

Psychological Influence of Parental Separations and Divorce on Student's Academic Performance in Some Selected Secondary Schools in Ogun State

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Abstract

Issue related to divorce and separations has become a global concern which deprives many school children the opportunity to attain academic excellence in their lives. Many misconceptions are surrounding parental separations and divorce in every society which has assumed a worrisome dimension in the last two decades. Though many explanations have been advanced for the dramatic increase in the rate of divorce and separations from the '90s. While some individuals claimed this to be unconnected with the changes in the divorce laws in the '80s, others contested this submission. The study looks at the 'psychological influence of parental separation and divorce and how it affects the student's academic performances in some selected secondary schools in Ijebu North Local Government Area of Ogun State. Descriptive survey research was adopted in the study, whilst 100 students who were identified to be living under single parenting were randomly selected from five secondary schools within the local government areas. The instrument used for data collection was solely questionnaires. The findings of the study revealed that a larger percentage of the respondents are sometimes psychologically depressed with unstable emotions which makes them feel uncomfortable in their academic pursuit whilst the result from the findings revealed that separated parents do not have enough time to either monitor or regularly supervise the academic progress of their wards whilst these children are normally not provided with the

necessary learning materials to aid their learning. It was concluded that separation/divorce is social cancer that leads to poor academic performance while recommendation was made based on the outcome of the result from the findings that parents should be more enlightened knowing that the aftermath of divorce and separation always bounce back on the children. Hence couples should adopt dialogue and mutual discussion in resolving family related issues.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Parental Separation, Divorce, Psychological Influence.*

Introduction

Parenting, as the name implies is a responsibility given to man from God and specifically designed for two mature individual who have married and have given birth to children in order to nurture them in such a way that will make them to be useful to the society. The need for the presence of parents in a child's life cannot be overemphasized as it goes a long way in ensuring wellbeing of a child psychologically, morally and mentally among others which in no doubt would have effect on the academic pursuits of the children. Parental presence tends to have a great influence on the academic performance of children or wards in school either positively or negatively whilst separation among parents tends to result in psychological, emotional instability and poor academic performances of the children (Balogun, 2010).

Recent research has shown that the separation of parents occurs when the relationship between the parents had broken down due to migration from one geographical location to another or absence of one of the parents. Also, separation could be due to infidelity, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, non-challant attitude of either the parents among others. (Balogun, 2007).

In Nigeria among the Yoruba tribe for instance, parental roles are culturally determined particularly the maternal and paternal role which usually have high level of influence in child upbringing. Maternal roles mainly focus on child care and homemaking while the paternal role on the other hand is that of economic responsibilities and discipline of the children (Omolade, 2006). Generally, it is the responsibility of the family, to train and bring up the child in the norms and value of the society. They are to be responsible for the psychological and emotional welfare of the

child. The parents are responsible for all round growth of children. However, divorce, separation or death of one spouse may leave the roles in the hands of either of the parent.

As a result of this occurrences in the family, parents sometimes give their children to someone with better resources or left them in the care of someone while they seek work elsewhere. Winston (2009), stated that, “it would be more ideal to have both parents in the home, but often, the reverse always be the case whilst there is nothing that could be done about it except the concerned parent plan to savage the situation. There are some problems that usually emanate from parental separation this include frustration, isolation of children and sometimes children involved might be forced to exhibit temper tantrums while in the classrooms or school environments around their colleagues. Hence, the student anger, sadness and frustration may justify the way they behave or react to issues.

In some cases, separation of parents might require that the child relocate to a new environment for better care as well as enroll in a new school. Such change could have a serious impact on child ability to have full concentration on his/her academic pursuits. Thus, instability of parents may result in psychological depression and impair developmental growth in the life of a child. An attempt to dig more into this led to the investigation of psychological influence of parental separations on student’s academic performance in some selected secondary schools in Ogun State.

Statement of the problem

The decline in standard of Nigeria education system today has been a thing of concern to many educational stakeholders and educational agencies in the country which called for various policies and strategies in solving the problems through several educational reforms. The government is still spending huge sums of resources in improving these educational challenges that plague our educational system. However, available statistics has proven that the challenges are still within the Nigeria educational system which has reflected in poor academic performances among students most especially at the secondary school’s level. Various factors have been identified to the reason for these among which are poor method of teaching, inefficient educational resources and facilities among others. In addition to this, Nyarko, (2011), asserted that lack of parental involvement in their children educational activities leads to poor academic performance in their studies. This

implies that such children do not experience adequate parental care while growing under their parent. On this premise therefore, gives the researchers the impetus in conducting an empirical study on psychological influence of parental separations on student's academic performance in some selected secondary schools in Ogun State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychological influence of parental separations on student's academic performance in some selected secondary schools in Ogun State. Specifically, the study sought to determine whether:

1. Parental Separation affects Students' Academic Performance
2. Parental separation affects the emotion of students from separated parents compared to the intact family

Research Question

1. Does Parental Separation affect Students' Academic Performance?
2. Does Parental separation affect the emotion of students from separated parents compared to the intact family?

Research Hypothesis

1. Parental Separation has no significant difference on Students' Academic Performance
2. Parental separation has no significant difference on the emotion of students from separated parents compared to the intact family

Review of Related Literature

Parental Separations

The marriage bond has lost most of its religious significance and has become more of personal commitment since either of the two-party involved is mostly likely less concern about the betterment of the marriage. Some religious bodies have not been welcoming those parents that are separated or divorced but others have encouraged their participation. Marriage is increasingly been regarded as a voluntary commitment between two people which they continue to keep as long as the religion is mutually satisfying. This definition is far different from the traditional notion that

“marriage is for life” (Balogun, 2020). The presence of children no longer important nor stands as a deterrent to getting separated as it was in the past because some couple believed that separation is preferable to bringing up their children than rearing them up in a loveless and quarrelsome home. This separation in various marriages homes has led to many single parenting

Single parenting

Single parenting as is called is becoming a rapidly growing phenomenon in both the developed and developing nations of the world. Studies show that in some societies alone, there are four single parents to every ten parents and there are two single parents for every ten (10) adults” (Memon et al., 2010). Since the parents jointly decide on single parenting, one voice is mostly ignored and it is that of the children. It was reliably gathered that single parenting has a major consequence on the child’s mental, academics, social, emotional, behavioral, financial and psychological outcomes (Duke, 2000). Single parenting faces many challenges which have significant effects on children as it has identified. Tope (2012) again, reported that recognizing the impacts of education in the world today, it is very imperative that parents are encouraged and motivated to make positive efforts to ensure active involvement and participation in the education of their wards to provide their children with the capacity to receive all the necessary assistants in their education. Tope further indicated that although students are primarily the ones for whom curricula are designed, textbooks are written, and schools are built for. However, parents are chiefly the ones who are held responsible for preparing their children for learning, preparing them physically, psychologically, behaviorally, attitudinally, emotionally, and motivationally.

From the assertions of Tope, (2012), it therefore, means that without the appropriate parenting children are more likely to perform poorly in school especially at their formative years of age. Hilton and Desrochers (2002) opine that the parent’s psychological influence that occurs in children after a separation has a direct effect on their well-being. Undeniably, all parents want their children to do well at school, but not all parents are willing to putting strategies in place to facilitating the success and progress of their children (Nelson, 2009). Adolescents and young adults need educational assistants from their families, especially with their immediate parents to be able to succeed in their higher education and their life as well. Tope (2012) pointed out that, because

of the impact that single parenting has on the development of children's personality traits, as well as social and academic achievements, it is necessary and worthwhile that it should be given the needed attention.

The direct effect of being raised by a single parent is especially visible in the child's thinking and mental mindset. Psychologists and advocates have validated this over time. Tests and observations have consistently concluded and found that single parenting makes school children more aggressive and rebellious. Hence, these are transferred to their educational needs for survival in society. Experts say the behavior could be the outcome of the anger and limitation the child experiences while growing up. These are obvious reasons to make the child feel abnormal, different and unaccepted (Alawode and Salami, 2004). Children being raised by single parent face many limitations which lead to influence on their academic performance. Families that attain their single-parent status through marital dissolution are disproportionately more likely to experience both residential instability and higher rates of inter-parental conflict (both prior and after marital disruption) due to change in circumstances and relationships (Balogun, 2012). Children who are exposed to the inter-parental conflict are more likely to have trouble concerning psychological and behavioral adjustment and academic achievement. Again, once levels of inter-parental conflict are taken into account, differences in well-being for children from single-parent families versus two-parent families are reduced (Amato, 2017). Finally, children from all family types are at risk when they experience parenting that is inadequate in terms of warmth, control, or monitoring.

Causes of Parental Separation

The increase of single parenthood is not a phenomenon isolated to the western world. Even in Nigeria and other developing countries, there has been a high percentage of single parents within the population caused by one factor or the other or a combination of more than one. When we say broken or separated family, it is not a distinct and strange thing in Nigeria society, rather common and experiencing problems in and around us. Family life is in crises when some problems aroused which causes separation of the members in the families, which is simply called separation or broken homes or family. However, a mere separation due to education, job, health etc. is not a separated family even though the family members are staying away from each other. As in any

country, single parenthood arises because of the following major causes: divorce, death or estrangement of a spouse and early pregnancy (Duke, 2000).

To be fully separated, there must be some crises which arise out of misconception, misunderstanding, parental interferences, spouse ego, infidelity, peer influence etc. Then the occurring crises when unresolved lead to the divorce of the parents, separation of the children from their parents to leave with either family or relatives in other for the children to continue their lives. Separation is the hardest challenges that can occur to a couple especially if they have children. It is a painful thing for husband and wife to end up their relationship but they are two matured individuals who are strong enough to handle changes in their lives. The psychological turn of this is more devastating on the children. (Eweniyi, 2005)

Consequence of Parental Separation on children

Separation can be a difficult time for a family. Not only are the parents realizing new ways of relating to each other, but they are learning new ways to parent their children. When parents' separate or divorce, the effects of divorce on children can vary. Some children react to divorce in a natural and understanding way, while other children may struggle with the transition. Children are resilient and with assistance the divorce transition can be experienced as an adjustment rather than a crisis. Since the children in a divorce vary (different temperaments, different ages), the effects of divorce on children vary, too. Family needs to understand this, and approach their separation in way that it will not have a detrimental effect in the child upbringing. With this in mind, here are some of the most commonly seen effects of separation on children. This includes: poor performance in academics and loss of interest in social activity, difficulty adapting to change and emotionally sensitive, anger/irritability and feelings of guilt, introduction of destructive behavior, increase in health problems, loss of faith in marriage and family unit among others.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Ijebu North Local Government. The population of the study comprised of all the student in the four selected schools within Ijebu-North local government. Purposive sampling was used in selecting one hundred (100) participants who were with their parents and the one from separated parents in

the selected schools among which are Molusi College, Ijebu Igbo, Ijebu-Igbo Girls Grammar School, Ago-Iwoye Secondary School and Ita-Merin Comprehensive High School, Ago Iwoye all within Ijebu North Local Government. Structured questionnaire of a four-point scale was used to elicit information from the respondent which ranges from strongly agree (4) as the highest to strongly disagree (1) the lowest. The internal consistency was done using Cronbach alpha and reliability coefficient of .80 was obtained. Data analysis was done using SPSS. Frequencies and percentages were used to answer the research question, while the hypothesis was tested using chi-square analytical tools, and results were interpreted in line with the measuring scale of the instrument

Data Analysis:

Research Hypothesis 1

Parental Separation has no significant difference on Students' Academic Performance

Table 1: The table shows chi-square analysis of significant difference of Parental Separation on Students' Academic Performance

Variables	Number of respondents	R- Calculated	R- Critical R- Tabulated	Significant Level
Parental separation and psychological influence on students' academic performance	90	0.775	0.049	Significant

$P > 0.005$

The table above is to determine whether parental separation has no significant difference on Students' Academic Performance. From the result in the table, the R-critical or tabulated value is less than the calculated R-value of 0.775. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted in its place that Parental separation has significant difference on Students' Academic Performance. These lend credence to the statement of (UNICEF, 2001) that

the occurrence of developmental disabilities and behavioral issues are increased in children brought up by a single mother, whilst poor academic performance in the children of teenage mothers has also been noted, with many of them being more likely than average to fail at the secondary schools (UNICEF, 2001).

Research Hypothesis 2.

Parental separation has no significant difference on the emotion of students from separated home compared to the intact family

Table 2: The table shows chi-square analysis of significant difference of Parental separation on the emotion of students from separated home compared to the intact family

Variables	Number of respondents	R- Calculated	R- Critical R- tabulated	Significant Level
Parental separation and the emotion of students compared to the students from an intact family	90	0.695	0.013	Significant

P>0.005

The table above is to determine whether Parental separation has no significant difference on the emotion of students from separated parents compared to the intact family. From the result in the table, the R-critical value is 0.013 which is less than the R-calculated of 0.696. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted in its place that parental separation has a significant difference on the emotion of students from separated parents compare to the students whose parents are intact. The outcome of this justifies the position of (Alawode and Salami, 2004) on the influence of single parenting on the academic achievement of Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Ejigbo Local Government Area of Osun State that ‘the direct effect of being raised by a single parent is especially visible in child’s thinking and mental mindset which Psychologists and advocates have validated this over time.’ Experts say the behavior could be the outcome of the anger and limitation the child experiences while growing up. These are obvious reasons to make the child feel abnormal, different and unaccepted.

Results and Discussions

The first hypothesis was to determine whether parental Separation has no significant difference on Students' Academic Performance. Considering the nature of single parenting in all the selected four selected secondary schools in Ijebu North Local Government Areas, Ogun State, it is not surprising for one to realize that the key findings of the study gave evidence that majority of the students living under single parent have negative response towards parental separation. It was affirmed that students living under separated or divorced parent are mostly depressed and emotionally not sound in their educational endeavors, making them reluctant towards their academic progress and subsequently they perform poorly as compared to their peers whose parents are intact. The findings of the study are parallel to the study of Berk (2000) that, differences in academic performance of children exist when those living under single parents are emotionally disturbed and cannot cope with their learning and usually perform worse than from two-parent families.

Also, the second hypothesis was to determine whether parental separation has no significant difference on the emotion of students from separated parents compared to the intact family. The findings of the study revealed that most children living under single parents are challenged with a lot of psychological and emotional trauma which resulted in retardation or relapsing their academic pursuit. Noticeable ones among them are that majority of students living under separated or divorced parents are not provided with adequate teaching and learning materials to aid in their learning. The results of the study further show that separated parents do not have enough time to monitor and supervise their children's academic careers. A large percentage of the sampled students for study confirmed that their parents do not have or create time for them in doing their homework.

The overall findings were that single parenting affects student's expectation thus leading to loss of control and responsiveness. The findings of the study lend credence to the work of Donkor (2010) who indicated that the poor performance of children living under single parents emanates from the psychological and emotional trauma face as a result of their parental separation. To him, these parents do not provide adequate and proper monitoring of their wards when the need arises.

Conclusions

Considering the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the parental separation had a greater psychological influence on students' academic performance among the selected four secondary schools in Ijebu North Local Government areas, Ogun State. The study produced real evidence which can be concluded that students living under separated parents feel depressed and are emotionally not sound and this makes them feel uncomfortable in their learning. It can also be drawn from the study that academic performance and parental separation are negatively related; hence the more the cases of parental separation being unconcerned about their children's education, the poorer the academic performance of their children in school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Teachers of these students should transcend beyond teaching and imparting knowledge but also by going a step further to offer counselling, encouragement and sharing personal experiences that will go a long way to motivate the students to excel in their career.
2. Concerned bodies within the school community such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Parent Teachers Associations, Counsellors, Psychologist, Social Workers, Commission for Human Right and Justice (CHRAJ) must rise in educating parents about the adverse effects of separation on their children both mentally, academically, psychologically, morally and emotionally through workshops, seminars and the mass media.

Implications of the Study

1. The findings of the study have academic, parenting and educational impact as it would help in educational policymaking. This will help them to come out with policies that will make parents aware of the impact of separation.
2. The study exposes parents to know that their children would be a recipient of their actions and inaction if separation/divorce is not averted as this may tend to destabilize their children psychologically, emotionally and academically.

3. The study has also generated data for teachers, social workers, counsellors, psychologists and parents who are concerned with the care and welfare of children and this will them to come out with policies that will assist children living under single parents to excel in their education.

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