

EFFECT OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD ON TRUANT BEHAVIOUR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EDO STATE

Prof. Egbochuku E. O. and Dr Oliha J. A

Educational Psychology and Curriculum studies

University of Benin, Benin city

Plot 83 Etete layout off Godwin Abbey Way off Sapele Road, Benin City

P. O. Box 1448

ABSTRACT: *This study investigated the effects of single parenthood on truant behaviour among secondary school students. The purpose of the study is to find out the influence of family pattern on truancy behaviour of secondary school students. A total number of two hundred and fifty (250) subjects were randomly sampled for the study. Schools were purposively selected to cater for mixed schools, boys and girls schools. A questionnaire was designed by the researchers to measure the effects of single-parenthood on truant behaviour of students. Independent t-test was used for analyzing the hypotheses. The result revealed a significant difference between truant adolescent students from single parent homes and those from intact parent homes. The second and the third hypotheses also revealed a significant difference between truant behaviour of adolescent male and female students from single parent homes and those from intact homes. With the results obtained, the conclusions drawn were that there is a difference between the truant behaviour of single parent students and intact parents students, and that differences existed between the male and female from the different family structures. Recommendations were made that students from single parenthood should be counselled on self-esteem and self- concept and as well marriage disagreement should be handled with love between the parents, instead of settling for divorce.*

KEYWORDS: Truancy, Single-Parent, Family Structure, Parenthood

INTRODUCTION

Truancy is a term used to describe any intentional unauthorized absence from compulsory school. The term truancy, typically refers to absence caused by students of their own free will, and usually does not refer to legitimate excused absence, such as ones related to a medicated conditions. Truancy is the term referring to an absence that is associated with the most brazen students' irresponsibility and results in the greatest consequences. It also refers to students who attend schools but do not attend classes. Atkinson, Hasley, Wilkin and Kindler (2000) pointed to differences in the extent of absence, from avoidance of single lesson to absence of several weeks. Truancy refers to absence from school and delinquent behaviour among young people as they negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood in an increasingly complex and confusing world (Henry, 2007). Although the issue of truancy is an age long problem, it seems that the truancy of the past cannot be compared with that of the present era. The antisocial behaviours often associated with the truancy' include vandalism, drug abuse, weapon carrying, alcohol abuse, rape, examination malpractices, school violence, bullying, cultism, delinquency, school drop-outs, to

mention but a few. Obviously, unless something is done to roll back the wave of truancy, the prospect of a better, safer and more prosperous society emerging in Nigeria will remain elusive.

The family is the foundation of human society. Families are the strongest socializing forces of life. They teach children to eschew unacceptable behaviour, to delay gratification and to respect the right of others. Conversely, families can teach children aggressive, anti-social, and violent behaviours. Also, children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflicts, or who are inadequately supervised are at the greatest risk of becoming truant.

Sociology of education makes us to know that the family is the first primary social group that the child first belongs to, come in contact with, and this group has a greater influence on the child's physical, mental and moral development. The family lays the foundation of education before the child goes to school and the personality that the child takes to school is determined by the home/family (Maduewesi and Emenogu, 1997).

Adolescence is a time of expanding vulnerabilities and opportunities that accompany the widening social and geographical exposure to life beyond the school or family, but it starts with the family. The modern culture has changed and outgrown the values and beliefs that were thought to be the core beliefs and values of our society. Even though, moralists and conservatives are experiencing disgust over the currently evolving belief and cultural systems the truth is what has been unacceptable in the past, is now becoming fast and rapidly rising trends for decades and even centuries. One of the major concerning issues to the conservatives is single parenting. Single parenting is already becoming a fast and rapidly growing trend in the society. Single-parenthood can be defined as when one out of two people who is responsible for the nurturing and child rearing is not available, and the work meant for two people, is now been carried out by only one person (Hines, 2007). According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, single-parenting is been defined as a mother or father who looks after children on their own, without the other partner. Single-parenting can be defined as a situation in which one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for the upbringing of the child (Whitting and Child, 1993; Ham, 2004).

Single-parenthood may arise when either the male or the female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock (Ortesse, 1998). In Nigeria, the existence of single-parenthood was unknown and where they existed, they are Ignored and taken as exceptional cases. However, nowadays, they are the fast growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria. In Nigeria, among the Yorubas, the parental roles are culturally determined and distributed. The maternal roles are that of child-rearing, home training and playing of complimentary roles, while the paternal roles are that of economic responsibilities and discipline of the children. The child is morally, mentally upright and emotionally balanced when the caring responsibilities are carried out by both parents. What makes up a family are the father, mother and kids, not father and mother alone. Fadeyiye (1985) pointed out that both parents have their own roles to play in child's education. The father is to provide every necessary tools for the educational advancement while the mother is expected to supplement the efforts of the father. But in the case where the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the necessary and basic needs as well as supervising

the academic performance of the child, by checking the academic records of the child or by going through their class and lesson notes or books every day and also giving of counselling supports when needed, these will affect the educational state or level of the child. So also, if a child is not well nurtured and mentally assisted, it will also affect his/her educational outcome. If it were to be a male child, it is likely for the child to be antisocial in nature by joining gangs. Also, if it were to be a female child, there is the likelihood for her to become wayward. Studies on father-child relationship suggest that the presence of a father in the home significantly influence the development of a child (Agulanna, 1999). Thus, parenthood is a responsibility requiring the full cooperation of both parents who must ensure the total development of their off-springs.

According to Nwachukwu (1998), children from single parent homes are more hostile, hyperactive and aggressive in nature. Many of the problems that single parents have are similar to those of two parents' family, but these problems seem more difficult to bear or manage when the home is being tutored by only one person. In most cases, truants have been viewed as individuals who come from less-intact families often referred to as "broken homes" (Shaff, Wolfinger, Kolowaleski and Smith, 2008). Typically, the term "broken home" has been operationally defined to mean children residing in single-parent households or any type of household other than a household in which both biological parents are present. In contrast, an "intact family" is usually referred to as nuclear family arrangement in which both biological parents reside in the household with their biological children. "Intact family arrangements" differs from other modern day family arrangements including single-parent arrangements, two-parent arrangements involving a step-parent, extended family arrangements, and the adoptive or foster family arrangement (Kierkus and Bauer, 2002).

Structurally, a family is either broken or intact. A broken family in this context is one that is not structurally intact for various reasons; death of a parent, divorce, separation, desertion and illegitimacy in which case, the family was never completed (Conkline 1996). This analysis becomes necessary because life in a single parent family can be stressful for both the child and the parent. Such families are faced with the challenges of diminished financial resources (Children's Defence Fund, 1994), assumptions of new roles and responsibilities, establishment of new patterns in intra-familial interaction and reorganization of routines and schedules (Agulanna, 1999). These conditions are not conducive to effective parenting. This is because when the single parent is overburdened by responsibility and by their own emotional reaction to their situation they often become irritable, impatient and insensitive to their children's needs. It is against this general background that this study was conceived to investigate the possible contribution(s) of family structure to the truant behaviour of students in secondary school in Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

The main problem for this study is that a lot of people, educationists and counsellors are complaining about the nonchalant attitude of students to study and their attendance toward classes. Reports and observations on students from different family structure and family composition are indicators to truant behaviour.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the influence of family patterns on the truant behaviour of secondary school students.

The study also wants to know the effects of single-parenting on the students' school attendance and if it causes truancy among the students of secondary schools.

Significance of Study

This study is relevant to counselors and social work educators. It assesses the influence of family structure on truancy. Truancy disproportionately affects children and their families and is highly correlated with poverty. Counsellors are at the forefront of intervening in truancy cases of children coming from especially less structurally intact homes.

Hypotheses

In pursuit of the research problems and to realize the objective of this study, the following hypotheses were raised and tested:

- 1) There is no significant difference between the truant behaviour of students from single parent home and those from intact parent families.
- 2) There is no significant difference between the truant behaviour of male students from single parent home and male students from intact parent home.
- 3) There is no significant difference between the truant behaviour of female students from single-parent families and female students from two-parent families.

METHODOLOGY

The population for this study consists of all students in senior secondary school in Benin metropolis in Nigeria. The sample was actually drawn using the students' record from the school registers. Four schools were randomly selected from fifty-nine co-educational senior secondary school from Edo south senatorial district. The selection from each school was based on equal number of students (65) from single-parent family and (65) from two-parent family. This made a total of 250 students that participated in the study. They were 125 students from single-parent family and 125 from two-parent family. The instrument used to obtain relevant data was an adapted form of Gesinde (2004) truancy assessment scale". This instrument was basically used to collect data on the subjects' truancy. The t-test statistical method was used to analyze the collected data and the hypotheses formulated.

RESULTS

The results are presented as they relate to the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the truant behaviour of student from single parent home and those intact parent home

Table 1: t-test of difference in the truant behavior of students from single-parent family and those from two-parent family.

Types of home	N	X	S.D	df	t cal	t tab
Single parent family	83	49.45	4.94	248	4.68	1.96
Two – parent family	167	59.60	5.88			

*Significant at $P < .05$

The data in Table 1 indicates that there is a significant difference between the truant behaviour of students from single-parent family and those from two-parent family. The calculated t-value (4.68) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 significance level and 248 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the truant behaviour of male students from two-parent family and male students from single-parent family.

Table 2: Difference between the truant behavior of male students from two-parent family and male students from single-parent family.

Types of home	N	X	S.D	d.f	t cal	T tab
Two - parent family	83	88.90	12.88	248	2.38	1.96
Single parent family	167	92.49	7.08			

*Significant at $P < .05$

Table 2, shows that there is a significant difference in the truant behaviour of male student from single parent family and male students from two-parent family. The calculated t value (2.38) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 significance level and 248 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the truant behaviour of female students from single-parent family and female students from two-parent family.

Table 3: Difference between the truant behavior of female students from single-parent family and female students from two-parent family.

Types of home	N	X	S.D	d.F	T cal	T tab
Two -parent family	83	63.47	10.38	248	2.46	1.96
Single parent family	167	78.45	7.90			

*Significant at $P < .05$

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the truant behaviour of female students from two parent family and female students from single parent family. The calculated t-value (2.46) is greater than the critical value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and 248 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is also rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that there is a significant difference between the truant behaviour of students from single parent family and students from two-parent family. The study also shows differences in the truant behaviour of male students from the single parent home and intact parent home and also between female students from single parent family and the two-parent family structure. The findings agreed with the conclusion of Nzewunwah, (1995) that there is a significant

difference between students from single parent families and those from two-parent families in terms of attitude to examination malpractices, attitude to studies and academic performance. This finding could be explained by the fact that life in a single-parent family can be traumatic and children brought up in such family structure often suffer some emotional problems such as lack of warmth, love and disciplinary problems, which may hinder their academic performance. On the other hand, children raised in two-parent family structure are often stable emotionally and they suffer less emotional problems thereby making them less anxious in the pursuit of their academic work. However, it should be noted that this situation might not be true all the time since there are some children in single parent family structures who still attend school regularly, perform academically better than children from two-parent family structure (Aijlia and Olutola, 2007). Ham (2004) discovered that students from non-intact family structures were absent from school at a rate of 78% higher than those from intact home. This situation may however be attributed to other factors inherent in the personality of the child. Whatever the result, parental separation tends to affect younger children more than the adolescents who are the subject of this study. However, early childhood problem may have negative impact on later life development. It should also be mentioned here that the presence of other adults in a single parent household might bring some positive influences on the degree of tension that may be suffered by children from such background. Also, the cultural practice in Africa, which allows support for widows, widowers and other categories of single parents, helps to reduce in considerable terms, the negative effect of single parenthood. In a Nigerian single parent family, some of the functions of the absent parent may be sufficiently taken over by the members of the extended family, friends and neighbours.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data collected and analyzed, the following conclusions were made:

1. The study revealed that the absence of a parent have an influence on the truant behaviour of the child. Therefore, by this, there is a relationship between the single parental influence and truant behaviour of students.
2. The research revealed that the interaction between the truancy behaviour of students from single parent homes and those from intact parent homes are significantly difference from each other. This implies that, there is difference between the truancy behaviour of students from single parent homes and those from intact parent homes which, could also be stated as the type of home has significant influence on truancy behaviour of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Governments, private organizations and individuals concerned with the business of education should endeavour to address the obstacles hindering effective schooling of students. This can be done by developing achievement motivation in students through achievement motivation training.
2. There is the need for the recognition of individual differences in students and the need to deal with them accordingly. Counselors should provide the necessary assistance and psychological support for students from single parent family so as to overcome their emotional problems.

3. There is also the need to keep enlightening the parents of the importance of the influence of the home structure on the life of children. This is necessary so that parents can understand the implications and consequences of parental separation and thus mobilize all resources to curtail the problems arising from the situation.
4. Generally, there is need to combat the continuing declining state of education by providing more funds and materials to uplift our educational system.
5. Finally, school counsellors should be employed in institutions of learning and adequate supervision to be put in place to ensure provision of necessary guidance services to students.

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