting abilities of single parents, social acceptance, challenges faced by single-parent households, and the overall attitudes of students. The analysis provides valuable insights into how media and society shape students' perceptions of single-parent households and whether changing social values are contributing to greater acceptance and reduced stigma.

A. General perception

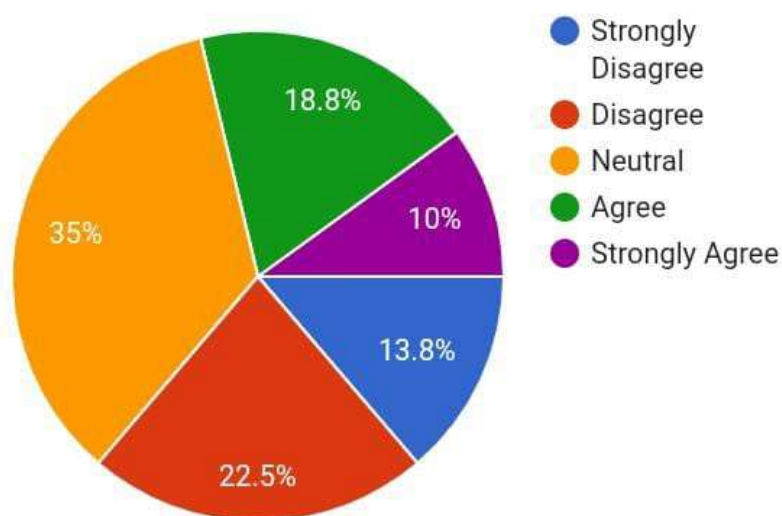


Figure 4.14 Social Acceptance of Single-Parent Families

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Single-parent families should be socially accepted like two-parent families." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (35%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 18.8% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that single-parent families should receive equal social acceptance. Meanwhile, 22.5% disagreed and 13.8% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that students have mixed perceptions regarding the acceptance of single-parent households. While a section of respondents supports equal acceptance of single-parent and two-parent families, the large percentage of neutral responses suggests uncertainty or changing attitudes toward non-traditional family structures. The presence of disagreement among some respondents highlights that traditional beliefs and social stigma surrounding single-parent households still exist. This indicates the need for greater awareness and positive social discussions to encourage acceptance of diverse family forms in Kerala.

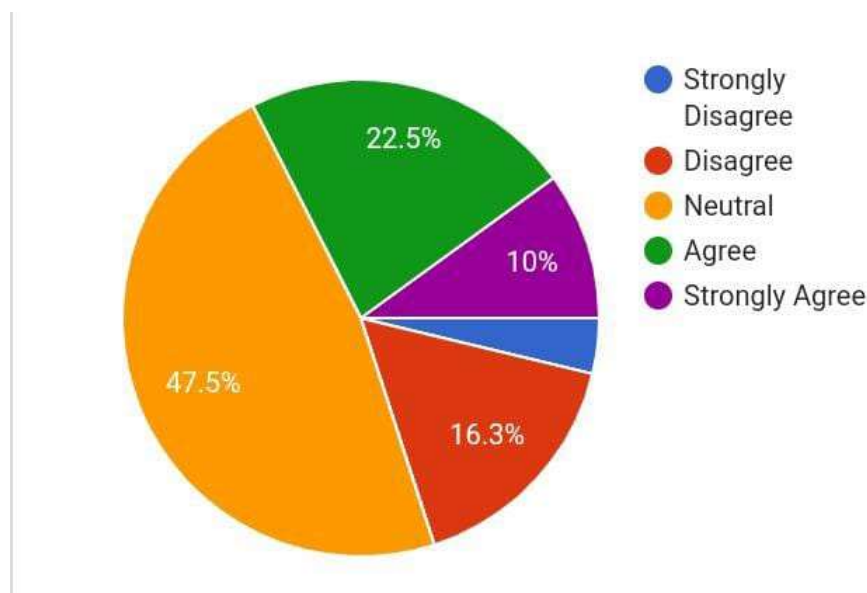


Figure 4.15 Perception Regarding the Success of Children from Single-Parent Families

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Children from single-parent families can grow up successfully." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (47.5%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 22.5% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that children from single-parent households can grow up successfully. Meanwhile, 16.3% disagreed, and a small percentage (3.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that many students are uncertain about the relationship between family structure and children's success, as reflected by the high percentage of neutral responses. However, the proportion of respondents who agreed suggests that a considerable number of students recognize that children from single-parent households are capable of achieving

success. The presence of some disagreement shows that traditional assumptions about two-parent families may still influence perceptions. This highlights the importance of increasing awareness that a child’s development depends on factors such as emotional support, care, and opportunities rather than family structure alone.

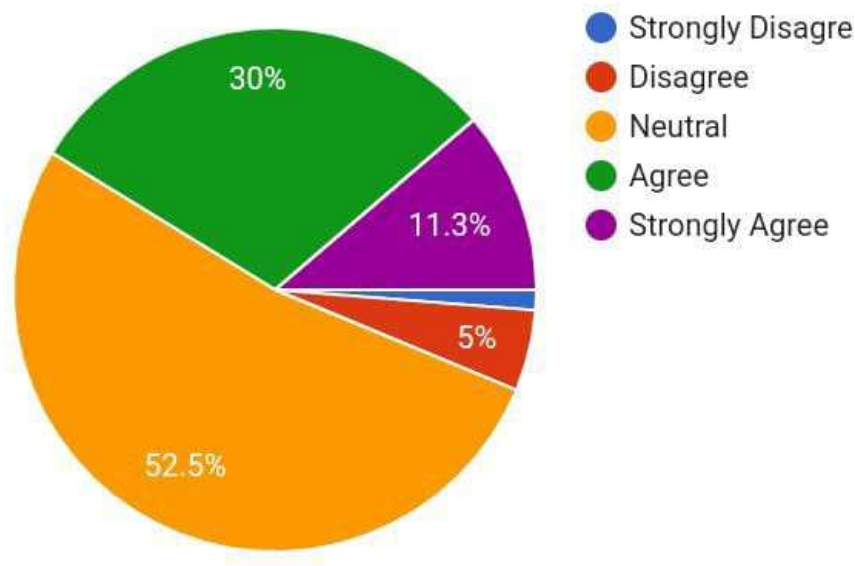


Figure 4.16 Perception Regarding the Increasing Presence of Single-Parent Households in Kerala Society

The graph represents respondents’ perceptions regarding the statement “Single-parent households are becoming common in Kerala society.” Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the majority of respondents (52.5%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 30% of respondents agreed and 11.3% strongly agreed that single-parent households are becoming common in Kerala society. Meanwhile, 5% disagreed, and a small proportion (1.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a considerable number of students recognize the increasing visibility of single-parent households in Kerala. The combined agreement responses suggest growing awareness among students regarding changes in traditional family patterns and the emergence of diverse family structures. However, the high percentage of neutral responses shows that many respondents may still be uncertain or have limited personal exposure to single-parent

families. This highlights that while social awareness is developing, broader discussions and representation of different family forms are needed to improve understanding and acceptance.

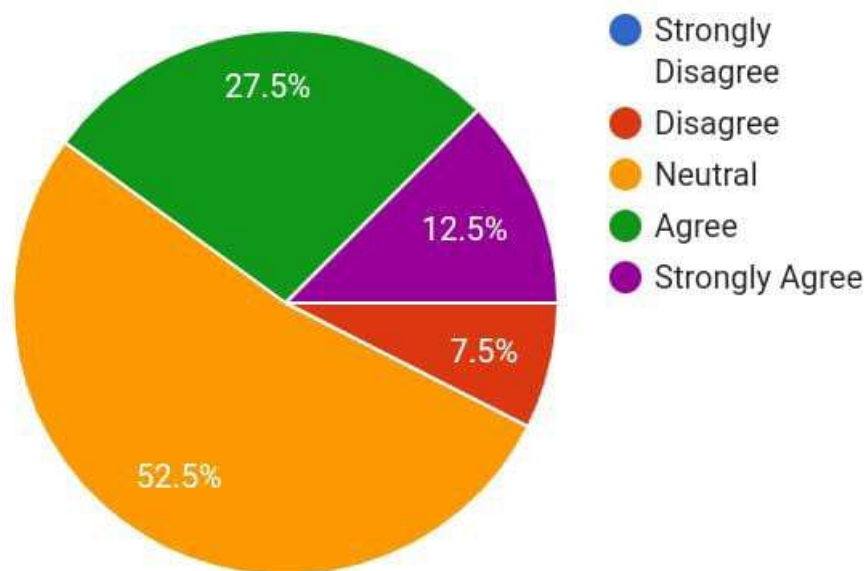


Figure 4.17 Perception Regarding the Influence of Family Structure on a Child's Character

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Family structure does not determine a child's character." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the majority of respondents (52.5%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 27.5% of respondents agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed that a child's character is not determined by whether they belong to a single-parent or two-parent family. Meanwhile, 7.5% disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a significant proportion of students recognize that family structure alone does not define a child's personality, values, or development. The agreement responses suggest a growing acceptance that factors such as parenting quality, emotional support, and social environment play an important role in shaping a child's character. However, the high percentage of neutral responses reflects uncertainty among some students, indicating that traditional beliefs about ideal family structures may still influence perceptions. Greater awareness about diverse family experiences can help challenge stereotypes associated with single-parent households.

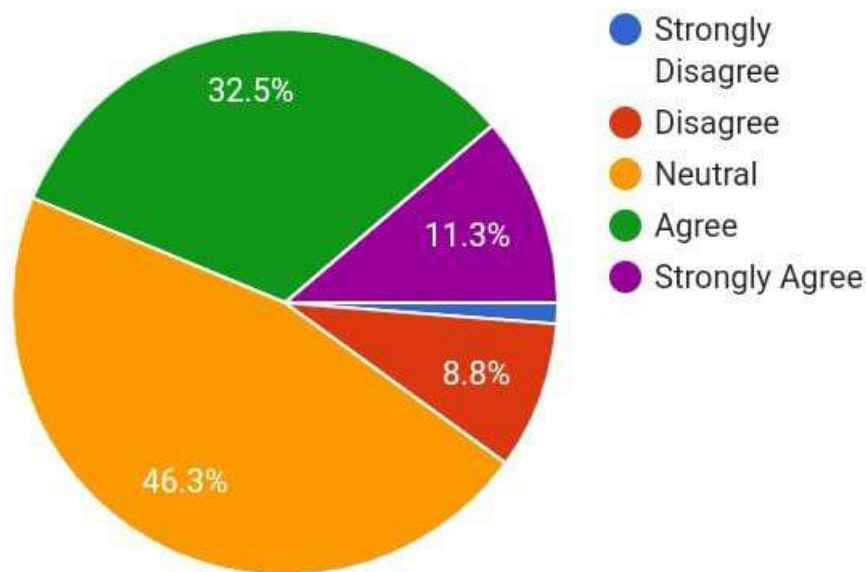


Figure 4.18 Perception of Whether Single Parents Can Effectively Manage Parenting Responsibilities

The figure presents the respondents' opinions on whether single parents can effectively manage parenting responsibilities. Among the 80 postgraduate students, 37 respondents (46.3%) expressed a neutral opinion. 26 respondents (32.5%) agreed, while 9 respondents (11.3%) strongly agreed that single parents can effectively manage parenting responsibilities. On the other hand, 7 respondents (8.8%) disagreed, and none of the respondents (0%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that most postgraduate students hold either a neutral or positive perception regarding the ability of single parents to manage parenting responsibilities. Nearly 44% of the respondents (agree and strongly agree combined) believe that single parents are capable of fulfilling their parenting roles effectively. The high percentage of neutral responses suggests that many students may have limited personal experience or are uncertain about the challenges and strengths associated with single-parent households. The absence of any strongly disagree responses indicates that none of the respondents completely rejected the idea that single parents can successfully raise their children. Overall, the findings reflect a generally supportive and non-negative attitude toward the parenting abilities of single parents, suggesting a gradual shift toward greater acceptance of diverse family structures among postgraduate students.

A Social stigma and Attitudes

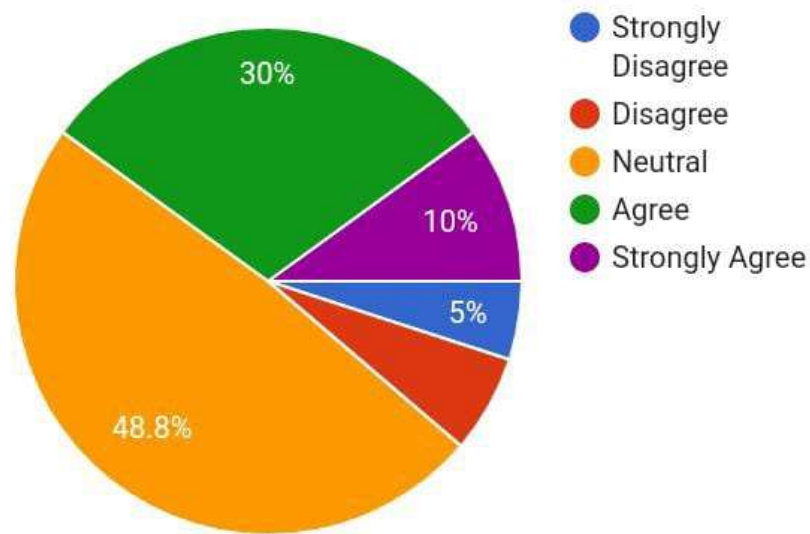


Figure 4.19 Perception Regarding Different Treatment of Single-Parent Families by Society

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Society treats single-parent families differently." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (48.8%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 30% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that single-parent families are treated differently by society. Meanwhile, 6.2% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a considerable proportion of students recognize that single-parent families may experience different treatment within society. The agreement responses suggest awareness of the existence of social stigma, stereotypes, and unequal attitudes toward single-parent households. However, the large percentage of neutral responses shows that many students may be uncertain or may not have personally observed such experiences. This reflects the complex nature of stigma, where changing social attitudes coexist with traditional beliefs about family structures in Kerala society.

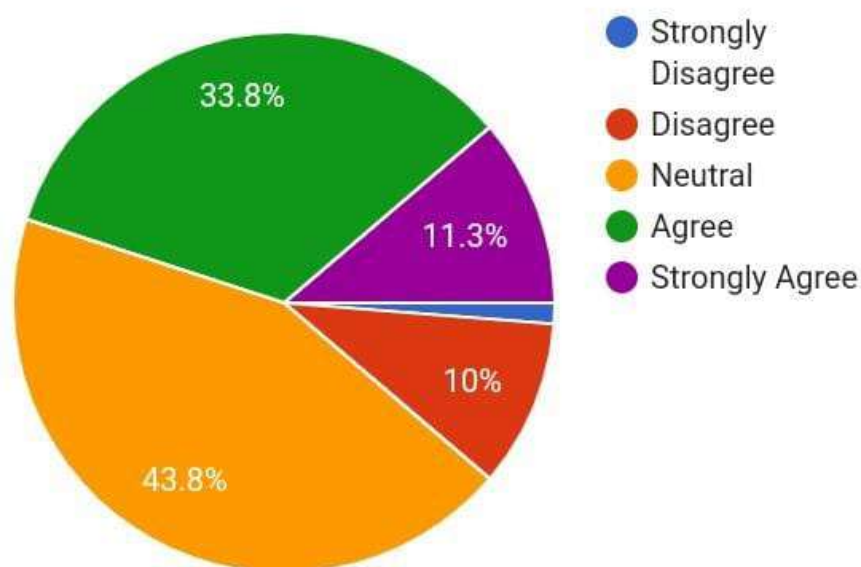


Figure 4.20 Perception Regarding Stigma Faced by Single Mothers Compared to Single Fathers

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Single mothers face more stigma than single fathers." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (43.8%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 33.8% of respondents agreed and 11.3% strongly agreed that single mothers experience greater stigma compared to single fathers. Meanwhile, 10% disagreed, and a very small percentage (1.1%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a considerable number of students recognize gender differences in the social experiences of single parents. The agreement responses suggest that single mothers may face greater judgment due to traditional expectations regarding motherhood, family roles, and social norms. However, the high level of neutral responses indicates that many students may be uncertain about gender-based differences in stigma. This highlights the need for greater awareness of how societal attitudes may affect single mothers and single fathers differently within the context of Kerala society.

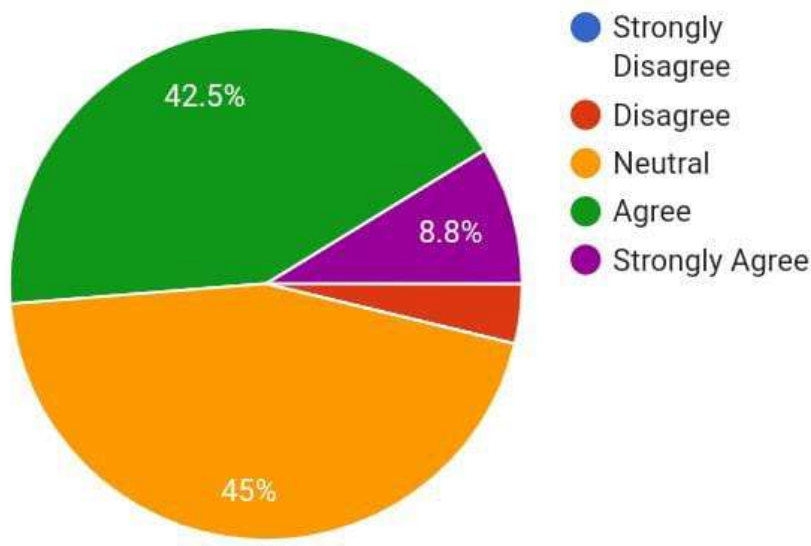


Figure 4.21 Perception Regarding Social Discrimination Experienced by Children from Single-Parent Households

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Children from single-parent households experience social discrimination." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (45%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 42.5% of respondents agreed and 8.8% strongly agreed that children from single-parent households experience social discrimination. Meanwhile, a small percentage (3.7%) disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a considerable proportion of students acknowledge that children from single-parent households may experience discrimination within society. The agreement responses suggest awareness of social challenges such as stereotypes, judgment, and unequal treatment faced by children from single-parent families. However, the high percentage of neutral responses shows that some students may be uncertain or lack direct experience regarding such discrimination. Overall, the results highlight the continued presence of social stigma and the importance of promoting greater acceptance and understanding of diverse family structures.

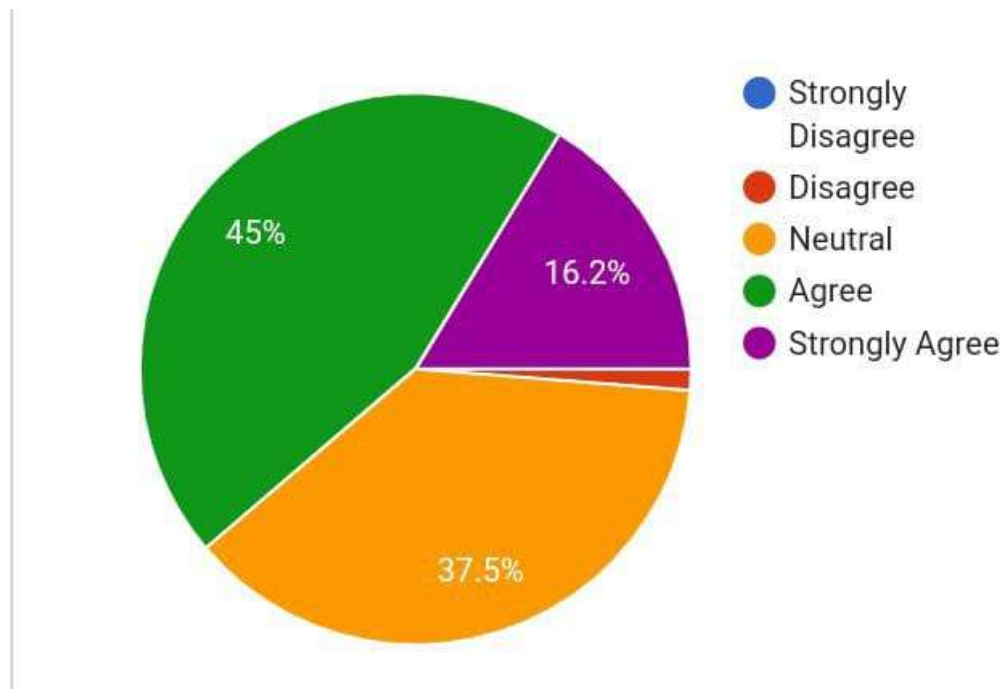


Figure 4.22 : Influence of Traditional Social Values on Attitudes Toward Single-Parent Households

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Traditional social values in Kerala negatively influence attitudes toward single-parent households." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (45%) agreed with the statement, while 16.2% strongly agreed. About 37.5% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion, whereas only a very small percentage (1.3%) disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe traditional social values influence how single-parent households are perceived in Kerala. The high level of agreement suggests that existing cultural expectations and conventional ideas about family structure may contribute to stigma and negative attitudes toward single-parent families. However, the presence of neutral responses indicates that some students may have mixed views regarding the role of tradition in shaping social perceptions. Overall, the results highlight the need to encourage broader acceptance of diverse family structures while addressing stereotypes connected to traditional family norms.

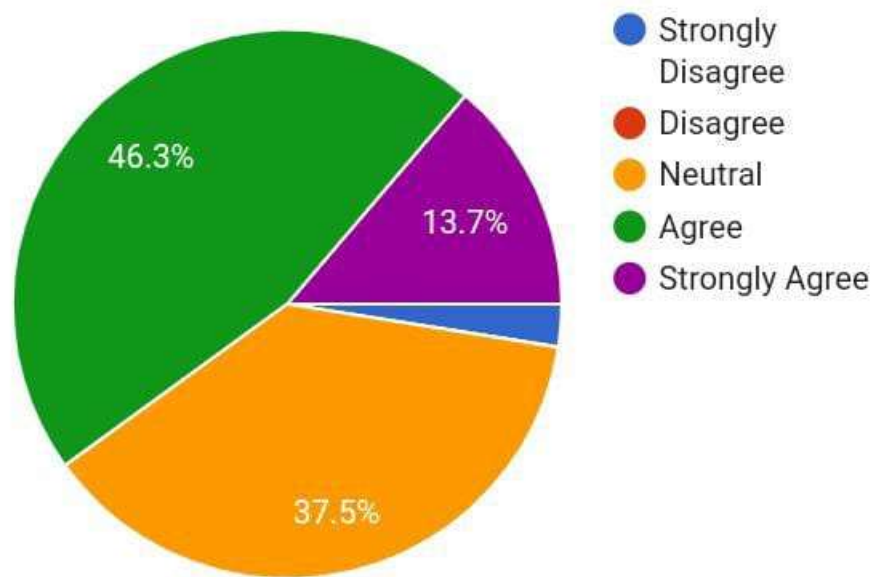


Figure 4.23 Perception Regarding Judgment of Single-Parent Families by Relatives and Neighbours

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Relatives and neighbours often judge single-parent families unfairly." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (46.3%) agreed with the statement, while 13.7% strongly agreed. About 37.5% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A small percentage (2.5%) strongly disagreed, while no respondents disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe that single-parent families continue to face judgment from relatives and neighbours. The agreement responses suggest that social expectations and community attitudes play an important role in maintaining stigma toward single-parent households. The presence of neutral responses shows that some students may not have directly observed such:

A. Media Influence

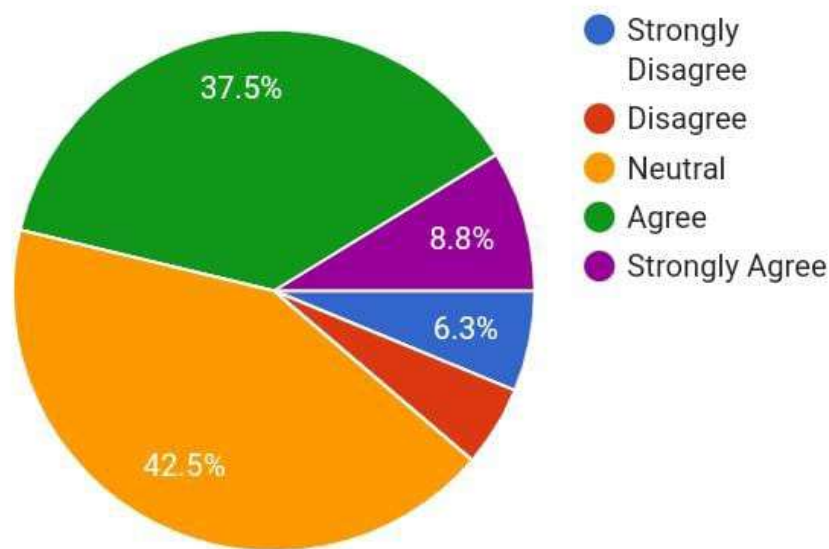


Figure 4.24 Influence of Media on Perceptions about Single-Parent Households

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Media influences people's perceptions about single-parent households." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (42.5%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 37.5% of respondents agreed and 8.8% strongly agreed that media influences people's perceptions of single-parent households. Meanwhile, 6.3% strongly disagreed, and a small percentage (5%) disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that many students recognize the role of media in shaping attitudes and opinions about single-parent households. The agreement responses suggest that media platforms, including television, cinema, and social media, can influence how society understands and represents single-parent families. However, the high percentage of neutral responses shows that some students may be uncertain about the extent of media influence. Overall, the results highlight that media representation plays an important role in either promoting acceptance or reinforcing stereotypes related to single-parent households.

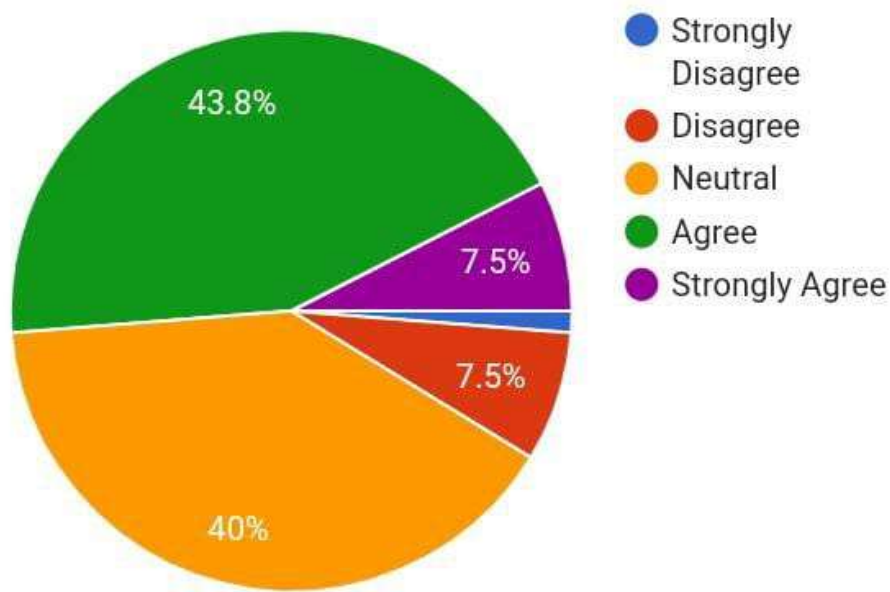


Figure 4.25 Representation of Single-Parent Families in Malayalam Cinema

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Malayalam cinema often portrays single-parent families emotionally or negatively." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (43.8%) agreed with the statement, while 7.5% strongly agreed. About 40% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. Meanwhile, 7.5% disagreed, and a very small percentage (1.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a considerable number of students believe that Malayalam cinema influences the representation of single-parent households, often presenting them through emotional or negative portrayals. The agreement responses suggest that media narratives may contribute to shaping public understanding and reinforcing certain stereotypes about single-parent families. However, the high percentage of neutral responses indicates that many students may perceive media portrayals differently or may not have a strong opinion on this influence. Overall, the results highlight the importance of balanced and realistic media representations in promoting acceptance and reducing stigma toward single-parent households.

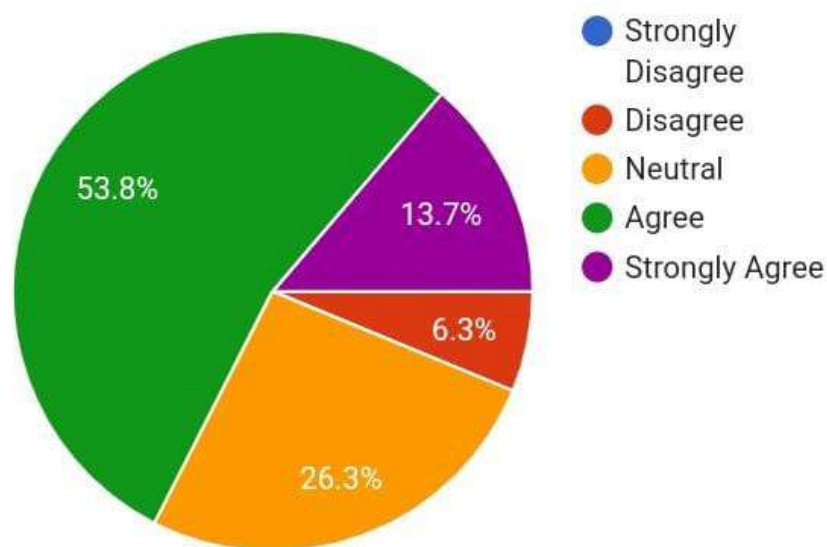


Figure 4.26 Role of social media in Increasing Awareness and Acceptance of Diverse Family Structures

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Social media has increased awareness and acceptance of diverse family structures." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the majority of respondents (53.8%) agreed with the statement, while 13.7% strongly agreed. About 26.3% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion, and 6.3% disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that most students believe social media contributes to increasing awareness and acceptance of different family structures, including single-parent households. The high level of agreement suggests that digital platforms provide opportunities for discussions, sharing experiences, and challenging traditional stereotypes related to families. However, the presence of neutral responses shows that some students may be uncertain about the overall impact of social media. The results highlight the positive role of social media in promoting inclusiveness and reducing stigma toward single-parent households in Kerala society.

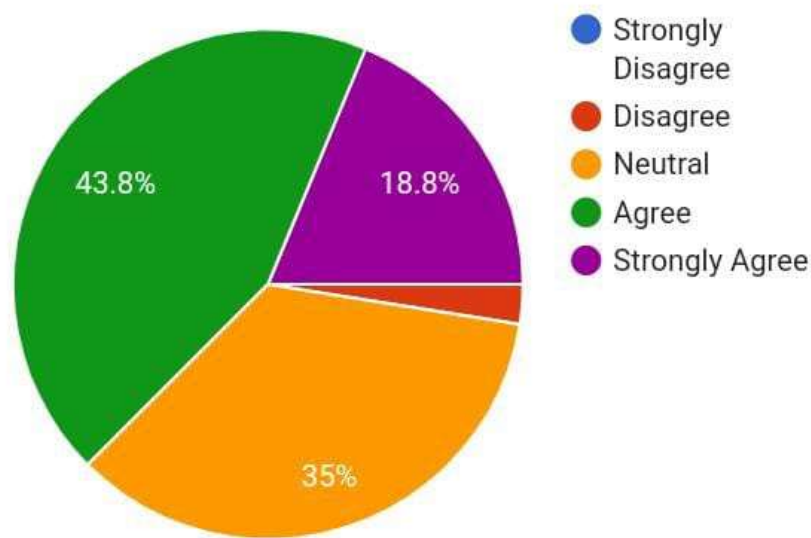


Figure 4.27 Role of Television Serials in Reinforcing Stereotypes about Single-Parent Households

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Television serials reinforce stereotypes about single-parent households." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (43.8%) agreed with the statement, while 18.8% strongly agreed. About 35% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion, and a small proportion (2.4%) disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe television serials contribute to reinforcing stereotypes associated with single-parent households. The high level of agreement suggests that repeated portrayals of single-parent families in certain ways may influence social attitudes and strengthen existing misconceptions. However, the presence of neutral responses shows that some students may have varied opinions about the influence of television content. Overall, the results highlight the importance of responsible and balanced media representation in reducing stigma and creating a more realistic understanding of single-parent families.

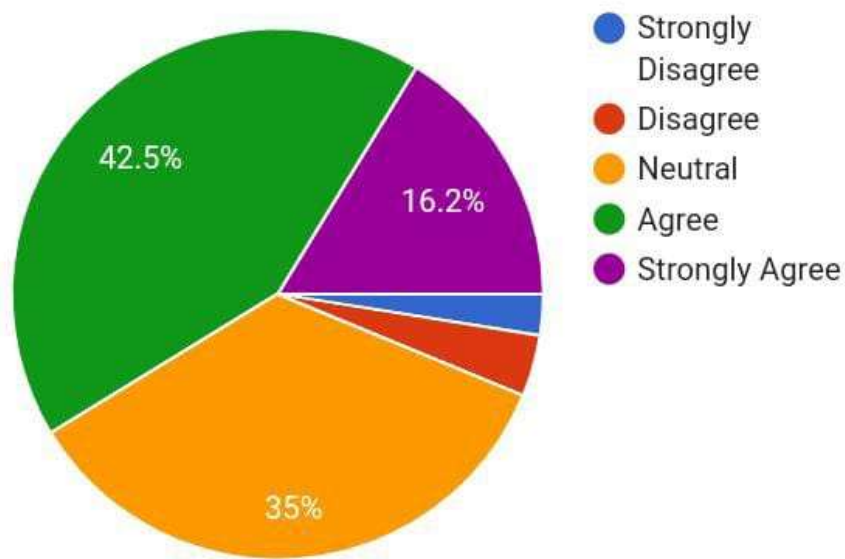


Figure 4.28 Role of Positive Media Representation in Reducing Social Stigma

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Positive media representation can reduce social stigma." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (42.5%) agreed with the statement, while 16.2% strongly agreed. About 35% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A smaller proportion of respondents disagreed (approximately 3.8%) and strongly disagreed (approximately 2.5%) with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe positive media representation can help reduce stigma associated with single-parent households. The high level of agreement suggests that realistic and supportive portrayals in media can influence public attitudes, challenge stereotypes, and encourage acceptance of diverse family structures. However, the presence of neutral responses shows that some students may be uncertain about the extent of media's ability to create social change. Overall, the results highlight the potential role of responsible media representation in promoting a more inclusive understanding of single-parent families in Kerala society.

B. Students Attitudes

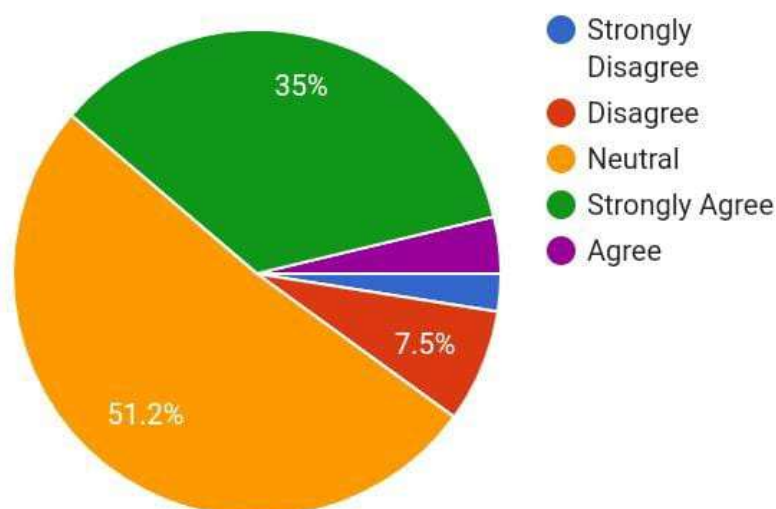


Figure 4.29 Comfort Level in Interacting with Individuals from Single-Parent Families

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "I feel comfortable interacting with individuals from single-parent families." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (51.2%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 35% of respondents strongly agreed and approximately 3.8% agreed that they feel comfortable interacting with individuals from single-parent households. Meanwhile, 7.5% disagreed, and a small percentage (approximately 2.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that many students demonstrate openness and acceptance toward individuals from single-parent families, as shown by the agreement responses. The positive responses suggest that students are becoming more comfortable with diverse family backgrounds and are less likely to judge individuals based only on family structure. However, the high percentage of neutral responses indicates that some respondents may not have enough personal interaction or experience with individuals from single-parent households. Overall, the findings reflect a gradual movement toward acceptance while highlighting the need for continued awareness to reduce social stigma.

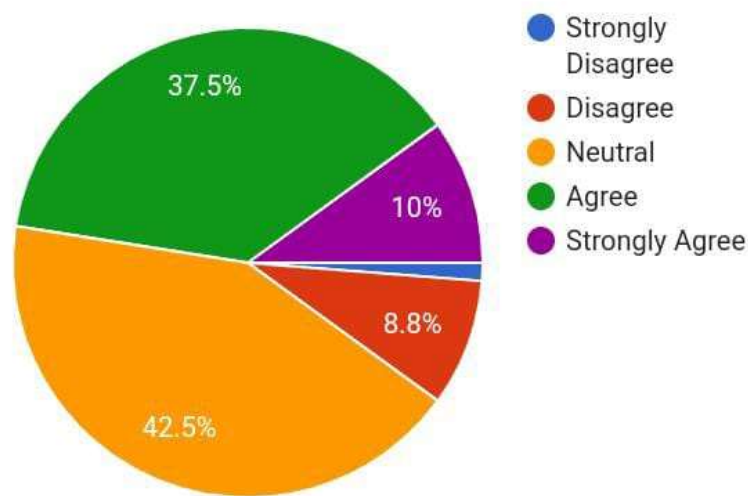


Figure 4.30 Perception Regarding Discrimination Against Students from Single-Parent Households in Educational Institutions

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Students from single-parent households should not face discrimination in educational institutions." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (42.5%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 37.5% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that students from single-parent families should not experience discrimination in educational settings. Meanwhile, 8.8% disagreed, and a very small percentage (1.2%) strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a considerable number of students support equal treatment and inclusion of individuals from single-parent households within educational institutions. The agreement responses reflect awareness that family background should not become a basis for discrimination or unequal opportunities. However, the high percentage of neutral responses suggests that some students may be uncertain about the existence of such discrimination or may have limited personal experience with the issue. Overall, the results highlight the importance of promoting inclusive educational environments that respect diverse family structures and reduce stigma.

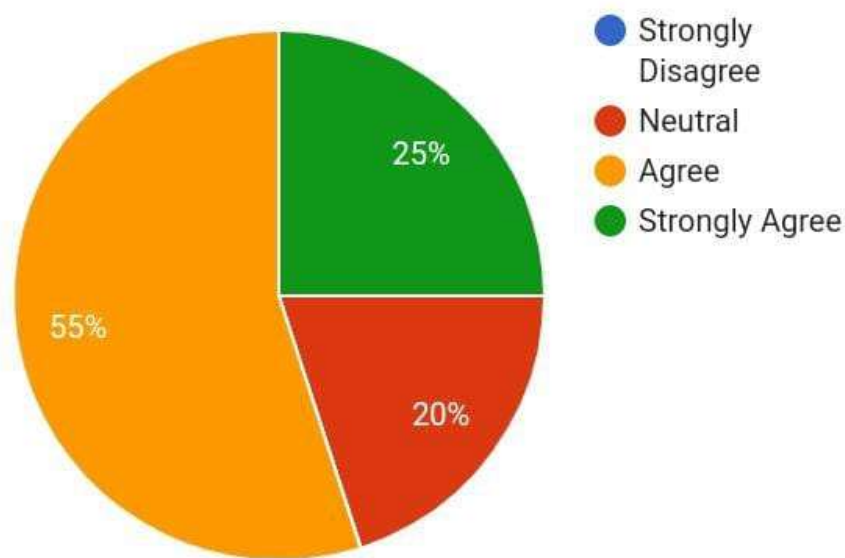


Figure 4.31 Perception Regarding Equal Respect for Single-Parent Households in Society

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Single-parent households deserve equal respect in society." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the majority of respondents (55%) agreed with the statement, while 25% strongly agreed. About 20% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students have a positive and accepting attitude toward single-parent households. The high level of agreement suggests that students recognize the importance of providing equal respect and social acceptance to all family structures, regardless of whether they are single-parent or two-parent families. The absence of disagreement reflects a shift toward more inclusive attitudes among educated youth. Overall, the results highlight growing acceptance of diverse family forms and a reduction of negative perceptions toward single-parent households in society.

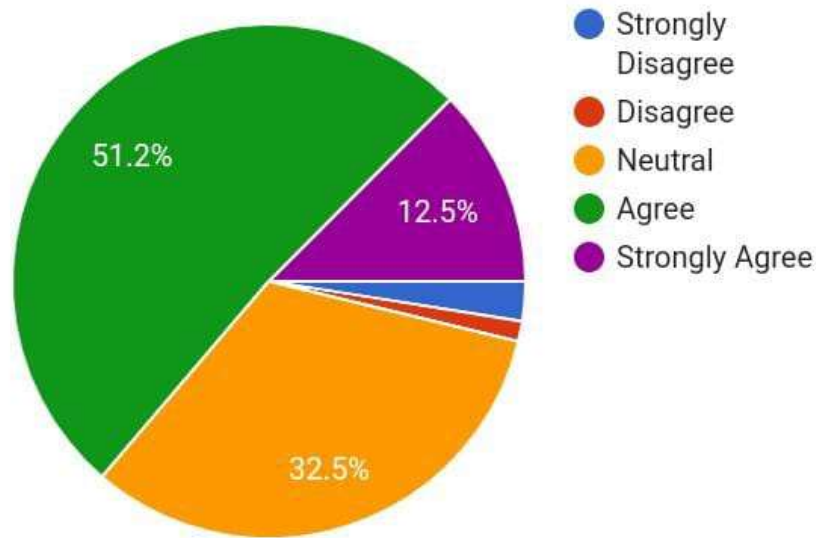


Figure 4.32 Perception Regarding Acceptance of Single-Parent Households among Educated Youth

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Educated youth are more accepting of single-parent households." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (51.2%) agreed with the statement, while 12.5% strongly agreed. About 32.5% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A small percentage (approximately 2.5%) strongly disagreed, while approximately 1.3% disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that most respondents believe education plays an important role in developing acceptance toward single-parent households. The high percentage of agreement suggests that educated youth may be more open to changing family structures and less influenced by traditional stereotypes. However, the presence of neutral responses indicates that some students remain uncertain about the relationship between education and social acceptance. Overall, the results suggest that education and awareness can contribute to reducing stigma and promoting positive attitudes toward diverse family forms in society.

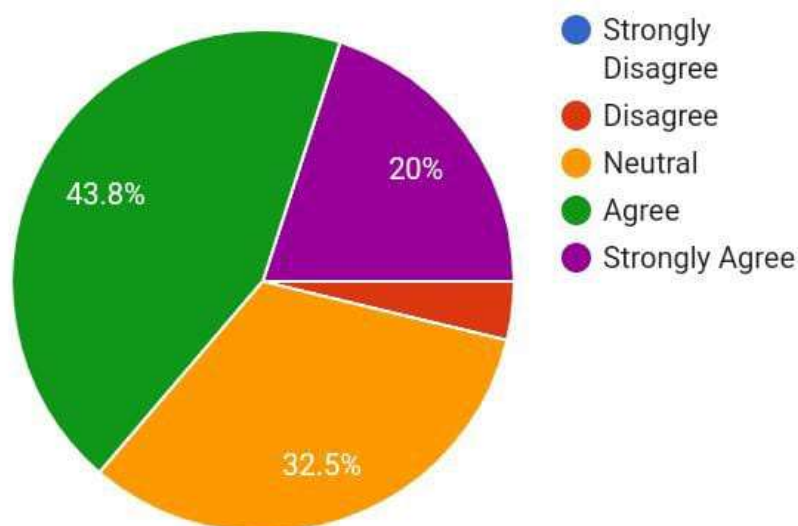


Figure 4.33 Role of Awareness Programmes in Reducing Stigma Toward Single-Parent Families

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Awareness programmes can help reduce stigma toward single-parent families." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (43.8%) agreed with the statement, while 20% strongly agreed. About 32.5% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion, and a small percentage (3.7%) disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe awareness programmes can play an important role in reducing stigma associated with single-parent households. The high level of agreement suggests that educational initiatives, social discussions, and awareness campaigns can help challenge stereotypes and promote a better understanding of diverse family structures. The neutral responses indicate that some students may be uncertain about the effectiveness of such programmes. Overall, the results emphasize the need for awareness-building activities to encourage acceptance, equality, and positive attitudes toward single-parent families in society.

C. Technology and Social Change

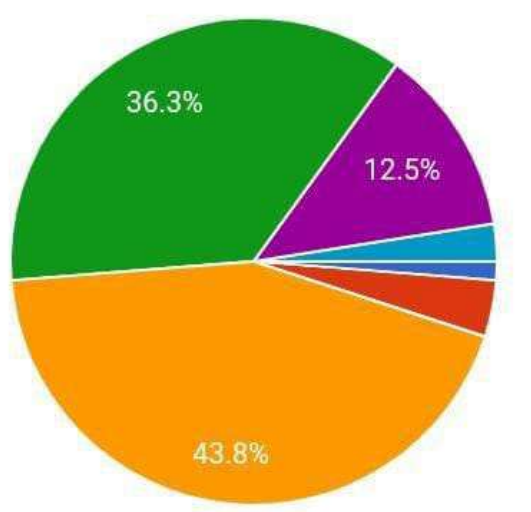


Figure 4.34 Influence of Digital Media on Young People's Understanding of Family Structures

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Digital media has changed young people's understanding of family structures." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (43.8%) expressed a neutral opinion. About 36.3% of respondents agreed and 12.5% strongly agreed that digital media has influenced young people's understanding of changing family structures. A small percentage of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that digital media plays a noticeable role in shaping young people's views about different family structures, including single-parent households. The agreement responses suggest that exposure to online platforms, discussions, and diverse representations may help students develop broader perspectives on family diversity. However, the high percentage of neutral responses shows that some respondents may be uncertain about the extent of digital media's influence. Overall, the results highlight that technology and digital communication can contribute to changing social attitudes and increasing awareness about non-traditional family structures.

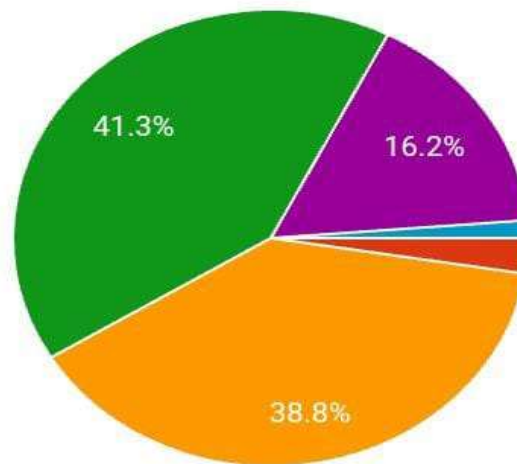


Figure 4.35 Influence of Modern Media Exposure in Reducing Traditional Prejudices

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Exposure to modern media reduces traditional prejudices." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (41.3%) agreed with the statement, while 16.2% strongly agreed. About 38.8% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A small proportion of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe exposure to modern media can contribute to reducing traditional prejudices related to single-parent households. The agreement responses suggest that digital platforms and modern media content may introduce individuals to diverse experiences, alternative perspectives, and changing ideas about family structures. However, the considerable percentage of neutral responses shows that some students may be uncertain about the influence of media in changing deeply rooted social beliefs. Overall, the results highlight the potential role of modern media in challenging stereotypes and encouraging more accepting attitudes toward single-parent families in Kerala society.

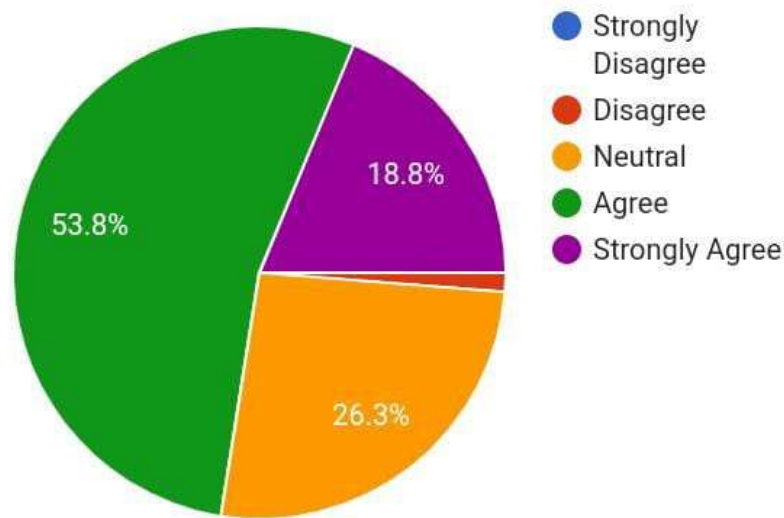


Figure 4.36 Role of Social Media Discussions in Normalizing Single Parenting

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Social media discussions help normalize single parenting." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (53.8%) agreed with the statement, while 18.8% strongly agreed. About 26.3% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A very small proportion (approximately 1.1%) disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe social media discussions contribute to the normalization and acceptance of single parenting. The high level of agreement suggests that online platforms create spaces for sharing experiences, increasing awareness, and challenging traditional stereotypes associated with single-parent households. The presence of neutral responses shows that some respondents may be uncertain about the overall impact of social media conversations. Overall, the results highlight that social media can act as an important tool in promoting positive attitudes and reducing stigma toward single-parent families in society.

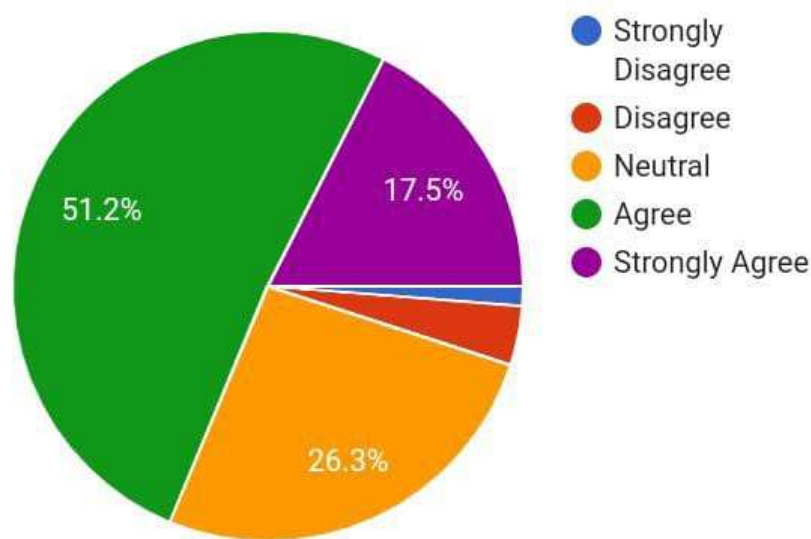


Figure 4.37 : Influence of Technological Advancement on Social Acceptance of Family Diversity

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Technological advancement has increased social acceptance of family diversity." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (51.2%) agreed with the statement, while 17.5% strongly agreed. About 26.3% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A small percentage of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe technological advancement has contributed to increasing acceptance of diverse family structures, including single-parent households. The high level of agreement suggests that access to digital platforms, online discussions, and wider exposure to different social experiences helps individuals develop more inclusive perspectives. However, the presence of neutral responses shows that some students remain uncertain about the extent of technology's influence on social change. Overall, the results suggest that technological development plays an important role in challenging traditional views and promoting greater acceptance of family diversity in Kerala society.

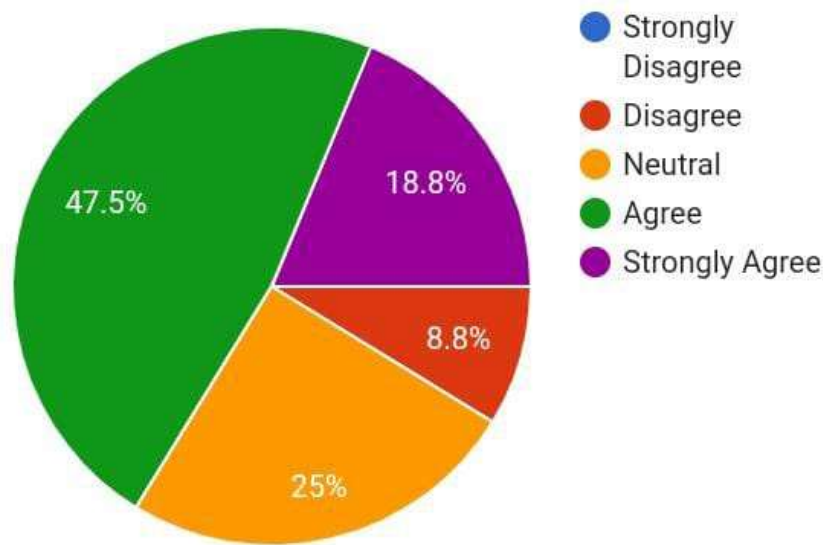


Figure 4.38 Perception Regarding Increasing Acceptance of Single-Parent Households in Kerala Society

The graph represents respondents' perceptions regarding the statement "Kerala society is slowly becoming more accepting of single-parent households." Among the 80 postgraduate students who participated in the study, the highest proportion of respondents (47.5%) agreed with the statement, while 18.8% strongly agreed. About 25% of respondents expressed a neutral opinion. A smaller proportion (8.8%) disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed with the statement.

The findings indicate that a majority of students believe Kerala society is gradually developing a more accepting attitude toward single-parent households. The agreement responses suggest that changing social values, increased awareness, education, and media exposure may be contributing to greater acceptance of diverse family structures. However, the presence of neutral and disagreeing responses shows that some traditional attitudes and uncertainties still remain. Overall, the results reflect a gradual social shift toward inclusiveness while highlighting the continued need to challenge stigma associated with single-parent families.

4.5 SECTION-C OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

In addition to the structured questionnaire, the study included a few open-ended questions to provide respondents with an opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions in their own words. These responses offered deeper insights into students' views, experiences, and perceptions regarding single-parent households that could not be fully captured through close-ended questions. The open-ended responses helped the researcher better understand participants' perspectives on the challenges faced by single-parent families, the role of media and society, and possible measures to reduce stigma and promote social acceptance. These qualitative responses complement the quantitative findings and enrich the overall interpretation of the study.

4.5.1. Major Challenges Faced by Single-Parent Families in Kerala (Thematic Classification)

Theme	Representative Responses	Frequency
1.Financial Challenges	Financially down, Financial stability, Financial problems, Financial issues, Financial freedom, Financial growth, Financial stress, Heavy financial strain on single income, Financial instability, Disproportionate financial strain	18
2. Social Stigma and Negative Attitudes	Society, Negative view of society, Social acceptance and negative view, Stigma, Social stigma, Stigma and social exclusion, Bad attitude towards them (especially women), Deep-rooted social stigma, Social constraints, People's mindset, Lack of social acceptance, People tend to humiliate them, Fear of society, Weird view from others, Exclusion	15
3. Childcare and Parenting Responsibilities	Time constraints in juggling work and child, Time management, Balancing work and childcare responsibilities, Child care, Control child	6
4. Lack of Family and Social Support	Family support, Lack of moral, personal and financial support from relatives, Limited support systems	4
5. Emotional and Psychological Challenges	Isolation, Emotional stress, Fear of living alone in a crooked society with a child	4
6. Traditional and Cultural Barriers	Traditional thinking, Cultural view	2
7. Safety and Security Concerns	Safety issues, Fear of living alone in society	2
8. Lack of Awareness and Opportunities	Awareness, Their challenges are ignored by society, Lack of opportunities	3

9. No Opinion / Uncertain Responses	I don't know, Nothing, Yes, Don't know maybe time management	4
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The qualitative responses reveal that financial challenges emerged as the most frequently reported concern among respondents. Many participants highlighted financial instability, financial stress, and the burden of managing a household on a single income as the primary difficulties experienced by single-parent families. These responses indicate that economic insecurity remains one of the greatest obstacles affecting their quality of life.

The second major theme was social stigma and negative societal attitudes. Respondents repeatedly referred to stigma, discrimination, social exclusion, humiliation, negative perceptions, and the lack of social acceptance. Several participants specifically noted that single mothers face greater negative attitudes, reflecting the persistence of gendered stereotypes within society.

Another important challenge identified was the difficulty of balancing parenting and employment. Respondents mentioned childcare responsibilities, time management, and the struggle of simultaneously fulfilling work and caregiving roles. These findings illustrate the dual burden carried by many single parents.

Several respondents also emphasized the lack of family and social support, stating that relatives often fail to provide emotional, moral, or financial assistance. Closely related to this were emotional and psychological challenges, including isolation, emotional stress, and fear of raising a child alone in an unsupportive social environment.

A smaller number of respondents referred to traditional cultural beliefs, suggesting that conventional norms regarding family structures continue to influence public attitudes toward single-parent households. Others highlighted concerns related to safety, lack of awareness, and limited opportunities, indicating that these issues also contribute to the challenges faced by single-parent families.

Finally, a few respondents expressed uncertainty or provided no specific opinion, suggesting limited awareness or personal knowledge about the lived experiences of single-parent households.

The open-ended responses demonstrate that postgraduate students have a meaningful understanding of the realities faced by single-parent families in Kerala. Rather than focusing

on only one problem, respondents identified multiple interconnected challenges that affect the well-being of these families. Among these, financial insecurity emerged as the most frequently mentioned challenge, suggesting that students believe economic stability plays a crucial role in ensuring the overall welfare of single-parent households. Managing family expenses with only one source of income can create continuous pressure, making it difficult to provide children with educational, emotional, and social opportunities comparable to those available in two-parent families.

The findings also reveal that social stigma remains deeply rooted in society. Many respondents acknowledged that traditional beliefs and cultural expectations continue to influence public attitudes towards single-parent families. In many cases, people still associate single parenthood with failure, misfortune, or social deviance, leading to discrimination, exclusion, and negative judgments. Such attitudes can affect not only the parent but also the children, who may experience prejudice in educational institutions, workplaces, and community settings.

The responses further suggest that media and public awareness have contributed to improving perceptions, but they have not completely eliminated stigma. As media increasingly portrays diverse family structures in a positive manner, younger and educated individuals appear to be developing more empathetic attitudes. However, respondents recognize that social acceptance is still evolving and that many families continue to experience criticism and misunderstanding from society.

Another important observation is that students recognize parenting as a multidimensional responsibility. They understand that single parents must simultaneously manage employment, childcare, household responsibilities, and emotional support for their children. Without adequate family, community, or institutional support, these responsibilities can become overwhelming. This demonstrates that respondents view the challenges of single parenting as structural and social rather than as the result of individual weakness.

Overall, the open-ended responses indicate that postgraduate students possess a thoughtful and empathetic understanding of the issues faced by single-parent households. The findings reinforce the central theme of the study by showing that financial hardship, social stigma, limited support systems, emotional stress, and societal attitudes are the major challenges experienced by single-parent families in Kerala. They also suggest the need for greater public awareness, positive media representation, stronger social support systems, and inclusive policies to reduce stigma and promote equal acceptance of all family forms. These findings

support the overall objective of the study, which seeks to understand how media and society shape students' perceptions of single-parent households and how these perceptions can contribute to creating a more inclusive and compassionate society.

The thematic analysis demonstrates that postgraduate students perceive the challenges faced by single-parent families as extending beyond financial hardship. Economic difficulties are closely intertwined with social stigma, inadequate support systems, parenting responsibilities, emotional stress, and cultural expectations. The findings suggest that improving the well-being of single-parent families in Kerala requires not only economic assistance but also greater social acceptance, supportive community networks, awareness programmes, and policies that promote equality and inclusion. Overall, the responses reflect an understanding that the difficulties experienced by single-parent families are multidimensional, requiring comprehensive social, institutional, and policy interventions.

4.5.2: Media Influence on Society's Perception of Single-Parent Households

- Political issues
- Political discourse
- Support
- I don't know
- Neutral
- Influence a lot
- Understanding parenting
- Support to understand single parent
- Positive influence
- Social media is most important fact of society
- Wrong perception and wrong view
- Easily understanding
- Good
- Sometimes positively sometime negatively
- Positively or negatively
- Still support and understanding positively
- Social media is helpful to understand single parent household
- Because the digital world most influenced the media so i strongly agree the social media can change society

- Lack of diverse representation
- Okay
- It offers essential lifelines for emotional support and community, but also exposes them to unrealistic parenting standards
- Negatively
- Positively
- Support to single parent and not forceful
- Promoting Joint family degrading single parent household
- Media is most important fact of society
- Media can control society
- Comparison, flawless portrayals of "perfect" two-parent families can trigger feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and reduced life satisfaction.
- Influence a lot through media portraying single child parent as a wrong person
- Social media most influenced in single parent household
- Useful to understand
- Fake news influence people's thinking
- Awareness
- Some peoples are understanding and support to single parent household
- Mostly influenced
- They report news regarding this and people start to normalise it and would judge every single parent like a bad human being
- Understanding
- Yes
- Positive or negative
- Media shapes single parenthood through unrealistic societal standards and unequal portrayal.
- Media influences society's perception of single-parent households by shaping public attitudes through its portrayal of single parents, either promoting understanding and acceptance or reinforcing stereotypes and prejudice.
- No idea
- Media has a major role in shaping the views, thoughts, constraints, issues and social exclusion.

- Nowadays media is more open about this topic which helps lot of stigma
- Influence a lot badly
- Sometime positively support to single parenting household
- positively or negatively
- Mostly support to understand the single parent household
- Political discourse and digital connectivity
- More support to understand single parent household
- Media can influence in both ways - positively and negatively
- One of the positive sides is that the concept of single parent is going to be accepted widely among the youth and also of the parent's today's generation.
- Cons is that the above said media portrayed earlier that the single family is not good for the society and many people started criticising the individuals based on that perception .
- I don't know
- Framing single parents either as impoverished, tragic victims of "broken homes" or as extraordinary, heroic survivors.
- Support to understand
- Positive and realistic portrayals of single parents can promote acceptance while negative stereotypes can reinforce prejudice and against single parent households.
- Society depend social media
- May media positively influence but other face may be affect negatively.

Analysis

The open-ended responses reveal that the majority of postgraduate students believe that media plays a significant role in shaping society's perception of single-parent households. Most respondents stated that media influences public opinion by creating awareness, increasing understanding, and encouraging acceptance of single-parent families. Many responses such as *"support," "positive influence," "understanding parenting," "support to understand single parent," "social media is helpful,"* and *"more support to understand single-parent households"* indicate that students view media as an important source of information that helps society become more aware of changing family structures.

At the same time, several respondents acknowledged that media can also have negative effects. Responses such as *"wrong perception," "wrong view," "negatively," "fake news influences people's thinking," "lack of diverse representation," "promoting joint family while degrading single-parent households,"* and *"portraying single parents as wrong people"* suggest that media sometimes reinforces stereotypes and prejudices. These responses indicate that inaccurate or biased portrayals can strengthen negative attitudes toward single-parent families and contribute to social stigma.

Many respondents emphasized that media influences society in both positive and negative ways. Several participants specifically stated that media can either promote understanding and acceptance or reinforce discrimination depending on how single-parent families are portrayed. Some students pointed out that positive and realistic portrayals help normalize single-parent households, whereas unrealistic representations often present single parents either as helpless victims or as extraordinary heroes, failing to reflect their everyday realities.

Social media emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned forms of media. Many respondents believed that platforms such as social media provide opportunities to learn about the experiences of single parents, spread awareness, and challenge traditional beliefs. At the same time, respondents also recognized that social media can spread misinformation, unrealistic parenting expectations, and negative public opinions, which may influence how society views single-parent households.

Some respondents also highlighted the role of political discourse, digital connectivity, news reporting, and online discussions in shaping public attitudes. A few respondents stated that increased media discussions have helped reduce stigma by making conversations about single-parent families more common in society. However, a small number of participants expressed uncertainty by responding *"I don't know," "No idea,"* or *"Neutral,"* indicating that not all students were able to clearly identify the role of media in shaping public perceptions.

Interpretation

The findings clearly indicate that postgraduate students consider media to be one of the most influential institutions in shaping society's attitudes toward single-parent households.

Students recognize that media has the power to influence how people think, feel, and behave by presenting particular images, stories, and narratives about different family structures. Since media reaches a large audience, its representation of single-parent families can significantly affect public understanding and acceptance.

The responses suggest that positive media representation contributes to reducing stigma by portraying single parents as capable, responsible, and resilient individuals who successfully raise their children despite various challenges. When newspapers, television programmes, films, and social media platforms present balanced and realistic stories, they encourage empathy and help people recognize that parenting ability is not determined by family structure alone. Such portrayals challenge traditional stereotypes and promote greater social inclusion.

At the same time, the findings reveal that negative or stereotypical portrayals continue to influence public opinion. When media repeatedly presents single-parent families as symbols of broken homes, failure, poverty, or social problems, it reinforces existing prejudices and creates misconceptions among viewers. Such portrayals may lead to discrimination, social exclusion, and unfair judgments against both single parents and their children. Respondents also pointed out that sensational news, fake information, and unrealistic parenting standards can distort public understanding and increase stigma.

Another important finding is the growing importance of social media. Unlike traditional media, social media allows individuals to share personal experiences, build supportive communities, and discuss issues openly. Many respondents believed that these platforms have created opportunities for society to better understand the realities of single-parent households. At the same time, they acknowledged that social media can also spread misinformation and harmful opinions if content is not presented responsibly.

Overall, the open-ended responses demonstrate that postgraduate students view media as a powerful socializing agent that can either challenge or reinforce social stigma. The findings suggest that the influence of media depends largely on the nature of its representation. Positive, realistic, and inclusive portrayals can encourage acceptance and reduce prejudice, while biased and stereotypical portrayals can strengthen discrimination and social exclusion. These findings directly support the objectives of the present study by highlighting the significant role of media in shaping students' perceptions and broader

societal attitudes towards single-parent households in Kerala. They also emphasize the need for responsible media practices, balanced storytelling, and increased public awareness to create a more inclusive society that respects diverse family structures.

4.5.3: Measures to Reduce Stigma Toward Single-Parent Families.

- Awareness class
- Shifting narrative
- Aware
- I don't know
- Awareness classes
- Shifting issue
- Shifting societal narrative
- Nil
- Awareness
- No idea
- No idea
- Understanding reality
- More job opportunities for the single parents
- School level awareness
- Shifting societal issue
- Awareness class and social media group activities
- Awareness and education
- Good
- Understanding parenting
- Inclusive education on family diversity in schools.
- Legal and policy reform
- Awareness class
- Get together
- Peer Support Networks, Self advocacy
- Awareness class
- Social media campaign
- Public awareness and education

- Shifting down
- Promote the understanding that healthy, functional families come in many forms.
- Definitely Awareness classes
- Changing a mass people mindset is not that possible
- Education
- Just aware for parenting
- Understanding
- Aware of parenting
- Shifting down
- You can't change people's mindset in a day it's a continuous process
- Provide awareness class
- It's not possible people Should change their mindset
- Yes
- normalizing single-parent households
- People should understand that single-parent families are also capable of providing love, care, and support to their children. Creating awareness, avoiding judgment, encouraging positive media representation, and offering community support can help reduce the stigma faced by single-parent families.
- People should be educated. Morally. Everyone has right to live in this SOCIETY.
- Aware to parenting
- Including education sector
- Shifting societal narrative
- Aware and understanding single parenting
- We should normalise single family housing
- Government to make policies and start campaigning for promotion of single-family inclusion
- Government to provide job opportunities for them
- Combine
- Inclusive language, policy reforms, and public education.
- Public awareness campaigns, inclusive media representation and government welfare initiatives
- Aware for single parenting

- Awareness class
- Social media meeting

Analysis

The open-ended responses reveal that postgraduate students suggested a variety of measures to reduce the stigma associated with single-parent families in Kerala. The most frequently mentioned recommendation was creating awareness through awareness classes, public education, and awareness campaigns. Many respondents repeatedly emphasized the need for awareness programmes in schools, colleges, communities, and through social media to educate people about the realities of single-parent families and to challenge existing stereotypes.

Another major theme that emerged from the responses was the need to change society's mindset and shift the traditional social narrative. Several respondents used expressions such as *"shifting societal narrative," "changing people's mindset," "normalizing single-parent households,"* and *"people should understand reality."* These responses indicate that students believe stigma can only be reduced when society begins to accept that healthy and successful families can exist in different forms, including single-parent households.

Many respondents also highlighted the importance of education. Suggestions such as *"inclusive education on family diversity in schools," "school-level awareness,"* and *"including education sector"* show that students believe educational institutions have an important role in promoting acceptance from an early age. They emphasized that children and young people should be taught to respect all family structures and avoid discrimination based on family background.

Several participants stressed the need for positive media representation. They suggested conducting social media campaigns, group activities, and public awareness programmes that portray single-parent families realistically and positively. Respondents believed that responsible media coverage can challenge negative stereotypes and help society develop a more balanced understanding of single-parent households.

Some respondents focused on government support and policy interventions. They recommended providing better employment opportunities, welfare programmes, legal and policy reforms, community support, and government campaigns to improve the lives of single parents. Others suggested strengthening peer support networks, self-advocacy

groups, community gatherings, and emotional support systems to reduce feelings of isolation among single-parent families.

A few respondents acknowledged that changing societal attitudes is a gradual process. Responses such as *"You can't change people's mindset in a day"* and *"It's a continuous process"* reflect the understanding that reducing stigma requires long-term efforts involving education, awareness, media, families, and society as a whole. Some participants responded *"I don't know," "No idea,"* or *"Nil,"* indicating uncertainty about possible solutions. However, the majority of respondents offered thoughtful and practical suggestions for promoting greater acceptance of single-parent households.

The findings demonstrate that postgraduate students recognize that reducing stigma towards single-parent families requires collective efforts from individuals, educational institutions, media, communities, and the government. The strong emphasis on awareness programmes suggests that students believe many negative attitudes arise from a lack of knowledge and understanding. By educating the public about the realities of single-parent families, misconceptions can be challenged, empathy can be increased, and discrimination can gradually decrease.

The responses also indicate that students see social attitudes as deeply rooted in traditional beliefs and cultural values. Therefore, many believe that changing people's mindset is one of the most important steps towards creating an inclusive society. Rather than viewing single-parent families as incomplete or abnormal, respondents suggested that society should recognize them as equally capable of providing love, care, emotional security, and a healthy environment for children.

Another significant finding is the recognition of the power of education and media in bringing about social change. Respondents believe that schools, colleges, and media organizations can promote positive attitudes by presenting realistic information about family diversity and encouraging respect for all family forms. Positive media representation and educational initiatives can help reduce prejudice among younger generations and contribute to long-term social transformation.

The suggestions for government policies, employment opportunities, legal protection, and welfare programmes reflect students' awareness that stigma is not only a social issue but also linked to economic and institutional support. Strengthening public policies and

community support systems can improve the quality of life of single-parent families while reducing the social disadvantages they often experience.

Overall, the open-ended responses indicate that postgraduate students strongly support awareness, education, positive media representation, inclusive policies, community support, and changes in societal attitudes as effective measures to reduce stigma towards single-parent families. These findings directly support the objectives of the present study by demonstrating that students believe social acceptance can be improved through collective action and responsible media practices. The responses also suggest that reducing stigma is a gradual but achievable process that requires cooperation between society, educational institutions, policymakers, and the media to build a more inclusive and compassionate environment for single-parent households in Kerala.

- The study analysed the perceptions of 80 postgraduate students in Trivandrum regarding single-parent households.
- Majority of respondents were female (62.5%) and belonged to urban areas (63.7%).
- More than half of the respondents (58.8%) personally knew someone from a single-parent household, indicating direct exposure to diverse family structures.
- Television (43.8%) was the major source of media exposure, followed by Instagram/Facebook (23.8%) and YouTube (18.8%).
- Most respondents showed neutral to positive perceptions toward single-parent households, reflecting changing but developing social acceptance.
- A significant proportion agreed that traditional values (45%) and social judgments from relatives and neighbours (46.3%) influence stigma toward single-parent families.
- Respondents recognized the influence of media, with 53.8% agreeing that social media increases awareness and acceptance of diverse family structures.
- Students showed supportive attitudes, with 55% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing that single-parent households deserve equal respect in society.
- The study indicates that students are gradually developing more accepting attitudes toward single-parent households.

- Although acceptance is increasing, social stigma continues due to traditional beliefs and expectations regarding family structures.
- Media plays a dual role by both reinforcing stereotypes and creating awareness about single-parent families.
- Positive portrayals through social media and digital platforms contribute to reducing misconceptions and encouraging acceptance.
- Education and exposure to modern ideas influence young people to become more open toward diverse family forms.
- The high number of neutral responses across several areas suggests that perceptions are still evolving and greater awareness is required.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, SUGGETIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 FINDINGS

5.1.1: INTRODUCTION

The major findings of a research study present the most important results obtained through the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. They summarize the key outcomes in relation to the objectives of the study and provide an overall understanding of the research problem. The findings of the present study are based on the responses collected from 80 postgraduate students from different colleges in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The study examined how media and society influence students' perceptions of single-parent households and explored the extent to which stigma continues to exist in contemporary society. The findings indicate that although students generally demonstrate positive and accepting attitudes towards single-parent families, traditional beliefs and social stigma continue to influence public perceptions. The major findings of the study are presented below.

5.1.2: MAJOR FINDINGS

Single-parent households are increasingly recognized as part of Kerala's changing family system.

- Students acknowledge that single-parent families still experience social stigma and judgment.
- Single mothers are perceived to experience more stigma compared to single fathers due to traditional gender expectations.
- Children from single-parent households are believed to face social discrimination and stereotypes.
- Media representations significantly influence public attitudes toward single-parent households.
- Social media discussions and digital exposure help normalize single parenting and family diversity.
- Educated youth show greater acceptance and openness toward single-parent families.

- Awareness programmes are considered important for reducing stigma and promoting inclusion.

The present study, "Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single-Parent Households in Kerala," was conducted to understand how media and society influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from 80 postgraduate students in Thiruvananthapuram, the following major findings were identified.

The study found that single-parent households are increasingly recognized as an important part of Kerala's changing family structure. Most respondents acknowledged that family patterns are changing due to factors such as divorce, separation, widowhood, migration, and changing social values. Students generally viewed single-parent families as one of the many forms of family existing in contemporary society rather than as an unusual or unacceptable family structure. This finding reflects the growing acceptance of family diversity among educated youth.

The findings also revealed that students are aware that single-parent families continue to experience social stigma and social judgment despite increasing social acceptance. Many respondents believed that traditional beliefs and cultural expectations continue to influence society's attitudes toward single-parent households. Although perceptions are gradually changing, stigma remains a significant challenge for many single-parent families in Kerala.

Another important finding is that single mothers are perceived to face greater stigma than single fathers. The respondents believed that women raising children alone are more likely to experience criticism, discrimination, and negative social judgment because of traditional gender roles and cultural expectations regarding marriage and motherhood. This finding indicates that gender-based stereotypes continue to influence public attitudes toward single-parent families.

The study further found that children from single-parent households are often perceived to experience discrimination and social stereotypes. Respondents believed that children may face prejudice, exclusion, bullying, or unfair assumptions in schools and society because of their family background. Such experiences may affect their emotional well-being,

confidence, and social relationships. This finding highlights that the impact of stigma extends beyond parents and also affects children.

One of the most significant findings of the study is that media plays a major role in shaping public perceptions of single-parent households. The respondents believed that television, films, newspapers, and digital media influence how society understands and responds to different family structures. Positive media portrayals were considered helpful in promoting acceptance and reducing prejudice, while negative or stereotypical portrayals were believed to reinforce misconceptions and social stigma. The descriptive findings indicate that respondents widely acknowledged the influence of media in shaping perceptions toward single-parent households.

The analysis showed that:

- 53.8% agreed that social media has increased awareness and acceptance of diverse family structures.
- 62.6% agreed that television serials reinforce stereotypes regarding single-parent households.
- 58.7% agreed that positive media representation can reduce social stigma.
- 72.6% agreed that social media discussions help normalize single parenting.
- 68.7% believed that technological advancement has increased social acceptance of family diversity.
- More than half of the respondents identified television and digital platforms as their major source of information.

These findings clearly indicate that respondents perceive media as an important factor influencing attitudes toward single-parent households. Based on the descriptive findings, the evidence tends to support the alternative hypothesis (H_1) and does not support the null hypothesis (H_{01}).

The study also found that social media has become an important platform for promoting awareness and normalizing single-parent households. Many respondents believed that online discussions, personal stories, awareness campaigns, and digital content have helped young people better understand the realities of single-parent families. Social media was viewed as a space that encourages dialogue, challenges stereotypes, and promotes greater

acceptance of family diversity. However, some respondents also recognized that misinformation and negative online content can continue to influence public attitudes.

Another important finding is that educated youth demonstrate relatively positive attitudes toward single-parent households. Most postgraduate students expressed acceptance, empathy, and respect toward single-parent families. The findings suggest that higher education, exposure to diverse social experiences, and access to information contribute to more inclusive and less judgmental attitudes among young people. This indicates a gradual shift from traditional beliefs towards more progressive perspectives on family diversity.

The study further revealed that awareness programmes and education are considered the most effective measures for reducing stigma. The majority of respondents suggested that awareness campaigns, educational programmes, positive media representation, school-level education, community discussions, and government initiatives could help improve public understanding of single-parent households. They believed that increasing awareness would reduce misconceptions, challenge stereotypes, and promote social inclusion.

Overall, the findings indicate that although social attitudes toward single-parent households are gradually becoming more positive among postgraduate students, stigma and traditional beliefs continue to exist within society. Media and social institutions play a crucial role in shaping these perceptions. Positive media representation, educational initiatives, and public awareness were identified as essential strategies for creating a more inclusive society where single-parent families receive equal respect, dignity, and acceptance. These findings directly support the objectives of the study by demonstrating the significant influence of media and society on students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala.

The findings consistently demonstrate that respondents perceive society as an important influence on attitudes toward single-parent households. The study found that:

- 45% agreed and 16.2% strongly agreed that traditional social values negatively influence attitudes toward single-parent households.
- 46.3% agreed that relatives and neighbours judge single-parent families unfairly.
- 42.5% agreed that children from single-parent households experience discrimination.
- 33.8% agreed that single mothers experience greater stigma than single fathers.

- Nearly half of the respondents acknowledged that society treats single-parent families differently.
- At the same time, 80% agreed that single-parent households deserve equal respect, suggesting changing societal attitudes despite continuing traditional beliefs.

These findings indicate that respondents recognize the strong role of societal norms, cultural expectations, and community attitudes in shaping perceptions toward single-parent households.

The descriptive analysis suggests that the perceptions of postgraduate students toward single-parent households are influenced by media exposure, societal attitudes, and socio-demographic characteristics. Respondents generally acknowledged the role of media in promoting awareness while also recognizing that traditional social values continue to reinforce stigma. Furthermore, variations in respondents' demographic backgrounds and personal exposure to single-parent families indicate potential differences in perception.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS

5.2.1: Introduction

Based on the findings of the study, several suggestions are proposed to promote greater acceptance of single-parent households and reduce the stigma associated with them. These suggestions aim to encourage positive social attitudes, improve public awareness, and strengthen support systems for single-parent families. Since the study found that media, society, and educational institutions significantly influence students' perceptions, collaborative efforts from different stakeholders are essential to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for single-parent households.

5.2.2: Organize Awareness Programmes

Awareness programmes should be conducted regularly in schools, colleges, and community settings to educate people about the realities, challenges, and strengths of single-parent families. These programmes can help eliminate misconceptions, challenge stereotypes, and encourage empathy and respect towards diverse family structures.

5.2.3: Promote Positive Media Representation

Media organizations should portray single-parent families in a balanced, realistic, and respectful manner. Television programmes, films, newspapers, and digital media should avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes and instead highlight the resilience, capabilities, and

achievements of single parents. Positive media representation can play an important role in reducing stigma and promoting social acceptance.

5.2.4: Include Family Diversity in Educational Curriculum

Educational institutions should include topics related to family diversity, gender equality, and social inclusion in their curriculum. Discussions, seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns can help students understand that families exist in different forms and that every family deserves equal dignity and respect.

5.2.5: Strengthen Community Support Systems

Local communities, neighbourhood associations, and voluntary organizations should create support networks for single-parent families. Emotional support, counselling services, childcare assistance, and community-based programmes can reduce feelings of isolation and improve the overall well-being of single parents and their children.

5.2.6: Government Policy and Welfare Support

The government should strengthen welfare schemes and social security programmes that support single-parent families. Measures such as financial assistance, affordable childcare services, employment opportunities, educational scholarships for children, and access to counselling services can improve their quality of life and reduce social and economic disadvantages.

5.2.7: Encourage Responsible Use of Social Media

Social media platforms should be used to spread awareness about single-parent households through educational campaigns, inspirational stories, and factual information. At the same time, efforts should be made to prevent the spread of misinformation, online harassment, and discriminatory content that may reinforce stigma.

5.2.8: Promote Gender Equality

Special attention should be given to reducing the stigma experienced by single mothers, who often face greater social discrimination due to traditional gender expectations. Society should recognize that both single mothers and single fathers are capable of providing a safe, loving, and supportive environment for their children.

5.2.9: Provide Counselling and Psychological Support

Professional counselling services should be made available for single parents and their children through educational institutions, healthcare centres, and community organizations. Emotional

support can help families cope with stress, social pressure, and psychological challenges associated with single parenthood.

5.2.10: Encourage Further Research

Future researchers should conduct similar studies with larger sample sizes covering different districts of Kerala and other states in India. Comparative studies involving students, parents, teachers, and members of the general public can provide a broader understanding of perceptions towards single-parent households. Qualitative and mixed-method studies can also explore the lived experiences of single-parent families in greater depth.

5.2.11: Promote an Inclusive Society

Society should move beyond traditional stereotypes and recognize that a family's strength depends on the love, care, responsibility, and emotional support shared among its members rather than its structure. Every individual, regardless of family background, deserves equal opportunities, dignity, and social acceptance. Promoting empathy, respect, and inclusion will help create a society where single-parent families can live without fear of stigma or discrimination.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The family is one of the most important institutions in society, and its structure has undergone significant changes over time due to social, economic, and cultural transformations. Among these changes, the increasing number of single-parent households has become a significant social reality across the world, including Kerala. Although society is gradually becoming more accepting of diverse family structures, single-parent families continue to experience stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion. The present study, "Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala," was undertaken to understand how media and society influence postgraduate students' perceptions of single-parent households and to examine the extent to which stigma continues to exist.

The findings of the study reveal that postgraduate students generally hold positive and accepting attitudes towards single-parent households. Most respondents recognized that single-parent families are capable of providing love, care, emotional support, and a healthy environment for children. They also acknowledged that the challenges faced by these families are largely the result of social and economic circumstances rather than the family structure

itself. This indicates a gradual shift in attitudes among educated youth towards greater acceptance of family diversity.

At the same time, the study found that social stigma continues to affect the lives of single-parent families. Many respondents believed that single parents, particularly single mothers, experience social judgment, discrimination, financial difficulties, and emotional stress due to traditional cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes. The findings also showed that children from single-parent households may face prejudice, stereotyping, and exclusion in schools and society. These observations suggest that despite social progress, traditional attitudes continue to influence public perceptions of family life.

The study further highlights the significant influence of media in shaping public attitudes towards single-parent households. Respondents believed that television, films, newspapers, and especially social media have the power to either reinforce stereotypes or promote greater understanding and acceptance. Positive and realistic portrayals of single-parent families were perceived as helping reduce stigma, while negative or stereotypical representations were considered responsible for strengthening social prejudice. This demonstrates that media plays an important role in influencing how society understands and responds to changing family structures.

Another important finding of the study is that education and awareness contribute to more inclusive attitudes. The respondents emphasized the need for awareness programmes, positive media representation, inclusive education, government support, and community participation to reduce stigma and improve the social acceptance of single-parent families. They recognized that changing societal attitudes is a gradual process that requires continuous efforts from educational institutions, media organizations, policymakers, and society as a whole.

Overall, the study concludes that the perceptions of postgraduate students in Thiruvananthapuram reflect a positive shift towards accepting single-parent households as a normal and valuable part of contemporary society. However, the persistence of stigma indicates that there is still a need for greater awareness, social sensitivity, and inclusive policies. The study emphasizes that the well-being of a family should not be judged by the number of parents but by the quality of care, love, support, and opportunities provided to its members.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on family diversity by highlighting the relationship between media, society, and students' perceptions of single-parent households in Kerala. It demonstrates that although attitudes are gradually changing,

collective efforts are still required to eliminate prejudice and promote equality. Building an inclusive society where all family forms are respected will not only improve the lives of single-parent families but also strengthen the values of social justice, dignity, and human rights. The findings of this study may serve as a useful reference for future researchers, educators, policymakers, social workers, and media professionals who seek to promote a more compassionate and inclusive society that values and respects every family, regardless of its structure.

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APPENDIX-QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: *Negotiating Stigma: Media, Society and Students' Perception of Single Parent Households in Kerala.*

Section A: Socio-Demographic Profile

(Tick the appropriate answer)

1. Age:

- 21–23
- 24–26
- Above 26

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Other

3. Religion:

- Hindu
- Muslim
- Christian
- Other

4. Place of Residence:

- Rural
- Urban

5. Type of Family:

- Nuclear Family
- Joint Family
- Single Parent Family
- Other

6. Educational Qualification:

- MA

- MSc
- MCom
- Other

7. Family Monthly Income:

- Below ₹20,000
- ₹20,001–₹50,000
- ₹50,001–₹1,00,000
- Above ₹1,00,000

8. Do you personally know anyone from a single-parent household?

- Yes
- No

9. Main source of media exposure:

- Television
- Cinema
- Instagram/Facebook
- YouTube
- OTT Platforms
- Newspapers
- Other

10. Average daily social media usage:

- Less than 1 hour
- 1–3 hours
- 3–5 hours
- More than 5 hours

Section B: Perception Toward Single Parent Households

Instructions: Please indicate your opinion using the following scale:

Scale Meaning

1 Strongly Disagree

2 Disagree

- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly Agree

A. General Perception

- 1. Single-parent families should be socially accepted like two-parent families.
- 2. Children from single-parent families can grow up successfully.
- 3. Single-parent households are becoming common in Kerala society.
- 4. Family structure does not determine a child's character.
- 5. Single parents can effectively manage parenting responsibilities.

B. Social Stigma and Attitudes

- 6. Society treats single-parent families differently.
- 7. Single mothers face more stigma than single fathers.
- 8. Children from single-parent households experience social discrimination.
- 9. Traditional social values in Kerala negatively influence attitudes toward single-parent households.
- 10. Relatives and neighbours often judge single-parent families unfairly.

C. Media Influence

- 11. Media influences people's perceptions about single-parent households.
- 12. Malayalam cinema often portrays single-parent families emotionally or negatively.
- 13. Social media has increased awareness and acceptance of diverse family structures.
- 14. Television serials reinforce stereotypes about single-parent households.
- 15. Positive media representation can reduce social stigma.

D. Students' Attitudes

- 16. I feel comfortable interacting with individuals from single-parent families.
- 17. Students from single-parent households should not face discrimination in educational institutions.
- 18. Single-parent households deserve equal respect in society.
- 19. Educated youth are more accepting of single-parent households.
- 20. Awareness programmes can help reduce stigma toward single-parent families.

E. Technology and Social Change

21. Digital media has changed young people's understanding of family structures.
22. Exposure to modern media reduces traditional prejudices.
23. Social media discussions help normalize single parenting.
24. Technological advancement has increased social acceptance of family diversity.
25. Kerala society is slowly becoming more accepting of single-parent households.

Section C: Open-Ended Questions

1. What do you think are the major challenges faced by single-parent families in Kerala?
2. How does media influence society's perception of single-parent households?
3. What measures can help reduce stigma toward single-parent families?