

IMPACT OF SPOUSE BEATING AND CHILD ABANDONMENT ON LOWER BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS IN IKONO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the influence of family social instability on the academic achievement of lower basic social studies students in Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 3175 families in the seven (7) clans of Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 315 families (10% of the study population) for the study. A 20 item questionnaire entitled Family social instability and academic achievement of Lower Basic School Students Questionnaire (FSIAALBSSQ) was developed by the researchers and validated by experts in Test and Measurement from Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. The reliability estimate of the instrument yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .87. Data collected from the instrument was analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test was used for the null hypotheses. All the null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. Findings indicate that the rate of child abandonment is high in the area being a rural community ravaged by poverty whilst incidents of spouse beating is prevalent. It is recommended that tendencies that may lead to family social instability should be strongly resisted by parents while couples maintain harmonious living with their spouses to bring about peace in the family.*

KEYWORDS: Family Instability; Spouse Beating; Child Abandonment; Academic Performance; Basic Education

INTRODUCTION

The family is the child's first place of contact with the world. He acquires initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family. Agulana (1999) pointed out that the family lays the psychological, moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child.

Structurally, family is either broken or stable. A broken family in this context is one that is not structurally intact, as a result of divorce, separation, death of one parent and illegitimacy. According to Frazer (2001), psychological family conditions arise mainly from illegitimacy of children, the label of adopted child, broken home, divorce and parental deprivation. Such abnormal conditions of the family are likely to have a detrimental effect on school performance of the child. Life, in a single parent family or broken family can be stressful for both the child and the parent. Such families are faced with challenges of inadequate financial resources (Children Defense Fund, 1994). Schultz (2006) noted that if children from unstable homes are to be compared with those from stable homes, it would be seen that the former have more

social, academic and emotional problems. Scales and Roehlkepartain (2003), are of the opinion that the family and its structure plays a great role in children's academic performance.

Levin (2001), also states that parents are probably the actors with the clearest unidimensional interest in a high level of their children's academic performance. The influence of the family on the lives of Juvenile delinquents is certainly much greater. Studies shows that children from poor homes are much more likely to commit serious criminal act (Coleman and Cressey, 1999). These problems are affecting every segment of the society including the lower basic schools which is the focus of this study. Academic performance and social adjustment, performance of students in the classroom and school takes a central role in the academic development of the students. Yardsticks are set by the school authority to measure performance. The standards set by the school will determine whether a student is performing well or not. Academic performance of students allows for ranking of students in numerically identifiable scale. This is about positioning students in terms of achievement. It can also be used for placement purposes. Studies have shown that factors which influence students' academic performance include the following: hard-work and discipline, family income, parent's education, previous schooling and self motivation. Other factors include students' aptitude, class attendance, age of students, students' learning style, peer group influence, matched with instructor's delivery style (Romer, 1993, Cogen & Huston, 1995).

To some extent, there is ample evidence to show that marital instability brings about stress, academic tension, lack of motivation and frustration. Obviously, these manifestations act negatively on a child's academic performance. Johnson (2005) asserts that children of unmarried parents/separated families often fail and are at risk emotionally. Aside students' academic performance, their social adjustment in and-of school environment is also very critical. According to Kelvin and Robert (1991), social stability is the psychological process through which people manage or cope with the demand and challenges of everyday life. Some children irrespective of family background or structure may work hard and become successful in life. Ayodele (2006) stated that the environment where a child finds himself/herself goes a long way in determining his learning ability in school.

Statement of the Problem

There is a global awareness of the importance of the home environment. In Nigeria, most homes are not intact as a result of issues of incompatibility of the couples, death of a parent and the quest for overseas trips to make more money, and at times marital infidelity. This has resulted in the separation of couples and children. In some states in our country, it has become a common phenomenon to read, hear or witness incidence of student's involvement in anti-social behaviour such as teenage pregnancy/parenting, child abuse, alcohol intake, drug abuse, rape, prostitution, sexual perversion, stealing, cultism, adolescent suicide, school dropout and all kinds of wanton misdemeanor.

Sad to say, that some of these problems are unfortunately the fall out of the social ills in the society. Kyra (2009) supports the assumption that social problems are created by social structures when she revealed 'that such incidence of what goes on in the society leaks into the school system, impacting students and their learning experience'. Eitzen et al (2009), also seconded the assumption by suggesting that norms violation problems are a source of deviance found within the social structure.

This is quite prevalent, in that most young ladies abandon their homes, and embark on overseas trips with a view to making money. Some men, who travel abroad, abandon their homes and would not communicate with families back home, so children from such homes are in a dilemma, especially in terms of adjustment. Ichado (1998) notes that the environment in which the students come from can greatly influence their performance in school. Ajila and Oluta (2007), Nzewuawah (1995) are of a similar opinion that the home environment has been recognized as having a remarkable influence on the academic achievement of students.

The effects of broken families may impact greatly on the internal organization of the family and by extension; affect a child's emotion, personality and academic achievement. Research has shown that marital quality or satisfaction is one of the primary predictors of relationship stability or instability (Karney and Brabury, 1995). With regard to marital quality, two recent studies found that greater educational attainment was positively related to marital satisfaction (Dakin and Wampler, 2008; Raver, Kaney, Garvn, and Hou, 2008). Bearing in mind the role of the family in a child's education, the failure of the family to perform its duties could hinder the child's academic achievement. Any nation that is desirous of advancing technologically will no doubt ensure that the future of her future leaders (the adolescents) is well guided, protected and guaranteed.

Efforts would be made by such a nation to ensure that children from broken families are identified, counseled and encouraged so as to develop their innate potentials, and contribute towards national development. Therefore, there is need for this study in Nigeria, especially as the issue of broken families are with us in the society, more so, as economic hardship has been a contributory factor to this phenomenon. It becomes imperative that a study on the relationship between family social instability and students' academic achievement should be investigated, in view of the fact that the youths are the leaders of tomorrow. Their academic and emotional well-being, if given the appropriate attention, will go a long way in ensuring that their potentials are harnessed, and put into use for national development. Consequently, the major problem of this study is to determine the relationship between broken homes and students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The study sought to examine the impact of family social instability on academic achievement of social studies students in Lower Basic schools in Ikono Local Government Area. Specifically, this study aimed at:

- I. Examining the relationship between child abandonment and academic achievement of Lower Basic school students in Ikono Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
- II. Examining the relationship between spouse frequent beating and academic achievement of students in Junior secondary schools in Ikono Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

In order to direct the study, the following research questions were framed:

1. What relationship exists between child abandonment and academic achievement of Lower Basic social studies students in Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
2. What relationship exists between spouse frequent beating and academic achievement of Lower Basic social studies students in Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated as a guide to this study:

1. There is no significant influence of child abandonment on academic achievement of social studies students in Lower Basic schools in Ikono Local Government Area.
2. There is no significant influence of frequent spouse beating on academic achievement of social studies students in Lower Basic schools in Ikono Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study “family social instability and academic achievement of social studies students in Lower Basic schools is relevant to many groups and individuals. The findings and recommendations of the study will enlighten parents on ways of managing social problems and their influence on classroom activities.

The study will help the teachers to easily identify students who exhibit behaviours that reflect social problems. They will also be equipped with the knowledge of managing students that are prone to social problems. The parents will benefit from knowledge of social problems which will enable them identify and associate with their children with the intent of solving the perceived problems.

The school authority will be encouraged to pay more attention to social reorientation programmes such as children education, family health and safety awareness, family peace awareness, and spouse counselling programmes. Relevant information on social problems in families will inspire the government to take pro-active measures, which may include enacting laws that will protect the rights of vulnerable children. To the society, the study will create awareness on the social ills of the society. The awareness is expected to generate concerns for majority of people and stakeholders in the society who in turn will gear up effort to eradicate the prevalent family social instability and social problems of the society.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study derives its theory from the social learning theory and the Marxian theory. According to the social learning theory, all behavior either adaptive or maladaptive is learned. Bandura believed that learning can take place through the interaction of the learner with significant others in his environment. He recognized the crucial roles which observation and imitation playing the learning process. According to Bandura, almost any learning outcome that result from direct experience can also come about on a vicarious basis through observation and then imitation of other people's behaviour. To Bandura, human behaviour is neither cause solely by

inner forces nor environmental influences. Instead, he believed that behaviour occurs as a result of a complex interplay between inner processes and environmental influences (Bandura, 1971). Man by nature watches what others do and then repeat their actions.

Marxism is a theory designed by Karl Marx to promote the society. It is a response to modernity. According to Karl Marx, it is a part of the modern belief that the society can be transformed for the better, that process can be achieved in social organization. Marxism rests upon the belief that the potential individual fulfillment and freedom is linked inextricably to the potential for progress in the social organization to the structure of the society. As stated by Karl Marx, the potential for individual fulfillment is linked to the economic, political or production activities of the society. In particular, the opportunity to be free in modern society is only possible when the class-based production and political system characteristics of capitalism is abolished.

In successful marriage, each spouse puts the other's needs ahead of self, possessions, job, friends and even other relatives. Husband and wife spend plenty of time with each other and with the children. Both are willing to make sacrifices for the interests of the family.

In stable families, couples think of one or two ways in which they could demonstrate that their family comes first (for example; cutting back on things that may be intruding on the time that they would better spend with their spouse and children). Successful couples view their marriage as a permanent union. When a problem arises, they strive to solve it rather than use it as an excuse to abandon the children or the marriage. When spouses have a sense of commitment, they feel secured. Each trusts that the other will continue to honour the union. In many ways, commitment is the backbone of a marriage relationship. Yet, after repeated conflicts, commitment can seem more like a trap than a trust. In effect, "till death do us part" becomes little more than a cold contract – one that the mates wish had loopholes. They might not abandon the marriage literally, or the children but they could "walk out" in other ways for example, by retreating into stony silence when serious issues need to be discussed.

Successful parents display reasonableness when dealing with their children. Their level of discipline is not excessive, nor "are they to please". Being a communicator, spending time with one's child will help a person to communicate with him. The more one communicates the better he will discern how his personality is developing, because communication is more than talking. Children need a time to laugh and a time to skip about, a time for recreation is very productive when parents and children enjoy it together.

Poverty often contributes to child abandonment and child prostitution. Child abandonment thrives in an environment of miserly and poverty and broken family. According to Roolman (2002), child exploitation, abandonment and prostitution are "clearly linked to the disintegration of the family and are fruits of misery and hunger". Some parents own up that poverty led them to sell their children into prostitution and abandon them because they see it as their only means of survival (UNESCO, 2010).

A stable family is a haven of safety and security. Today the family is changing—sad to say, not for the better. Yes, the family is in crisis. In addition to what has already been mentioned, teenage rebellion, child abuse, spousal violence, alcoholism, and other devastating problems rob many families of happiness. Scales and Roehikepartain (2003) found that the family and its structure play a great role in children's academic achievement. Spouse frequent beating could be a great obstacle to children's maturation and ability to succeed academically.

Spouse beating disrupts family peace as well as academic achievement of children. Children need love, peace and care. A modern researcher Bliss (2009) echoed that children suffer serious crippling effects when exposed to spouse violence and lack of love. Married couples may find that the financial and emotional demands of raising children make existing marital problems escalate. For example, differences in opinion between married couples on how to discipline and reward the children may increase tension between two people who already find it difficult to communicate (Coleman and Cressey, 2008).

Studies show that children brought up by peace loving parents, excel academically, develop better social skills, feel good about themselves and are happier than kids whose parents are violent, always quarrelling and fighting. Osavenren (2002) has suggested five steps to good parenting, stable family and happy marriage to include:

- (a) **Creating a Loving Home:** Children need love, in the 1950's, anthropologist M. F. Ashley Montagu wrote; "What the human organism requires most for its development is a nutriment of love; the source of virtually all health is in the experience of love, especially within the first six years of life. Plan regular time together as a family. Married couples need time for togetherness.
- (b) **Exercising Your Authority:** Children are quick to learn when their parents are afraid to assert their authority and can be relied upon to give in. John Rosemond, author of the book "Parents power", wrote in 2003 when it comes to the question of "Who is the boss"? if parents won't run with the ball, children will.
- (c) **Defining Family Rules and Enforce Them Promptly:** The fact is that kids fare better with clear rules, and consequences. Without structure, children become self-absorbed, selfish and unhappy and they make everyone around them miserable too. The scripture simply states: if you love your children you will correct them – Proverbs 13:24. Parents need to clearly define the laws that they want their children to follow. Let your yes be yes, your no be no.
- (d) **Acknowledging Your Child's Feelings:** Children want and need the most important people in their lives, and their parents to know how they feel. If parents habitually contradict their children when such feelings are expressed. According to the scripture, Proverbs 22:6 says: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he grows up, he will not depart from it".

The review of literature in the study focused on family social instability, children abandonment and spouse beating. It is instructive not to generalize their conclusion as most of the studies were conducted in different parts of the world with their peculiar environments and attendant effects.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. It provided an opportunity for collecting from part of the entire population. According to Anyanwu (2000) the cross-sectional

survey research design is very effective and the researcher wants to explore what is going on in a given situation.

Area of Study

Ikono Local Government Area is in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Ikono Local Government Area is bounded in the North by Ini local government area to, the East, it shares a common boundary with Ibiono Ibom and Itu local government areas, in the South it is bounded by Uyo local government area, and in the West Abak local government area has a common boundary. Ikono Local Government Area together with its Ini counterpart is the cradle of Ibibio Nation and is densely populated. It is made up of seven clans of Ikono Middle, Ediene, Ndiya, Nkwot, Ukpom, Itak and Ikono North. There are about 120 villages scattered in the local government area. The people speak Ibibio language. Apart from a few petty traders, the Ikono indigenes are farmers and some are civil servants. A few engage in palm produce business. There are no commercial banks in Ikono to boost the economic activities of the people. There are about fifteen post primary schools and forty primary schools (Area Educational Office, 2001). In the health sector, Ikono General Hospital has catered for many patients since its establishment but it has been very poorly equipped. There are health centres at various locations in the local government area. In the social welfare department, there have been alarming reports of children abandonment, spouse beating and family disorganization in the local government area.

Population

The study concentrated on child abandonment and spouse beating from seven clans in Ikono Local Government Area. The clans were represented by letters A, B, C, D, E, F, and G, for purpose of confidentiality. Clan A has a total population of 372 families, while Clan B has 395. Clan C is at the heart of the local government area. It has a population of 746 families. There are 564 families in Clan D, while Clan E has 215 families, Clan F with a population of 320 families. Clan G is situated in the south with a total family population of 302. Clan H has a population of 261. There are a total of 3175 families in the seven clans of the local government area.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Village Enrolment registers in each of the clans from years 2005 to 2010 were used to extract names of families who had enrolled in these registers. For five consecutive years, the researchers moved round from clan to clan, from village to village selecting participating families through simple random sampling technique. 10% of a total number of families in each clan were selected to form the sample for the study. Therefore, a total of 315 families formed the sample size for the study.

Table 1: Sampling frame for families in the seven clans of Ikono Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Clan	No. of families	10% of families selected	Locality description		
			Urban	Semi-Urban	Rural
A	372	37	-	-	1
B	395	39	-	-	1
C	746	75	1	-	-
D	564	56	-	-	1
E	215	21	-	-	1
F	320	32	-	1	1
G	302	30	-		1
H	261	26	-		
Total	3175	315	1	1	6

Instrumentation

The instrument used for the study was a check list which enabled the researchers to identify abandoned children and spouses prone to beating. The format requested for the children and spouses personal data including sex, marital status, number of children, economic status of parents, locality, occupation of parents and possible reasons for dropping out of children from school and reasons for abandonment.

Validation of Instrument

The content validity of the instrument was assessed by three (3) lecturers in the Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counselling, University of Uyo, who are experts in Test and Measurement. These experts checked the items of the questionnaire for consistency and difficulty level. Their final checking and corrections were incorporated in the instrument before the questionnaire was processed and administered to the respondents.

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the split half reliability method. The instrument was pilot-tested on 10 neutral subjects outside the study area. Copies of the questionnaire were divided into two halves after numbering them odd and even. Data from both halves were separated, collated and computed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

Research Procedure

The researchers together with the research assistants administered the questionnaire to the family heads. This ensured accuracy and uniformity. The researchers visited the respondents in their homes, took permission from their respective clan heads to administer the questionnaire to the targeted respondents. Before administering the questionnaire, the respondents were adequately briefed and assured of the confidentiality of information given. Guided by the check-list, information on parents' and children's personal data was obtained from the parents.

Method of Data Analysis

Data generated from questionnaire was analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test statistics. The two hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collection from each of the seven clans was analysed based on variables that characterized child abandonment in the local government area. Analysis was carried out based on reasons for child abandonment and spouse beating. These analyses were based on the research questions raised and the research hypothesis postulated for the study.

Descriptive Analysis of Research Data

Table 1: A breakdown of abandoned children on the basis of sex

Sex	Male	Female	Total
Number of abandoned children	93	125	218
Percentage (%)	42.7	57.3	100
Ranking	2 nd	1 st	

Table 1 above reveals a higher number of female children abandoned than male in Ikono Local Government Area.

Table 2: A breakdown of spouses prone to beating on the basis of locality

Locality	Rural	Urban	Total
No. of spouses beaten	113	105	218
Percentage (%)	51.7	48.3	100
Ranking	1 st	2 nd	

It is observed above that incidents of spouse beating were more rampant in the rural areas than in the urban areas.

Table 3: Analysis based on reasons for child abandonment

	Reasons for child abandonment							Total
	Sick-ness	Poor finances	Academic deficiency	Truancy	Indiscipline	Pregnancy and early marriage	Death	
No. of dropout	19	68	51	40	10	25	5	218
Percentage (%)	8.7	31.2	23.4	18.3	4.6	11.5	2.3	100
Ranking	5 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	6 th	4 th	7 th	

The result was analyzed based on their possible reasons of poor finances, academic deficiency and truancy. Others were indiscipline, pregnancy and early marriage and death of parents. The percentage of child abandonment in these clans were found and ranked accordingly.

Table 4: Analysis based on marital status of parent and reasons for spouse beating

Marital Status	Reasons for Spouse Beating							Total
	Sickness	Finance	Disrespect	Truancy	Indiscipline	Pregnancy	Death	
Married	12	28	26	14	7	9	2	98
Divorced	4	16	13	14	3	7	2	59
Widowed	3	15	7	8	6 th	9	1	43
Deceased (parent)		9	5	4				18
Total	19	68	51	40	10	25	5	218

Out of 98 spouses who suffered spouse beating, financial reasons rank first with 28 spouses representing 28.6%, seconded by 26 disrespect cases representing 26.5%. While there were 14 cases of truancy etc.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of child abandonment on academic achievement of Lower Basic social studies students in Ikono Local Government Area.

Table 5: Result of t-test of child abandonment on academic achievement of Lower Basic school social studies students

Male	Female	D	d ²	t-test cal.
21	18	3	9	
14	24	-10	100	
17	23	-5	36	
16	16	0	0	-2.5
17	20	-3	9	
2	8	-6	36	
6	16	-10	100	
		$\Sigma d = .52$	$\Sigma d^2 = 290$	

$$t\text{-test}_{\text{tab.}} = 2.45; df = 6; \alpha = 0.05$$

The hypothesis was rejected since the t-test calculated was greater than the tabulated t-test value. Hence, there is significant influence of child abandonment on academic achievement of Lower Basic social studies students in Ikono local government area. That means that the abandonment impacts negatively on students' achievement in schools in the area.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of frequent spouse beating on academic achievement of Lower Basic social studies students in Ikono local government area.

In testing this hypothesis, it was pertinent to use t-test. The result is that the t-test calculated was greater than t-test tabulated, therefore the null hypothesis stands rejected. Hence there is a significant influence of frequent spouse beating on the academic achievement of Lower Basic social studies students in Ikono local government area.

Table 6: Result of t-test analysis of the frequent spouse beating on academic achievement of social studies students

Urban	Rural	d	d ²	t-test cal.
14	25	-11	121	
23	15	8	64	
22	18	4	16	
17	15	2	4	3.49
21	16	5	25	
4	6	-2	4	
12	10	2	4	
		$\Sigma d = 8$	$\Sigma d^2 = 238$	

$$t\text{-test}_{\text{tab.}} = 2.45; df = 4; \alpha = 0.05$$

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study noted that 45% of child abandonment in Ikono Local Government Area belonged to married parents, 27% to divorced parent, 19.7% to widows and 8.3% were of deceased parents. It also established that 51.4% of their parents were below average in terms of parents' marital status, 35.8% were average while only 12.8% were above average. The study also revealed that in Ikono Local Government Area 52.9% and 13.3% or below average and above average respectively in academic in social studies.

The high rate of child abandonment in the area is attributed to several factors such as untimely death of parents, poor finances, indiscipline, divorce, frequent beating of spouses by couples etc. This is in line with the study of Rootman (2002) who found that child abandonment is clearly linked to disintegration of the family and UNESCO report (2010) which attributed it to poverty. Ikono is largely rural and poverty is glaringly noticeable among the rural populace, hence several families which are stricken by poverty abandon their children to their fate.

In the same vein, spousal violence due to alcoholism is rampant in many families in the study area. Children are academically destabilized due to the rowdy character of their parents. This study is supported by the findings of Coleman and Cressey (2008) who opined that spousal violence increase tension among the children and make it difficult for them to concentrate in school.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The principal concern of this study was to identify the influence of family social instability in Ikono Local Government Area on the academic achievement of Lower Basic school children. It also sought to determine the factors which contribute to abandonment of children in the area. To realize the objective of the study, two research questions and two research hypotheses were posed.

The sample consisted of 315 families from seven clans in Ikono Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A check list requesting for such data as students' sex, locality, parents' marital status, academic achievement, cases of abandonment and possible reasons for

abandonment was used. The data were analyzed using t-test and chi-square statistics. The result showed that there is a significant influence of child abandonment and frequent spouse beating on children's academic performance.

This study reveals that factors such as child abandonment, frequent spouse beating, parents' marital status of parents do contribute to poor academic achievement of students in social studies in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the results and findings of this study, the researchers give the following recommendations:

1. The importance of education to national development should be re-emphasized to the general public starting from the grassroots in order to take its rightful place in the Local, State and National budgets.
2. Parents as stakeholders in education should provide for the education of their children.
3. Divorce and marriage separation should be avoided by parents and they are advised to exercise strict control over their children and bring them up in a disciplined way.
4. Tendencies that tend to break up the family should be resisted by parents so that it would not lead to child abandonment.
5. Spouse should be friendly and develop cordial mutual relationship to each other.

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