

## **Effect of Single Parent on Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Ibadan South-East Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** The study determined the effects of single parent on academic achievement of secondary school students in Ibadan South-East local government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The whole of secondary school students in Oyo state represent the sample population. In carrying out the study, ex-post facto or causal survey design was adopted for the study. Stratified proportional random sampling technique was used in selecting the subjects used for the study. The reliability and validity of the instruments were determined before use by the investigators. The study revealed among other things that: There is no significant difference between students from divorced home and their academic achievement. There is no significant difference between children in step-families and their level of academic achievement. There is no significant difference between academic achievement of students from single-parent and their counterparts living-together parents. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from favourable home environment and their counterparts from unfavourable home environment. The following are included in the recommendations in the study. The husband and wife should be made to realize that it is their joint responsibilities that can see their children through their educational achievement. Class and subject teachers should be sensitive to significant changes in any student behaviour and attitudes. The school should ensure that information on the child's home circumstances is regularly checked and up dated in conjunction with the parents.

**Key words:** Population, ex-post, stratified, academic, conjunction, Nigeria

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the recent past, a significant number of studies have been conducted on child-and subject centredness.

According to Sarason (1985) the child-centredness of traditional teacher education development or an adequate perspective about parenting has been neglected. He believes that it is clearly not sufficient for teachers to rely on their own parenting experiences. Teachers are consequently left with a feeling of helplessness about the effects of families on children and about their own limited impact on families-whether this takes the form of anger about declining standard of education. The lack of accurate knowledge about what is happening about families in societies today makes the business of school-home relationship so frustrating. Teachers are left fulminating that the parents they need to meet at open days are the one they never see. Their contact with specific families is limited to the time that a child is a pupil.

Reason why parents and teachers should have a relationship at all. According to Busfield (1987) much more interest is now shown in parents and their behaviour and much more information is available about parenting.

However, with the above studies, something remains lacking-a rigorous empirical study of influence of single parent on academic achievement of students. To fill this gap, the researcher has looked into the effects of single parent on academic achievement of secondary school students. This topic is not only necessary but it is logistically very timely due to the poor performance of students in external examinations faced by secondary school nowadays.

Separation and divorce which is preceded by a period of unhappiness and sometimes accompanied by physical and verbal abuse is another causes of single parent. It has been found that pre-separation cases did not necessarily spill over into parent/child relationships and indeed, 'family life' may remain relatively conflict-free despite

intense conflicts between the parents. This may explain why the knowledge that parents are going to divorce frequently comes as a tremendous shock for children. Even in the most outwardly unhappy homes, children find it difficult to accept that divorce is necessary. Most children would prefer that parents stayed together whatever the problems that exist.

Divorce rates have increased significantly in recent years with a third of marriages now ending in divorce. However, rather than providing evidence of moral decline and the disintegration of the values of family life, divorce and separation rates reflect changes in the status and employment prospects of women. Divorce or separation may result from dissatisfaction with a particular marriage rather than a rejection of marriage per se. The vast majority of divorced or separated people subsequently remarry. This means that school classes will contain many pupils living in reconstituted families and is steady increase in pupils born to older-than-usual parents-the children of a second marriage. Tinker (1984) is of the opinion that it is quite normal for children to know both their grandparents and great grand parents. Froggat (1985) describes such as 'adult children' and that they have to adjust emotionally, not only to the independence demands of teenage children, but also to the increasing dependence needs of their parents and grandparents.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

It is the purpose of this study to determine the difference between single parent and the students' academic achievements. It also measured the extent to which single parent variables such as death of one of a couple, separation, divorce, working mothers, young unmarried mothers and step families affected the academic achievement of secondary school students.

#### **The following research questions are posed:**

- How does parental divorce contribute to children's stress?
- To what extent does stress affect academic achievement of students?
- Do step-children perform well in school?
- How does father or mother cope in Saturday parenting?
- How students from dependent parents are adjusting to school system?
- What is the extent of boys and girls reaction towards couple separation?

#### **HYPOTHESES**

To properly guide the study, the following hypotheses were tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level of significance:-

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between students from divorced home and their academic achievement.
- H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between children in step-families and their level of academic achievement.
- H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between academic achievement of students from single-parent and their counterparts from living-together-parents.
- H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from favourable home environment and their counterparts from unfavourable home environment.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Studies had shown that the home environment refers to the cognitive stimulation and emotional support the child receives in his or her home. It was also established that home environment affects achievement independent of other factors. The home environment accounts for one third to one half of the cognitive disadvantages of children who experience long term poverty.

Closely related to home environment is the problem of poverty. Research has shown that the child poverty rate in the world has fluctuated between 19 and 22% and it is currently a little over 22%. It explains further that if child poverty trends continue over the next seven years as they did from 1970's through 1990's to early 2000, then by the year 2010, the rate is expected to be as high as 28%.

One way of investigating the role of family background is to identify measures of social disadvantages. He describes children as disadvantaged when their families.

- Have only one parent
- Have more than children they can cope with
- Receive low income.

Studies had referred to the decade between the mid-to-late 1960's and the mid-to-late 1970's as a decade of crisis for marriage and elaborates on the dimensions of that crisis in terms of three 'vital signs';

- The first marriage rate,
- The remarriage rate,
- The fertility rate;

Since these vital signs have stabilized somewhat, Bernad contends that today we are attempting to come to terms with new life-styles reflected in different kinds of marriage, such as two-earner families, cohabitation and swinging, Two-earner family is perhaps the greatest.

The following had been found to be the essentials of the parent child relationship:

- The importance of an ongoing interaction between adults and children,
- The need for an irrational commitment on the part of the parent regarding the child's welfare,
- The importance of having people rationally committed to the child's welfare,
- The support of third parties,
- Co-operative consensus,
- Change in societal attitudes and
- The involvement of various adults in child-rearing.

When dying, death and grieving in a family are surrounded by secrecy as well as pain and fear, the child's vague and frightening feelings about illness and death increase. These children learn not to ask questions and are isolated in their grief. But even very young children are able to grasp ideas about the nature of change, the irreversibility of death and the feelings and processes involved in loss, for example by examining phases and changes in plant and animal life.

Lasdown (1980) asserts that it is helpful to recognize common reactions in families following bereavement. According to him, these include shock or numbness, feelings of guilt, general apathy and even preoccupation with the dead parent image, 'seeing or 'hearing' her or him in the house.

Despite the trauma such as above, divorce experience too has been likened to the trauma of loss through death. Unlike death, however, it is without symbolic rituals, it incurs little public sympathy, has no 'finality' and memories are often negative rather than positive. The grieving process normally involves a range of feelings occurring in a variety of combinations, continuously or intermittently for months, sometimes years, for parents and children, divorce is the most stressful period of their lives. The feelings are experienced by everyone but with varying intensity and almost certainly at different times

Nissel (1987) in his own contribution expresses that divorce is the largest cause of single parenthood. It is estimated that one in three of all marriages will end in divorce and, although most divorces will subsequently remarry, this means that, at any one time, one in eight of

all families is headed by a lone parent. This is a similar proportion to the number of Victorian families made motherless or fatherless by death and the main problems facing single parent families do not seem to have changed much over the years. Nissel confirms that understanding and poverty are the overriding problems.

Not minding the above views, Parke (1981) expresses that teachers worry about pupils who suffer the consequences of their parents' divorce and many exaggerated claims are made about the links between parents' divorce and children's delinquency. Sharing the same view, Rutter (1981) explains that there is no direct link between children of divorcing parents and delinquency. He expresses further that children of divorced parents are less maladjusted and delinquent than children in intact families. Walcak (1984) buttressed this with some children saying that whilst they would prefer to have two happily married parents, they would rather have a single parent than two unhappily married parents.

Mitchell (1984) corroborated that with the saying of some children that they rarely get an adequate explanation of what is happening or have any saying in the decision making.

On losing one of the parents in the course of divorce, Lamb (1980) expresses that losing a father seems to have longest lasting effects on children's development than losing a mother. According to him, father's absence is associated with a decline in school achievement; with a decline in I.Q. in boys aged between six and twelve years; and with difficulties in concepts of masculinity. Lamb (1980) goes further that effects on girls are more severe but often delayed until they are called upon to be wives and mothers themselves. According to him however, girls without father show a slightly increased tendency to illegitimate pregnancy and problems in establishing concepts of femininity.

## **POPULATION**

The population of this study comprises both the school guidance counsellors and SS2 science students with their parents. The schools are the seventeen public secondary schools comprising of 2 male only, 2 female only and 13 mixed schools in Ibadan South East Local Government Area of Oyo State. There are 8 old and 9 new public secondary schools altogether and, these compares of 34 guidance counsellors. 20 counsellors are females while 14 are males. There are 1,360 science students made up of 900 male and 460 female students. Out of this, 810 students are in the old school while 550 are from the new schools respectively.

### **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

Through the process of stratified proportional random sampling, one male and female school each with six mixed schools were sampled with a total of 720 students. 4 guidance counsellors from old schools and 4 from new schools, respectively were randomly selected after stratification.

### **DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUMENTS**

The instrument used for this study is a questionnaire of two types. Type 1 of the questionnaire, 'for the School Guidance and Counsellor' is coded as 'FSGCO' having two sections-section 'A and B'.

Section A of the type 1 questionnaire is an open response question and was constructed to determine- the school name, grade and its year of establishment.

Section B of type 1 questionnaire is a Likert rating scale constructed to highlight the possible variables affecting student's achievements in schools.

Type 2 of the questionnaire-For Students of Secondary School and their parents coded 'FSSSAP' has two sections-section A and B

Section A of 'FSSSAP' has two divisions-Divisions I and II.

Division I section A of 'FSSSAP' is a fixed response type and was constructed to give information about the respondents and his/her school. Division II of the questionnaire is a Likert Rating scale. Questionnaire 2 section B was constructed to give information about themselves and their children.

Questions 5 of section B of FSSSAP and 8 of section A division 1 of FSSSAP were used to analyze hypothesis 1;

Questions 8 of type 2 section B was used to answer hypothesis 2.

Question 6,8and 12 of type 2 section B questionnaire were used to analyze Hypothesis 3.

Questions 8 and 12 of type 2 section B of the instruments were used to analyze hypothesis 4.

### **VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS**

The instrument was shown to four experts in Teachers Education department including the researcher's supervisor. They have all agreed that it is contently valid.

Test-retest method was used. By this, the instrument for the study was administered twice on ten teachers of Ibadan City Academy with an interval of one week. The

result of the two tests after correlation was 0.81 using Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

The instrument, which was structured questionnaire, was personally administered on the respondents of the sampled schools. Three days were given them to complete the questionnaire. Thereafter, the researcher went round to collect the instrument.

### **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected were subjected and analyzed by Chi-Square on hypothesis 1 to 4, using the following formula:

$$X = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 1 (H<sub>0</sub>)**

There is no significant difference between students from divorced home and their academic achievement'.

In order to test the above hypothesis, questions 5 of section B of FSSSAP and 8 of section A division 1 of FSSSAP were constructed and used:

Question 5: What is the marital status of your parents?

Question 8: What is your level of performance in number of your subjects in your last examination? Quote at the below categories:

Five credits and above, below 5 credits but more than 6 passes, below 6 passes. Questionnaires were distributed to 720 respondents. There responses to question 5 were as follow:

Six hundred forming 83.3% said their parents were living together while 120 forming 16.7% of the respondents confirmed that their parents were separated. Twenty two hundred forming 30.7% of the respondents had 5 credits and above, 438 (61%) of them had below 5 credits but more than 6 passes while 8.38%, that is, 60 of the respondents had below 6 passes.

The two questions were analyzed using Chi-square in the Table 1.

The calculated value of  $X^2$  is 164.96 but the table value at an  $\alpha$  of 0.05 with 2 as degree of freedom (df) is 5.99. Since the calculated value is more than the table value, the hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference between the performance of students from divorced home and their academic achievement.

Table 1: Level of performance and marital status

Level of performance	Marital status	f0	fe	f0-fe	(f0-fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(f0-fe)^2}{fe}$
5 credit and above	Living together	117	185	-68	4624	25.0
	separated	105	37	+68	4624	124.99
Below 5 credit but more than 6 passes	Living together	338	365	-27	729	2.0
	separated	100	73	+27	729	9.99
Below 6 passes	Living together	45	50	-5	25	0.5
	separated	15	10	+5	25	2.5
		720	720	0		164.96

Table 2: Level of performance and mode of living

Level of performance	Mode of living	f0	fe	f0-fe	(f0-fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(f0-fe)^2}{fe}$
5 credits and above	With parents	164	181	-17	289	1.60
	With step-families	58	41	-17	289	7.05
Below 5 credits but more than 6 passes	With parents	390	358	32	1024	2.86
	With step-families	48	80	-32	1024	12.80
Below 6 process	With parents	34	49	-15	225	4.59
	With step-families	26	11	15	225	20.46
		720	720	0		49.35

Table 3: Level of performance of students from single-parent and living-together-parents

Level of performance	Mode of living	f0	fe	f0-fe	(f0-fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(f0-fe)^2}{fe}$
5 credits and above	With father only	18	14	4	16	1.143
	With mother only	12	16	-4	16	1.000
	With both	25	25	0	0	0.000
Below 5 credits but more than 6 passes	With father only	16	23	-7	49	2.130
	With mother only	24	26	-2	4	0.154
	With both	50	41	9	81	1.976
Below 6 process	With father only	19	16	3	9	0.563
	With mother only	23	17	6	36	2.118
	With both	19	28	-9	81	2.893
		206	206	0		11.997

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 2 (H<sub>02</sub>)

There is no significant difference between children in step-families and their level of academic achievement'

In order to test the above, question 8 of type 2 section B in the questionnaire was generated and distributed to 720 respondents.

Question: Whom do you reside with (parents, step-families)?

Five hundred fifty eight students forming 71.7% of the sampled population were living with their parents while 132 respondents (18.3%) were living with step-families. 58 of the respondents who live with step-families had 5 credits and above, 48 of them had below 5 credits but more than 6 passes while 26 of the students who live with step-families had below 6 passes.

Chi-square was used to analyze the hypothesis as below (Table 2):

The critical value for 2 degree of freedom (df) and an  $\gamma$  of 0.05 is 5.99, while the calculated value is 49.35. Since the critical value of 5.99 is less than the table value with a  $\alpha$  of 0.05 at 2 df, the Null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected. Hence, there is a significant difference between performance of students living with their parents and those with their step-families.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 3 (H<sub>03</sub>)

There is no significant difference between academic achievement of students from single-parent and their counterparts living-together-parents'

Testing the above hypothesis, questions 6, 8 and 12 of type 2 section B questionnaires were formed:

Question 6: Are you living with parents?

Question 8: Are you living with only your father or mother?

Question 12: What is your level of performance in the last promotion examination?

Out of 720 questionnaires distributed, 206 respondents were living with their parents. 72, making 35% of the respondents were living with only their fathers; 41% or 84 of the respondents were living with only their mother while 150 forming 73% were staying with both parents.

The above hypothesis was tested using Chi-square as in the below Table 3:

The critical table value at 4 df with an  $\alpha$  of 0.05 is 9.49 while the calculated value is 11.98. Since the computed value is greater than the critical table value, the Null Hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant level of performance of students living with both parents and their counterpart with single parent.

Table 4: Students academic performance and home environment

Home environment	Level of performance	f0	fe	f0-fe	(f0-fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(f0-fe)^2}{fe}$
Conducive	Great extent	180	142	38	1444	10.17
	More extent	58	75	-17	289	3.85
	Moderate extent	80	75	5	25	0.33
	Less extent	30	56	-26	676	12.07
Not conducive	Great extent	114	152	-38	1444	9.5
	More extent	98	81	17	289	3.57
	Moderate extent	76	81	-5	25	0.31
	Less extent	84	58	26	676	11.66
		720	720	0		51.46

#### RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 4 (H<sub>04</sub>)

There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from favourable home environment and their counterparts from unfavourable home environment.

To test the above hypothesis, two questions were generated:

- To what extent does the type of school you attend affect your academic performance?
- How is your home environment conducive to leaving?

The responses to question (a) was as follows: 294 of the whole sampled population which constitutes 40.8% believed that the type of school they attend affect to a great extent their academic achievement. One hundred fifty six of seven hundred twenty (21.7%) believed that their school of attendance affect their academic achievement to more and moderate extents, respectively, while 114 respondents forming 15.86% agreed that the school they attend affect their academic achievement to a less extent.

Response to question 'b' was 504 of 720 respondents which represents 70% believed that their environments is conducive to learning, while 30% that is 216 respondents said that their environment is not conducive to learning. The above questions were analyzed by chi-square to test the level of significance (Table 4).

The critical value for 3 df at an  $\alpha$  of 0.05 is 7.81 while the calculated chi-square ( $X^2$ ) value is 51.46.

Since the critical value of 7.81 is = PV of 51.46 at a  $\alpha$  of 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the academic performance of students from favourable homes and their counterparts from unfavourable homes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The national aims and objectives of education in Nigeria as explained in National Policy of Education (NPE) 1981 are;

- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- The inculcation of the right type of values and the attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigeria society.
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the development of his society.

It is evident that such objectives as stated above may not be easily achieved considering the expanding rate of poor academic achievement of students.

The husband and wife should be made to realize that it is the joint responsibilities of father and mother that can see their children through their educational achievement. The couple should therefore guide against anything that could stress the relationship between them as that will lead their child (ren) to a stressful life as well.

On the part of the students, they should have focus in life. It is what they want to become in life that should be paramount to them. They should regard other distractions from home, school and society as something that would prevent them from achieving their goal in life. They should feel free to discuss whatever is bothering them with their teacher or and school guidance counsellor who will help them to solve such.

Class and subject teachers should be sensitive to significant changes in any student behaviour and attitudes. These may include worsening temper, aggression, lack of concentration, depression, loss of appetite and truancy. Such can relate to a stress brought about by a change in home circumstances. The teacher should report such to the school authority for proper investigation and action.

From its end, the school should ensure that information on the child's home circumstances is regularly checked and updated in conjunction with the parents. Where the parents have separated, the school should have details of custody and access the arrangements.

The school can as well use the services of the school guidance and counsellor to counsel both students and parents on the effects of environmental stressor on the academic achievement of students. He can also educate parents and a student on adequate preparation for the transition of pupils from childhood to adulthood as adolescent period itself is stressful on its own without any other environmental stressor.

The school should also know that there are also times when a specialist help is more appropriate for the types of behaviours which the students exhibit in response to stress. In such situations, the role played by the school may primarily comprise of referral, providing a means of access to the professional help by educational psychologists, child guidance clinics and social workers amongst others.

On the final note, government should try to improve the living standard of her citizens by tackling the problem of unemployment, reducing the rate of retrenchment of able-bodied citizens and try to provide for the immediate needs of her unemployed citizen.

Government can also establish separate special education for the students with behavioural or learning problems.

The following recommendations are made

- Efforts should be made by the parents to settle their differences
- Religious leaders should always intervene in the dispute that may arise between a husband and wife in order to settle the dispute amicably
- Rather than separating a couple the courts should find ways of assisting couples in settling their disputes or differences
- Step mothers should treat their step children as their own and they must be Godly in their dealings with their step children.

- It may even be better for a man to have realizable house help who will be assisting in the up-bringing of their children rather than go into second marriage after death of their wife.

Finally, life has to do with give and take. Therefore, couples should try to understand each other and they should also learn how to forgive and forget.

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