

IMPACT OF FAMILY STRUCTURE ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN YEWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The intention of this study was to investigate the extent to which family structure, specifically; single parent families and two parent families affect the academic performance of secondary school students. Two hundred and twenty students of the public secondary schools in Yewa Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria were involved in the study. The Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS), which was designed by Suldo and Huebner (2006), was used to gather information from the students and it was conducted in a classroom environment during school period. After collecting information from the students, their scores in Mathematics and English Language (which are compulsory subjects in all secondary schools) of the second term of 2014/2015 academic session were obtained from their class teachers with the permission of the principals of the schools. The scores were then converted to Z-scores in order to ensure their reliability and validity since they were collected from different schools. Results show a significant difference in the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families. In other words, the academic performance of children from two parent families is better than those from single parent families. The implications of the findings were that parental separation should be avoided and religious leaders, counsellors as well as government must engage in enlightening parents about the importance of family structure on the life of children and in ensuring a well-ordered society.*

KEYWORDS: Family Structure, Secondary Schools, and Academic Performance

INTRODUCTION

Certainly, academic performance is a very important tool with which the success, ability and capability of a student to contribute to the development of a society are measured. The implication of this is that students that perform beyond average of the standard set by the society is not only seen as brilliant but as well probable to contribute meaningfully to the sustenance, growth and development of such society, especially, in the future. As a result of this, every society constantly observe the academic performance of its students at all levels of educational institutions.

In Nigeria, researches have shown that students' academic performance is declining at a disturbing rate (Tenibaje, 2009) and some of the reasons that have been identified for such decline are personal factors such as individual's intelligence, knowledge, study habit, achievement motivation, anxiety, self-esteem and locus of control (Fathi-Ashtiani, Ejei, Khodapanahi & Tarkhorani, 2007; Cizek & Burg, 2006; Akinleke, 2010), school factors in terms of student-teacher relationship, the school's background characteristics, the environment and classroom's conditions (Ushie, Emeka, Ononga & Owolabi, 2012).

Without any doubt, these factors affect the educational attainments of students but important as well are certain family factors of the students. Family background is the bedrock of children's psychological development, social relations, moral advancement, and socio-economic attainments. This view was shared by Ajila and Olutola (2009) when they noted that the home has a great influence on the child's psychological, emotional, social and economic state. According to them, the state of the home affects the individual since the family is the first point of contact and socializing agent in an individual's life. This study intends to find

out how family structure affects student's academic performance. The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2011) posits that the influence of type of family structure on academic success continue through high school and it significantly influences outcomes such as high school dropout rates, graduation rates and age at first pregnancy.

Family structure suggests whether a family is intact or broken. A broken family in the context of this research work is a family that has split or separated for various reasons such as death of a parent, separation, divorce or abandonment that may lead to children being raised by single parents, stepparents or relatives. On the other hand, an intact family refers to a family in which both biological parents are present and living together in the home. The intactness of a family may not necessarily mean that it functions well or that the children are being well catered for, as all manners of normal conflicts and problems as well as life threatening issues do occur in intact families as well. Structural analysis of families is important because family is the most important and informal socializing agent that moulds the child in society and the future of the child depends upon it. It helps children to recognize and achieve important societal goals. Impliedly, family setting and background play important role in strengthening or upsetting student's academic performance. The purpose of this study is to examine the probable contributions of family structure to the academic performance of secondary school students in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State.

It is appropriate to say that families are different in terms of various factors – socioeconomic status, level of education, size, cultural background, parental involvement in both academic and extra-curriculum activities of the children, domestic issues, organizational and physical closeness, and so on – that affect student's academic performance. Qaiser, Ishtiaq, Zaitoon and Wahab (2012) noted that researches reveal that there are a variety of factors that account for the poor and unsatisfactory academic performance of students. According to them, such factors include illiteracy of parents, domestic issues and problems, large family size, lack of parent's attention and control, low socioeconomic status and family structure. For the purpose of this study, family structure is being conceived in terms of single- or two-parent families. Thus, the intention of this research work is to examine whether these parent styles have different impacts on students' academic performance or not.

Two-Parent Family

This is a family with both parents and children intact. Michelle (2012) describes it as the traditional type of family, which is held in esteem by society as it is considered the ideal to raise children. Parental involvement in the activities, training as well as development of the children is high as both parents are available. In other words, children in two-parent family enjoy more parental support financially, socially and physically from both parents (Fagan & Churchill, 2012) since both parents have more access to employment, income and savings than single parents do (Amato, 2005).

Two-parent families are able to give more time, affection, and supervision to their children than single parents (Peter, 2016) as the two parents can relieve one another when they find that parenting is becoming difficult (Peter, 2016). This kind of family is also likely to offer more social and emotional supports as the children would be exposed to both father- and mother-figures that are for effective socio-psychological developments. According to Ella, Odok and Ella (2015), nuclear family, which consists of two parents and children, is held in esteem by society as being the ideal in which to raise children. In their opinion, such children receive strength and stability from the two parents' structure and generally have more opportunities due to financial ease of two parents and they tend to fare better on a number of cognitive, emotional and behavioural needs.

Single-Parent Family

A single parent is a separated person who bears virtually all of the daily and regular responsibilities of bringing up a child or children. Such parenting may result from death or imprisonment of a partner, separation

or divorce of married parents and unintended pregnancy, especially among adolescents. It may also happen as a result of deliberate choice. In other words, individuals (especially, single women) often seek an anonymous or known sperm donor in order to get pregnant and become single mothers. Wikipedia (2012) notes that the demographics of single parenting show a general increase worldwide in children living in single parent homes as single parenting has become a norm in the United States and is a trend in multiple other countries. Salami and Alawode (2002) noted that single parents are fast growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria nowadays. According to them, the existence of such parents is formerly unknown in Nigeria and where they existed, they are ignored as exceptional cases.

Billings (2012) argues that children from such homes become delinquent because they are most often denied security, protection and love that should come from both parents and these affect their academic activities negatively. In the same vein, Stone (2012) claims that children from single parents are more likely to show, to a large extent, the effect of under-nourishment, illness, insufficient rest as well as negative attitude towards school, which manifest in infancy, which is a factor that can affect achievement and performance negatively. Single parent families have on the average, lower income than two parent families and are therefore, more constrained in ensuring adequate financial resources to meet their children's learning needs. It is usually more difficult for single parents to provide and maintain a supportive learning environment for their children since they must cope with the double responsibility of work and child rearing (OECD/UNESCO, 2003).

Specifically, it compares the academic performance of students from single parents with those from two parent families. This intention was informed by the observation of the Programme International Student Assessment (2000), which noted that the quality of parents and the structure of the home of a child go a long way to predict the quality and regularity of the satisfaction and provision of a child's functional survival and academic needs. To achieve the basic intention, three research questions were raised and answered. They are:

1. Is there any difference in the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families?
2. Is there any difference in the academic performance of male students from single parent families and those from two parent families?
3. Is there any difference in the academic performance of female students from single parent and female students from two parent families?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study is anchored on two theories of family: Structural-functionalism and the Family Composition perspective.

Structural-functionalism

This model was closely associated with Talcott Parsons (1951) who argued that the family performs a number of functions within the society, but two are crucial. The first was the socialization of new members into the appropriate values, norms and standards of society. What this means is that the role of the family was to make sure that independence and a motivation to achieve was instilled in children's behaviours. According to Parsons, the second function was to stabilize adult behaviour through marriage, which serves as the remedy to the emotional stress and tensions of everyday life. The theory also recognizes (and explains) the differentiation of gender roles within the family, with partners complimenting each other's roles. Men were noted as performing an instrumental role while women provide the complement with their more expressive nature. In parsons' opinion, the expressive role was assigned to women because of the primary expressive attachment between mother and children.

The implication of this theory is that both father and mother have effective roles to play in the upbringing, training and development of children as they complement each other. Thus, children would fare better in two parent families.

The Family Composition Model

This theory also argues that two parent families are the ideal family structure for children. According to the theory, children that are brought up by single parents will suffer lower levels of happiness, security and welfare than those from two parent families. This is because such children lose social capital, which refers to the emotional, economic and educational support that parents offer their children. For instance, Sara and Gary (1994) concluded that the decision of parents to live away from each other damages, and often times, destroys the social capital that might have been available to children had they lived together.

Impliedly, when parents do not live together, children lose a close tie to the non-residential parent. Such parent does not feel emotionally attached to the children and feels less likely to take up financial responsibility of their children.

METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain information about how family structure impact on the academic performance of secondary school students, a total number of two hundred and twenty (220) students and ten teachers were randomly selected. The study was conducted in the Yewa South Local Government Area. The Local Government (formerly, Egbado South) is a Local Government Area in the Senatorial West of Ogun State, Nigeria. It has its headquarters in the town of Ilaro. The Local Government has ten (10) wards and the people speak Yewa and Egun dialects of the predominant Yoruba language. The Local Government Area was preferred because the researchers reside there, which makes it easier for them to access.

Using cluster sampling, the Local Government Area was divided into ten wards (Ilaro I, Ilaro II, Ilaro III, Iwoye, Idogo, Owode I, Owode II, Ilobi/Erinja, Oke-Odan and Ajilete) which are the geo-political wards of the Local Government Area. Twenty (22) students were randomly chosen from each geo-political ward, making a total number of two hundred and twenty (220). All of them were in the Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) and their age ranged between 14 and 17 ($M = 17.4$). Out of the 220 students, 208 completed the questionnaire, which makes a response rate of 94.5%. Permission was sought from the authority of the schools before questionnaire were administered on the students.

A total of ten (10) classes participated in filling the questionnaires and each session lasted approximately one hour. The classes were visited during the regular teaching hours. A brief meeting was held with the students to explain the purpose of the research to them. The protection of their anonymity and confidentiality was also assured and none of the students was given any reward (whether cash or any other form of gift) to make them participate in the study. After explaining the purpose the research work, students were asked to indicate if they were willing to participate in the study. Once a student signifies his/her willingness, a questionnaire is given to him/her. Examples of how to fill the questionnaire was shown to them so as to be sure that they understood how to provide their answers. As they filled the questionnaire, the researcher walked round the classroom to make sure that students were responding to the questionnaires correctly. Distributing the questionnaire, explaining the purpose and collecting them back took approximately one hour.

Instrument

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for this study. To collect the qualitative information, in-depth interviews were conducted with the ten (10) teachers that were in classrooms at the time that the study was being conducted. Teachers were included in the population because they are also parents and are involved in the daily upbringing of children.

To collect the quantitative data, the Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) that was designed by Suldo and Huebner (2006) was used. It is a 40-item scale, which was designed in Likert-type of six responses that range from 1 = completely disagree to 6 = completely agree. The scale was designed to measure five dimensions of life satisfaction, which include family, friends, living environment, school and self satisfaction. Scores of each dimension is obtained through adding up scores and dividing it by the total number of items of that dimension. The scale had earlier been used by Mozhgan and Mohammadreza (2011) in a study titled "Family Structure and Multidimensional Adolescent's Life Satisfaction". They claimed that the scale's reliability is satisfying.

To gather data on students' academic performance, their scores in Mathematics and English Language (which are compulsory subjects in all secondary schools) of the second term of 2014/2015 academic session were obtained from their class teachers with the permission of the principals of the schools. The scores were then converted to Z-scores in order to ensure their reliability and validity since they were collected from different schools. Also known as a standard score, Z-score is a measure of how many standard deviations below or above the population means a raw score is. It is a way of comparing results from a test to a normal population and the scores range from -3 std devs to +3 std devs. For the current study, -2 std devs to +2 std devs were obtained. -2 represented a very poor performance; -1 represented a poor performance; 0 signifies an average performance; 1 represented good performance; and 2 represented brilliant performance.

Data Analysis

Several statistical methods were employed in the course of analyzing the data obtained for this study. Such methods include tables, simple percentages, cross-tabulations, charts and t-test.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Gender of the respondents

Figure 2 shows that female respondents were 98 (47.1%) while males were 110 (52.9%). Impliedly, majority of the students in the Local Government are males.

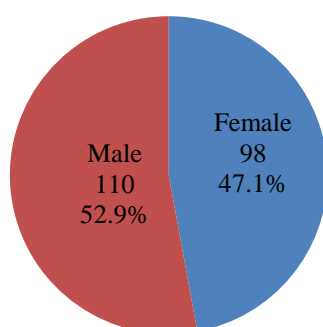


Figure 2: Gender of the Respondents

School Setting of Respondents

Information obtained on the school setting of the respondents in terms of whether urban or rural school shows that 95 (45.7%) of the respondents described their school as being in urban area while 113 (54.3%) regarded their school as rural. This suggests that most of the schools were located in rural areas, which is expected because Yewa South Local Government Area is mostly rural. However, this may be considered an advantage for the students as they would have sufficient time to concentrate on their studies.

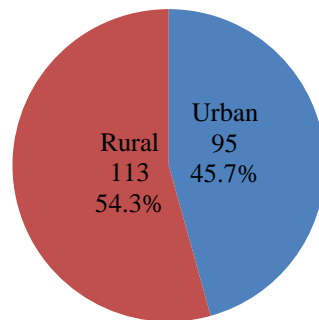


Figure 1: The School setting of the respondents as being rural or urban

Classes of the Respondents

From the responses to the question that asked the students to indicate their class, it was gathered that 60 (28.9%) were in Senior Secondary School I (SSS I); while 103 (49.5%) were in SSS II; and 45 (21.6) of the respondents were in SSS III. This study purposively focused on the Senior Secondary Students as the researchers considered them as experienced and matured adolescents that will be able to give judicious views on family structure.

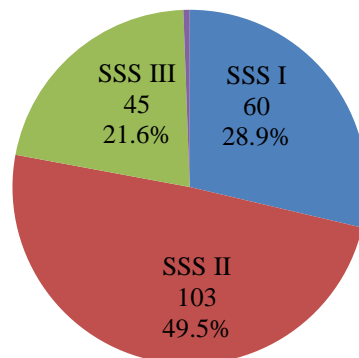


Figure 3: Classes of the Respondents

Family Structure of the Respondents

104 (50%) students from single parent families and 104 (50%) students from two parent families were used for this study. This equal proportion was used so that the assessment of one group will not be over-expresses above the other. By this, unbiased and reliable results would be obtained.

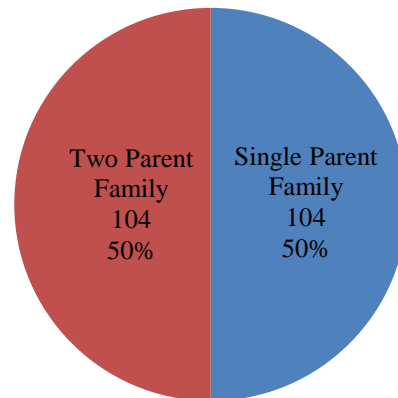


Figure 4: Family Structure of the Respondents

Family Structure and Academic Performance Cross-tabulations

Table 1: Family Structure and Academic Performance Cross-tabulation

	Academic Performance				Total
Family Structure	Poor Performance	Average Performance	Good Performance	Brilliant Performance	
Single Parent Family	24 11.5%	21 10.1%	19 9.2%	16 7.7%	80 38.5%
Two Parent Family	40 19.2%	37 17.8%	31 14.9%	20 9.6%	128 61.5%
Total	64 30.7%	58 27.9%	50 24.1%	36 17.3%	208 100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2016

The analysis in the table above indicates that out of the 30.7 % students that performed poorly, 11.5% were from single parent families, while 19.2% were from two parent families; data on above average and good performances showed that 10.1% and 9.2% were from single families while 17.8% and 14.9% were from two parent families respectively. For brilliant performance, 7.7% came from single parent families while 9.6% came from two parent families. This therefore shows that respondents from two parent families performed better than those from single parent families. This could be due to the fact that students from two parent families experience the care, attachment and figure of both parents that may make them to be more mentally balanced, emotionally stabled and socially organized than children from single parent families who may lack the care and guidance that may be required from both parents.

Hypothesis 1: There will be significant differences between the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families.

Table 2: t-test of the difference in the academic performance of students from single parent families and two parent families

Family Structure	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-tab
Single Parent	104	39.64	4.92	238	4.63*	1.96
Two Parent	104	37.51	5.68			

*p<0.05

The result in the table above shows that the academic performance of students from the two types of family is different. The calculated t-tab value (1.96) was less than the t-cal value (4.63) at 0.05 significance level and 238 degree of freedom. The implication of this is that students from two parent families perform better than those from single parent families. As a result of this, the first hypothesis is confirmed. This finding is in line with the conclusion of Peter (2016) that there is a significant good positive relationship between two parent structure and academic performance of students.

Hypothesis 2: There will be significant difference between the academic performance of male students from single parent families and those from two parent families.

Table 3: Difference between the academic performance of male students from single parent families and male students from two parent families

Family Structure	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-tab
Male (Two Parent)	61	77.7	12.86	118	2.26*	1.96
Male (Single Parent)	52	53.4	7.03			

*p<0.05

This table reveals a significant difference in the academic performance of male students from single parent families and male students from two parent families. Specifically, the second hypothesis is confirmed as expected as the analysis shows that the t-tab value (1.96) is less than the t-cal value (2.26) at 0.05 level of significance and 118 degrees of freedom. This means that male students from two parent families performed better in academic engagements than those from single parents.

Hypothesis 3: There will be significant difference between the academic performance of female students from single parent families and those from two parent families.

Table 4: Difference between the academic performance of female students from single parent families and female students from two parent families

Groups	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-tab
Male (Two Parent)	49	72.47	10.37	118	2.43*	1.96
Male (Single Parent)	46	68.45	6.99			

*p<0.05

Table 4 above indicates that there is a significant difference between the academic performance of female students from single parent families and those from two parent families as the t-cal (2.43) is greater than the t-tab value (1.96) at 0.05 significant level. Thus the third hypothesis is also confirmed as predicted.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The intention of this study was to examine whether there is a significant difference between the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families. It also tries to determine if there sex differences affect their academic performance. Assessment of the Senior Secondary Students of Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria was conducted and a significant difference in the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families was confirmed. This finding is in line with past studies that students from two parent families are more satisfied with life generally (Mozhgan & Mohammadreza, 2011) and perform better in their academic pursuits than students from single parents (Uwaifo, 2008; Ushie, Emeka, Ononga & Owolabi, 2012).

As stated earlier, this finding may be explained by the fact that children from two parent families experience sufficient care, attention, warmth, father- and mother-figure attachment and emotional stability that are characteristic of two parent families. On the other hand, children from single parent families may suffer distraction, emotional problems, disciplinary problems and insufficiency as the single parent may find it difficult to cater for the socioeconomic needs of the child/children alone. However, Apia and Olutola (2007) noted that this position may not be true at all times as there are some children in single parent families that perform better academically than children from two parent families. According to them, such may be attributed to other factors inherent in the personality of such children.

In view of the above findings, parental separation (in the form of divorce or disagreement) should be avoided. This can be done when partners learn to tolerate each other's individual differences; do not allow matrimonial issues to degenerate and are both committed to the welfare of their family. Also, religious leaders, counsellors and government must engage in enlightening parents about the importance of family structure on the life of children and in ensuring a well-ordered society.

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