

Single-Parenting, Psychological Well-Being and Academic Performance of Adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of single-parenting on the psychological well-being and academic performance of adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the growing phenomenon of single parenting and its impact on the psychological and academic well-being of adolescents. A sample of 100 participants randomly selected from 5 secondary schools was used. Questionnaire and achievement test were employed to generate data for the study. Two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The hypotheses were tested using descriptive statistical technique and t-test. The study revealed that children appeared to profit psychologically and academically when both parents provide aspects of an orderly and nurturing home life. Teachers, counsellors, educational psychologist and administrators need to have knowledge of those factors that affect children from single parent homes to better understand the behaviours and attitudes of the children they are teaching. While many children in single parent homes grow up into successful, mature adults, many children being raised in single parent homes may not reach their full potential due to inadequate family resources. School personnel also need to provide support to the mother or father who is parenting solo. Having a teacher, counsellor or psychologist to consult and collaborate with, can be an immeasurable help in raising well-adjusted and successful children.

Keywords: single-parenting, intact-homes, single-parent homes, psychological, academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

Research on single-parent families has changed over the years. During different periods, research in the area has followed one of the two models; The Family Deficit Model or the Risk and Protective Factor Model. Family Deficit model which dates back to the 1970s views the nuclear or two-parent family (otherwise known as intact family) as the ideal family structure. According to this model, single-parent families have a negative impact on children simply because they do not have a nuclear family structure. It is therefore considered an aberration, which lacks the capacity to produce a psychologically balanced offspring.

Risk and Protective Factor model, which was developed in the 1990s, does not regard single-parent families as irregular. Rather than view single parenting as the cause of negative outcomes for children, it views family structure as one of the many risk factors. Risk factors are background characteristics and life events that may have negative impact on child development. Whereas, protective factors are characteristics and events that positively influence children and help limit the impact of risk factors. Essentially, risk factors are the weaknesses while protective factors are the strengths of any given family.

Until recently, single parenting is alien to Nigerian family culture. Where they exist at all, they are

ignored as exceptional phenomenon. However, the aggressive influence of western culture has impacted so much on traditional family value in Nigeria. This coupled with increasing socio-economic demands on traditional family life and the attendant social complexities have worked to erode strong positive family values associated with traditional Nigerian families. Consequently, single parenting hitherto considered an aberration in the recent past is now gaining societal acceptance; but not without its negative tendencies.

Single parenting is a situation in which one of the two individuals (i.e., mother or father) involved in the conception of the child becomes solely responsible for the upbringing of the child. Single parenthood arises when either the male or female parent decides to produce and raise a child or children outside of wedlock. It could also come about as a result of divorce, separation of various kinds or death of any of the spouses. Thus, leaving the responsibility of raising the children to the 'surviving' partner.

In the last few decades, attempts have been made by scholars, psychologists, educationists, counsellors and students of child psychology to determine the nature and extent of the influence of single parenting on the emotional and physical development of the child. Most of these studies have focussed more on adolescents and teenagers raised by female single parents. Not much effort has been put into adopting a

more holistic approach to evaluating comprehensively the totality of relationship between the psychological well-being and academic performance of children raised by single parents. Although, there is paucity of data on single parent families in Nigeria, empirical studies, behavioural statistics of school children and even newspaper reports show a growing incidence of the phenomenon of single parents and delinquent school children from such homes.

Empirical evidence has equally shown that children from intact-homes will be well taken care of and better socialised. This is due to the fact that the process of socialisation depends on both parents playing complimentary roles in raising such children; which will definitely impact positively on the later during school years. On the other hand children from single parent homes are likely to suffer deprivations and denials of some rights and opportunities that will have negative psycho-socio impact on them in school years. Studies have equally shown that children from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviours and poor academic records.

The inspiration behind this study is therefore my deep seated desire to find practical ways of helping children from single parent homes to cope with the trauma of their lopsided upbringing with a view to ameliorating its negative impact on their psychological well being and academic performance. Adolescence is a transitory period between childhood and adulthood. During this period an individual is seen neither as a child nor an adult. Hall in Salami & Alawode (2000) claimed that adolescents are characterized by emotional instabilities and hyperactivities, which cause them to experience storms and stress. Erickson in Salami & Alawode (2000) opined that identity formation creates tension in the adolescents to the extent that some of them become confused about their personality.

The period of adolescence is very important to development of an individual. Any laxity on the part of the parents in assisting and guiding the adolescents may result in academic backwardness and development of unwholesome behaviours. The foundation of what a person becomes in the society is laid in the home and at the initial stage of life. Parents therefore have important roles to play in seeing to it that the youths acquire the appropriate social, psychological, moral and academic development.

In Nigeria, the parental roles are culturally determined. Maternal role is that of childcare and home making while the paternal role is that of economic responsibilities and discipline of children. Generally, it is the responsibility of the family, to train and bring up the child in the norms and values

of the society. They are to be responsible for the psychological and emotional welfare of the child.

The parents are mainly responsible for the educational and career development of their children. However, divorce and separation of various kinds or death of one spouse may leave the role in the hands of a single parent. 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 Henslin (1985). Single parenthood may arise when either the male or female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock Ortese (1998).

In Nigeria, the existence of single parents was before now unknown, and where they existed they are ignored as exceptional cases. However, nowadays, they are a fast growing family pattern both inside and outside Nigeria Nwachukwu (1998). Although there are no available statistics of single-parent families in Nigeria, practical experience and newspaper reports show that there is increase of single parents in Nigeria. In the western countries, there is a growing increase in the percentage of adults and children living in single-parent households Nwachukwu (1998).

A child from homes where the father and the mother are present will be well taken care of and socialised in the best way possible Ortese(1998). This is due to the fact that the process of socialisation depends on both parents playing complimentary roles in bringing up the child. Such a child is likely to achieve self-actualisation later in life. Children from single-parent homes are likely to suffer deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities. Salami & Agbo (1997,1998) are of the view that adolescents from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviour and poor academic records. The problem of deprivation of a second parent is bad enough but when the remaining parent cannot cope with the resultant problems a tragic situation arises. In such a situation, the child becomes a misfit in the society.

The family is the first socialising agent the child comes into contact with. It has a great 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 Maduewesi & Emenogu (1997). Fadeye (1985) in Salami & Alawode (2000) pointed out that both parents have roles to in child education. The father is to provide the necessary tools for the educational advancement while the mother is supposed to supplement the father's efforts in this regard. When the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the basic needs as well as supervise the academic performance of the child

he/she (the child) will be backward or withdrawn. The same thing occurs when the mother is absent and the father is not privileged enough (Ortese, 1998).

A single parent faces doubled responsibilities requiring time, attention and money of the parent. Hence, less attention is paid to the psychological well-being and education of the child. Children from single-parent homes are commonly described as more hostile, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive and distractible than children from intact families (Nwachukwu, 1998). One is therefore motivated to ask the question: 'what is the relationship between psychological well-being and academic performance of adolescents raised by single parents in Nigeria.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Jointly, parents have important roles to play in ensuring that their children acquire appropriate and balanced social, psychological, moral and academic development. Each of the parents has indispensable and unique responsibility for the psychological, educational and career development of their children. However the advent and subsequent societal acceptance of single parenthood has distorted these complementary roles. This has in turn impacted adversely on the total upbringing of the children including their psycho well-being and educational performance.

However it is disturbing to note that, although many single parents do amazing job to provide for their children, it is clear through studies that children do face certain challenges. These include the following:

- Studies suggest that single parent homes are more likely to be low-income homes. These children would therefore be subject to problems associated with this socio-economic group.
- Though single parenting is gaining acceptance, there is sometimes a social stigma associated with this family structure.
- There is a strong link between the absence of a father figure and increasing level of teenage pregnancy and crime.
- Researches show that children in single parent homes exhibit anti-social behaviours.
- Single parents will generally have less time to devote to each child. This can have negative impact on their school work and their social development

Theoretically, growing up in a single-parent family is frequently viewed as a risk factor in a child. Single-parent families are now a common phenomenon. Many people have raised questions about the influence of single-parent families on a child's academic performance and the ways single parents, collaborating with teachers and educational

administrators can help their adolescent children make success of their academic work.

Academic performance in the context of this research work means three things: Firstly, the ability to study and remember facts, secondly, being able to study effectively and see how facts fit together and form larger patterns of knowledge and thirdly, being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or down on paper. To be able to attain the foregoing description, an adolescent needs an appropriate family environment. The implicit challenge of this research work is to determine, which of the intact or single-parent family is the appropriate family environment.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the growing phenomenon of single parenting and its impact on the well being of adolescents. Specifically, the study is to:

- Compare the psychological well-being and academic performance of adolescents raised by single parents and intact homes.
- Determine the influence of single parenting on the psychological well being and academic performance of adolescents.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

- There will be no significant difference in the psychological well -being of adolescents raised in single parent homes and those raised in intact-homes.
- There will be no significant difference in the academic performance of adolescents raised in single-parent homes and those raised in intact homes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will assist teachers, counsellors, child psychologists and administrators to have a better understanding of the factors that affect children from single parent homes, so that they can better appreciate the behaviours and attitudes of the children they teach or counsel. This knowledge will put them in a good stead to help and add value to the life of these children. It is also hoped that the result of this study will help practitioners to develop appropriate counselling techniques and programmes which if implemented will decelerate the speed at which single-parenting is growing; seeing that single parenting does not lend itself to the balanced moral, emotional, physical, social and educational development of children of such background.

LIMITATION OF STUDY

This study was carried out in Lagos metropolis, which is located in South West region of Nigeria in West Africa. The study was limited to Senior Secondary school students (SSS II) in selected schools in one education district.

METHODOLOGY DESIGN

A research design used for this study was structured survey questionnaire. This was considered appropriate for this research as it enables the collection and analysis of data from respondents considered to be the exact representation of entire group.

Population of the Study

The target population of this study comprised all the adolescents in all the secondary schools in Oshodi-Isolo local government area of Lagos State.

Sampling Procedure

A random sampling method was employed for the selection of 100 Senior Secondary 2(SS2) students from 5 randomly selected secondary schools in the local government areas involved in the study. Though, random sampling procedure was used, the researcher ensured parity in the number of students selected from single parent homes and intact homes.

INSTRUMENTATION

Two major instruments were used to obtain relevant data for study:

1. A 30-item 4-point likert scale type questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part 1 provided personal information of the respondents. While Part II was 30 items on

the psychological well-being of an adolescent.

2. A 20-item multiple-choice achievement test was compiled from the standardized senior secondary certificate examination on English Language.

ADMINISTRATION OF INSTRUMENT

The researcher made the first visit to the five schools selected for the study and sought permission from the school authorities to use their students for the research survey. Copies of the questionnaires and the objective test were administered to the randomly selected students. The researcher personally collected the questionnaires and tests after they had been administered for subsequent data analysis.

PROCEDURE FOR DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical tool used for the analysis of the data collected was the t-test, the two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Hypothesis one in the null form states that there will be no significant difference in the psychological well-being of adolescents raised in single-parent homes and those raised in intact homes. The result of the analysis is shown in table 1

Table 1: Difference in the psychological well-being of adolescents raised in single-parent homes and intact homes.

VARIABLES	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit
Psychological W/B of intact homes	50	79.82	6.78	2.11	1.67
Psychological W/B of single homes	50	77.80	13.29		

P < 0.05, df 49

Table 1 show that the t-calculated 2.11 is greater than the t-critical 1.67 at 0.05 level of significance, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant difference in the psychological well-being of adolescents from single-parent home and those from intact homes.

Hypothesis two in the null form states that there will be no significant difference in academic performance of adolescents raised in single-parent homes and those raised in intact homes. The results of the analysis are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Difference in the academic performance of adolescents raised in Single-parent homes and intact homes.

VARIABLES	N	X	SD	t-cal	t-crit
Academic performance intact homes	50	11.36	2.94	2.72	1.67
Academic performance single homes	50	9.48	3.87		

P < 0.05 df 49

Table 2 shows that the t-calculated 2.72 is greater than the t-critical 1.67 at 0.05 level of significance, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, which means that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of adolescents raised from single parent homes and those from intact homes.

being of adolescence raised in single-parent home and those raised in intact homes was rejected and the alternate which state that there is a significant difference in the psychological well-being of adolescence raised in single-parent homes and those raised in intact homes was accepted. This hypothesis states that there is a significant difference in the psychological well-being of adolescents raised in single parent homes and those raised in intact home. This result corroborates Clarke-Stewart & Hayward (1996) findings, which cited studies documenting the

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis One – Which states that there will be no significant differences in the psychological well-

deleterious effects of divorce on children's self-esteem, achievement in school and psychological adjustment. They noted that it was important for both parents, to remain 'full service' parents if their children were to experience psychological growth and strength. According to Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan (1997), children raised in single parent homes when compared to their peers from traditional two-parent homes are at risk for number of less desirable outcomes and such outcomes lead to concurrent psychological and behavioural difficulties. They are supported by the findings of Ortese & Agbo (1997,1998) that the reason for this difference in well-being is that children from intact homes regardless of sex, develop good personality and they hardly have complex because, they are secured in the love of their parents.

Hypothesis Two – Which states that there will be no significant difference in academic performance of adolescents raised in single-parent homes and those raised in intact homes was rejected and the alternate which indicates that there is a significant difference in academic performance of adolescents raised in single-parent homes and those raised in intact homes was accepted.

This hypothesis states that there is significant difference in the academic performance of adolescents raised in single parent home and those raised in intact home. As indicated in a study by (Nicholas Zill et al 1993), children of divorced parents were twice as likely as children from intact families to have academic difficulties and drop out of school. Sokan & Akinade (1994) also stated that children from single parent homes exhibit lower self-esteem, lower achievement motivation and lower academic achievement than those from intact homes, where both father and mother are parent. This is in agreement with the study of Barry D. Ham (2003) where he established that those students from intact families outperform those students from divorced families across all categories. More specifically, in multi-variable statistical analysis, Ham calculated that students from intact families maintained grade points average (GPA) 11% higher than those of peers from divorced families.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION **Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents Raised By Single Parents**

Results suggest that children's well-being was associated with participation in a wide range of activities with the parents. The ability of the custodial single parent to successfully provide a nurturing environment for the children appeared to be affected by the family's socio-economic status. In general, single mothers have a harder time making ends meet. As a result of the financial strain experienced by many single mothers, they tend to be more anxious,

depressed and over whelmed with parenting issues. Single father on the other hand, fared much better economically. They were able to maintain a socio-economic status more similar to what the children experience before separation. Given these differences in environment, it is expected that children raised by single fathers would have a stronger sense of well-being that children raised by single mothers.

Academic Performance of Adolescents Raised By Single Parents

Results regarding academic performance of children from single parent homes were also contradictory. In the review, some researchers claimed that children in father led homes did better academically since fathers had greater economic resources and could provide better schools and more educational materials. Other researchers argued that the academic performance of children from mother led homes and father led homes did not differ dramatically, which corroborated with our findings. Despite economic hardship mothers tended to be more involved in school functions and were more like to stay in touch with their children's teachers, which are factors that can enhance academic performance.

This mixed picture suggests that single mothers and single fathers provide different types of resources and support for their children. Children appeared to profit psychologically and academically when both parents provide aspects of an orderly and nurturing home life.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

It is not enough to know that a child comes from a single-parent home. Teachers, counsellors, educational psychologist and administrators need to have knowledge of those factors that affect children from single-parent homes to better understand the behaviours and attitudes of the children they are teaching. While many children in single-parent homes grow up into successful, mature adults, many children being raise in single-parent homes may not reach their full potential due to inadequate family resources. Teachers, counsellors, educational psychologist and administrators need to understand that children raised in floundering families need schools that are warm, nurturing, structured and authoritative. School personnel also need to provide support to the mother or father who is parenting solo. Having a teacher, counsellor or psychologist to consult and collaborate with, can be immeasurable help in raising well-adjusted and successful children.

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