

Effects of single-parenthood on the academic performance of secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the effects of single-parenthood on the academic performance and truancy behaviour among secondary school students. The purpose of the study is to find out the influence of family pattern on the academic performance and truancy behaviour of secondary school students. A total number of two hundred and fifty (250) subjects were randomly sampled for the study. Schools were purposely 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 the academic performance of students, the questionnaire contained the following items: name of the respondents, name of the school of each respondent, age, sex, religion and the type or kind of family structure. Independent t-test was used for analysing the hypotheses. In analysing the first hypothesis, it showed that there is no significant difference between the academic performance of adolescent students from single parent homes and those from intact parent homes. The second hypothesis revealed that there is significant difference between truancy behaviour of adolescent students from single parent homes and those from intact homes. With the results obtained, these conclusions were made, that there is no difference between the academic performance of single parent students and intact parents students, but there is difference between them in truancy behaviour. These recommendations were made that students from single parenthood should be counselled on self-esteem and self concept, so also marriage disagreement should be handled with love between the parents, instead of settling for divorce.

Keywords: Single-parenthood, academic performance, trancy,secondary school, influence, family pattern

Introduction

Time has really changed, many of the old customs and traditions which were taught and practised for several years are becoming obsolete now. 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 olden days, is now becoming fast and rapidly rising trends.

For decades and even centuries, one of the major concerning issues to the conservatives, is the issue of single-parenting. Single-parenting is already becoming a fast and rapidly growing trends in the society. This made the catholic church that was known as the dominating mentor and guide of traditions, norms and values of living, to be so adamant to advocate the sanctity of the sacrament of marriage of matrimony. This is why the procreation outside wedlock is strictly considered as a ground for excommunication. It is of the greatest sins, according to the doctrine of the catholic church to engage in pre-marital or extra-marital sex. Nowadays, single-parent families have become even more common than the so-called “nuclear family”, consisting of a mother or father and the children.

Review of Related Literatures

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. 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); Eshleman, (1981) & Henslim (1985)]. 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 as exceptional cases. However, nowadays, they are fast growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria. In Nigeria, among Yoruba's, 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 disciplines of children. The child is morally, mentally upright and emotionally balance when the caring responsibilities are carried out by both parents.

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). What makes up a family is the father, mother and kids, not father and mother alone.

Fadeiye(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 everyday. 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's likelihood for the child to be

anti-social in nature by joining gangs, also, if it were to be a female child, there is likelihood for her to become wayward.

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 as those for two parents family, but these problems seem more difficult to bear or manage when the home is being tutored by only one person. For example, all children feel hostile towards their parents as they grow-up and try to be independent. But in a situation, where the anger and rebellion are all directed towards one person, it may seem worse, if there is only one to bear it, not for the two to share.

There are some problems that are exceptional, which are only faced by the single-parents, which make it somewhat difficult to raise children. These problems include: bitterness towards the absent spouse, loneliness, poverty and insecurity about raising children alone without a help. For these and some other reasons, single parents sometimes cling to their children or over-indulge them.

It is widely believed that children from broken homes have higher incidence of academics, emotional and behavioural problems than other children from intact homes. An analysis of data by NAEP(1986)(National Association of Educational Procurement) data indicated that third graders living with one parent score considerably lower than third graders living with both parents (Natriello, McDill and Pallas, 1990). Ekstrom et al (1987) cited in Education Reforms and students at Risk: A Review of the state of the Art – January 1994, find a significant correlation between single-parent homes and drop out rates for whites and Hispanics (but not for blacks).

In case of divorce, separation or death of a parent, children are at somewhat greater risk for symptoms of poor psychological adjustment, behavioural and social problems, low self-esteem and poor performance in school. Johnson and Medinans (1968) cited in Ortesse (1998) found that most medical students whose fathers had been absent while they were at ages one to five of life were more psychiatric, psychopathic and criminalistic in nature than those whose parents were present during this period. According to Ortesse (1998), a child from intact homes will be well taken care of and well socialised as possible. This is due to the fact the process of socialization depends on both parents playing complementary roles in bringing up the child.

Truancy is a term used to describe any international unauthorised 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. The definition is designed to cover the long term absence of a depressed school refuser or a teenage mother, the gesture of a bravado of an occasional truant, the child kept at home by a parent to help care for siblings, and the child taken out of school for an out-of-season family holiday, and many other variations on this theme.

A recent report from OFSTED(Office For Standard in Education) noted that some of the plausible, or at least practically irreputable explanations which schools received for absence, which they then classify as authorised are questionable (OFSTED 2001). The Audit Commission (1999) noted that at least 40,000 out of the 400,000(10%) pupils absent from school each day are truanting or being kept off schools by their parents without permission. Separating these two categories of absence statistically is clearly impossible, both for schools or for researchers, unless detailed study of each case is undertaken.

According to Sheila Bryant in Library Law Blog (2006) said; Truancy occurs when a student between the age 6 and 17, missed a certain number of days from school within a specific period and time, as defined by the statute of the state that the students resides in. Truancy usually apply to those students that are minors, because in most state, the age of an adult is deemed 18, however, these can be exceptions based on the state statute.

Truancy is an issue that affects many people, because truancy has been associated with various criminal behaviours such as vandalism, burglary and drug use. Also, truancy can be the symptoms for other emotional/mental, economic and family situations.

Therefore, the problem of defining truancy lies in the concept at which each researcher believes in, and this affects the definition of each researcher, some says, truancy depends on the school's criteria used in categorising truancy, while some says it differs from school to school's handbook for defining truancy. Some authors also says, it depends on the total number of lessons/classes missed and so on.

Therefore, all these concepts and believes, unable people to classify anyhow absence from school or class to be truancy.

Since in many, though not all cases, the decision to truant is taken by children themselves, it seems appropriate to begin with their views on the causes of truancy.

Kindler, Wakefield and Wilkin (1996) reported on interviews with 160 children in age 7 and above, for the children, the main causes of truancy and disruptions are classified and described(in rank order) as :

The influence of friends and peers who are seen encouraging truancy as a status-seeking activity or as a way of joining in or blending in, and sometimes teasing or goading the child into truancy.

The content and delivery of the curriculum, seen as lacking in relevance and stimulus.

Family factor, either parental attitudes or family problems.

Bullying in school

The classroom context, either because of teachers' inability to control, or problems arising from the child's own personality or learning abilities.

Student non-attendance is a problem that extends much further than the school. It affects the student, the family, and the community.

The Los Angeles County Office of Education identifies truancy as the most powerful predictor of delinquency. Police departments across the nation report that many students not in school during regular hours are committing crimes, including vandalism, shoplifting, and graffiti. When Van Nuys, California, officials conducted a three-week sweep for truants on the streets, shoplifting arrests dropped by 60 percent (Garry 1996).

Absenteeism is detrimental to students' achievement, promotion, graduation, self-esteem, and employment potential. Clearly, students who miss school fall behind their peers in the classroom. This, in turn, leads to low self-esteem and increases the likelihood that at-risk students will drop out of school.

In a longitudinal study of African-American males, Robins and Ratcliff (1978) found that of those students who were often truant in elementary school and truant in high school, 75 percent failed to graduate. Failure to graduate, in turn, is associated with diminished earning potential in adulthood and other poor outcomes.

Tenibiaje (2009) highlighted causes of poor performance in Nigeria higher institutions, he said poor performance have been attributed to a lot of indicators, such as students factors, like students attitudes to school, approach to learning and academic self-concept. Apart from students factors, school factors and parents' factors, there are other indicators that affect poor performance. On the part of the parents, there are certain factors which influence children's success, such as: parents' social class, parents' educational status as well as parental inputs and other exogenous variables.

The views of professional in schools and education welfare services collected and analysed by Kinder, Harland, Wilkin and Wakefield(1995) also included that personal factors; family and community factors and school factors amongst the causes of truancy.

Individual (personal) factors include: Lack of self-esteem/ social skills/ confidence, poor peer relationship, lack of academic ability, special needs and lack of concentration/ self management skill and self interest.

Family and community factors: These include; parentally condoned absence from school, not valuing education, domestic problems, inadequate or inconsistent parenting, economic deprivation and community lack of self-esteem. Within the school, professionals identified the case with which some pupils could slip away unnoticed if school systems were not in

place to defer them, relationship with teachers and peers, and problems relating to the relevance of school and the curriculum to these truants.

Statement of the Problem

The main problem for this study is that a lot of people, educationists and counsellors are complaining on non-chalant attitude of students to study and attendance to classes. Reports and observations on students from different family structure and family composition are indicators to academic performance.

Research Question:

The following research questions were raised based on the background to the study.

1. Is there any difference between the academic performance of students from single-parent homes and intact homes?
2. Is there any difference between truancy behaviour of children from single parents and children of intact homes?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the influence of family patterns on the academic performance and truancy of secondary school students.

The study also wants to know the effects of single-parenting on the academic achievement and if it causes truancy in the students of secondary schools.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested with suitable statistical techniques at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of adolescents from single-parenting homes and those from intact homes.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant difference between the truancy behaviour of students from single-parenting homes and those from intact homes.

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a survey method of research, that is aimed at collecting data for the purpose of interesting and knowing the effects of single-parenthood on the academic performance and truancy behaviour of secondary school students.

Population

The population of this study was drawn from secondary schools in Ado-Ekiti Local Government. The students used were all the students of Senior Secondary School I and Senior Secondary School II in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

A questionnaire was designed by the researchers to measure the effects of single-parenthood on the academic performance and truancy behaviour of Secondary School Students. The questionnaire was basically designed to seek information from the students that play truancy, from intact homes and from single-parenthood family. The questionnaire is a one section questionnaire. The questionnaire seeks information on age, name of respondents, name of school of respondents, sex, name of subject, class and the family structure.

The reason for adding name of subject is to able to marry the names of the subjects and the academic performance after collection and prevalent truancy behaviour. How to have the academic performance and the rate of truancy of the students is by meeting with the counsellor or the class teacher for their just concluded examination results for the academic performance and asking for the class register for measuring the rate of truancy of the students.

Instrumentation:

The instrument used for collection of bio-data information is the questionnaire, while the class- register and the students last examination result was used for checking truancy and their academic performance.

Validity of the research Instrument

Face and content validities were done by experts in the field of psychology and test and measurement. Face and content validities of the questionnaire were done, items that were not valid were dropped.

Reliability of the research Instrument

The questionnaire was trail-tested to groups of students from other local government. The exercise was done at two occasions, with an interval of two weeks for test-re-test method of reliability. The scores obtained at the two occasions from those groups were correlated using Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient, and value of 0.70 was obtained.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of adolescent students from single parenting homes and those from intact homes.

Table 1: t-test summary of academic performance of adolescent students from single homes and that of intact homes.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t(ob)	P
Single Parenting Home	83	53.39	10.62			
				248	.725	.469
Intact Parenting Homes	167	54.40	10.27			

P>0.05

The hypothesis is accepted: $t = 0.725$, $P > 0.05$.

Therefore, there is no significant difference between the academic achievement(performance) of adolescent students from single parenting homes and those from intact homes.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the truancy behaviour of adolescent students from single parenting homes and those from intact parenting homes.

Table 2: t-test summary of truancy behaviour of adolescents from single parenting homes and those from intact homes.

GROUP	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t(ob)	P
Single Parenting Home	83	88.90	8.26			
				248	2.905	.004
Intact Parenting Homes	167	91.49	5.66			

P<0.05

The result of hypothesis 2 is rejected ($t=2.905$, $P<0.04$).

Therefore, there is significant difference between the truancy behaviour of adolescent students from single parenting homes and those from intact parenting homes.

Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

This study attempts to identify the effect in which single parenting can cause or have on the academic performance and truancy behaviour of secondary school students. Two hypotheses were raised and tested for, using independent t-test. Based on the findings of this study, the first hypothesis raised, which states that, there is no significant difference between the academic performance or achievement of adolescent students from single parenting homes and those from intact parenting homes. The result obtained in this study shows that, there is no correlation or relationship between the type of home through which a student come from and his/her academic performance in the school. This result disagrees with Ogenyi (1998), which states that , single parenting do not help children to develop as self- actualised individuals.

The result obtained in the second hypothesis showed that there is significant difference between the truancy behaviour of adolescent students from single parenting homes and intact homes. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This result is supported by the findings of Tyerman (1958), which says, there is correlation between home circumstances and persistent truancy without the knowledge of the parents. He concluded that there are four factors associated with truancy and are all related to home background. The factors according to Tyerman (1958) include:

- (a) Poor relationship between children and parents and with both parents.
- (b) Poor physical condition in the home
- (c) The use of corporal punishment in the home and,
- (d) Lack of parental interest in the child's welfare.

Tyerman (1958), also stated that, children who lacked material care for a significant part of their infant lives may show symptoms of truancy.

Conclusion

Based on the data collected and analysed, the following conclusions were made.

1. The study revealed that the absence of a parent doesn't necessarily have influence on the academic performance of the child. Therefore, by this, there is no relationship between the single parental influence and academic achievement 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. It can also be stated as, type of home has significant influence on truancy behaviour of students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, these are the recommendations.

1. Students of single parenthood should be encouraged on the three basic dimensions of self-concepts, namely; sense of belonging, sense of worth and sense of competence. They need a positive identity or an enhanced self-concept for the overall adjustment.
2. Marital disunity is a major cause of single parenting. Therefore, to avoid this, parents should tolerate, accommodate, appreciate and understand each other in marriage. Forces of disunity should be ignored, de-emphasized, if not eliminated. Both parents should try to stay together for the sake of good upbringing of their children. Whenever there is problem in the home, the couple should try and see the counsellor for a help or otherwise, settle the problems within themselves amicably.

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