

Family Structure / Parenthood and the Academic Achievement Behaviour of Adolescent Students in College of Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper examines the effects of family structure and parenthood on the academic achievement behaviour of students in a College of Education. Survey design was used. The sample for the study consisted of 200 students drawn from the five schools in Enugu State College of Education (Technical) Enugu. The adapted form of Guidance and Counseling on achievement behaviour Grade form was used for data collection and the data collected were subjected to statistical analysis. The three null hypothesis formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that significant differences existed between the academic achievement behaviour of students from single-parent family and those from two-parent parental structures. The results also indicated significant differences in academic achievement behaviour of male and female students compared on two types of parental structures. On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that school counselors should be employed in all schools and that they should provide necessary assistance to students especially those from single-parent family to enable them overcome their emotional challenges.

Keywords: Adolescents, Single-parent, Two-parent, Achievement, Behaviour, Parenthood

INTRODUCTION

The performance of Nigerian students in the post-primary and post-Secondary school and other public examinations has continued to decline from year to year. For Nigeria, a developing country that invests so much on the education of the youths, continuing poor performance of students at public examinations puts the country at a serious disadvantage in the competitive global economy. According to Cech [1], a progressively complex world calls for increasingly skilled people who can compete favourably in the global labour market.

The situation described above has prompted investigations into the factors that influence academic achievement behaviour of Nigerian students in public and private institutions. Teachers, counselors, psychologists, researchers and school administrations in Nigeria [7, 2]) have been asking questions and making projections. This is because of the public outcry against declining performances of Nigerian students in public examinations in the country [3].

Different factors are capable of influencing the academic achievement behaviour of students. Such factors may include: the students' internal state (intelligence, state of health, motivation, anxiety, self concept and self-efficacy, and their environment/availability of suitable learning

environment, adequacy of educational infrastructure like textbooks and well-equipped laboratories).

Investigation of these factors by researchers has produced several findings. For example Clemens and Oelke [4] and Emeke [5] have attributed the cause of poor academic achievement behaviour to a combination of personal and institutional factors. Personal factors relate to the individual's intelligence, knowledge and ability. While institutional factors are family or parental influences, societal influences, institutional influences and school related factors - student-lecturer rapport, teacher related factors, accommodation and living conditions. In the same vein, Hassan [6] Sogbetan [7] and Wiseman [2] among others have examined the causes of poor academic achievement behaviour among adolescents in Colleges of education. Some of the factors identified are intellectual ability, poor study habit, achievement motivation, lack of vocational goals, low self-concept, lack of efficacy, low socio-economic status of the family, poor family structure and anxiety. The consequences of these include indiscipline in schools and low level of educational standard.

A Daily Sketch publication on causes and cures of poor academic achievement behaviour at West African School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) in

2006 identified and grouped them into: problems of teachers, problems of inadequate facilities in the schools, problems traceable to students, problems caused by parents and society at large and problems of government policies and low funding of the education sector [8].

Achievement Behaviour

According to Niss [9], achievement behaviour is an important part of a secondary school students' development and which leads to their becoming effective and having a sense of mastery over their environment. Through achievement the student develops a positive self-esteem, self-concept, and academic self-efficacy belief, feeling of acceptance, adequacy and self-worth. Achievement behaviour develops early in childhood and is carried along through the entire schooling period to adult life [10]. Early school experiences have a tremendous impact on the student's later achievement behaviour. Psychologists [9, 11], generally agree that early experience and mastery of tasks affect achievement motivation. As the adolescent develops, his achievement behaviour becomes more complex and abstract.

Ikpeazu [12] has shown that the secondary school student's achievement behaviour is fostered through an interaction between parents and teachers with the student so that he learns that one can master tasks. Achievement behavior also means the attainment of success of a student in his school work among his classmates. Studies by Eccles and Schunk, [13] have confirmed that adolescent's personality characteristics like socio-psychological variables as reported by [14-16] are good predictors of achievement behaviour. Also mentioned as good predictors of academic achievement behaviour are locus of control, interest in schooling and self-efficacy.

In the context of this paper, achievement behaviour is defined as the dynamic cognitive entities representing future-based possibilities that respond to changes in the person as well as the situation. Academic success is the purpose or aims that schooling adolescents want to achieve after learning a particular subject or course in school.

Home background and Achievement Behaviour

Studies [8, 17] indicated that there is an awareness of the importance of the home environment or family on pupils/students academic achievement behaviour. The home has a great influence on the students' psychological, emotional, social and economic state. In the view of Ajila and Olutola [8], the state of the home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's adolescent life. This is because the family background and context of the adolescent affect his/her reaction to life situations and his/her level of achievement behavior. Although,

the school is responsible for the experiences that make up the adolescent's life during school periods, yet parents and the adolescent experiences at home play tremendous roles in building the personality and ego identity development of the adolescents and making the adolescent what he is in society. Thus, Ichado [8] concluded that the environment in which the adolescent comes from can greatly influence his achievement behavior at school.

Although the home environment or family has been recognized as having a lot of impact on the academic achievement behaviour of the adolescents [19, 8]. Most Nigerian studies have concentrated on the area of socio-economic status of parents. Other aspects of parental environment such as the structure of the family have been grossly neglected. Yet, Ichado [18] stated that parents' constant disagreement affect adolescent emotionally and this could lead to poor academic achievement behaviour in school. The family lays the psychosocial, moral and spiritual foundations in the overall development of the adolescent. While the mother's significant role in this cannot be over-emphasized, previous studies on father-adolescent relationship suggest that the presence of a father in the home influences significantly the development of adolescent [17]. Thus, parenthood is a responsibility requiring the full cooperation of both parents who must ensure the total development of their offspring(s).

Structurally, a family is either broken or intact. A broken family in this context is one that is not fully intact for various reasons; death of a parent, divorce, separation, desertion and illegitimacy in which case, the family was never complete [20]. This analysis becomes necessary because life in a single parent family can be stressful for both the adolescent and the parent. Such families are faced with the challenges of diminished financial resources [21] assumptions of new roles and responsibilities, establishment of new patterns in intra-familial interaction and re-organization of routines and schedules [17]. These conditions are not conducive for effective parenting. This is because when the single parent is overburdened by responsibilities and by their own emotional reaction to their situation, they often become irritable, impatient and insensitive to their adolescents' needs [19]. It is against this general background that this study aims to study further the influences of parental structure on the achievement behaviour of adolescents of Enugu state College of Education Technical, Enugu, Enugu State.

Purpose of the Study

The present study set out to determine:

- The difference between the academic achievement behaviour of adolescents in single-parent families and those from two-parent families.

- The difference between the academic achievement behaviour of male adolescents from single parent families and adolescents from two parent families?
- The difference between academic achievement behaviour of female adolescents from single families and those from two-parent families?

Research Questions

To address this problem, the following research questions will guide the study.

- To what extent is the difference between the academic achievement behaviour of adolescents in single parent families and those from two parent families?
- To what extent is the difference between the academic achievement behaviour of male adolescents from single- parent families and those from two- parent families?
- To what extent is the difference between academic achievement behaviour of female adolescents from single-parent families and those from two-parent families?

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were raised and tested:

- There is no significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of adolescents from single -parent families and those from two-parent families.
- There is no significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of male adolescents from single- parent families and those from two-parent families.
- There is no significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of female adolescents from single-parent families and female adolescents from two- parent families.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was survey. The population for this study consists of all students of Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu in Nigeria. However, the sample for the study was drawn from the students' population from five schools in the College.

The sample was actually drawn using the students' personal records at the College. Respondents from five schools in the College were randomly selected. From the five schools, namely. School of Education, School of Business Education, School of Science Education, School of Technical Education and School of Vocational Education - 40 adolescent

students were purposefully selected. The selection from each school was based on equal number of students (20) from single- parent family and (20) from two- parent family. This made a total of 200 adolescent students that participated in the study. Thus: 100 adolescents from single-parent family and 100 adolescents from two- parents family made up the sample size for the study.

DATA COLLECTION

The instrument used to obtain relevant data was an adapted form of the Guidance and Counseling achievement scores form (GCAASF). This instrument was basically used to collect data on the subject's academic achievement behaviour as measured by their scores in the compulsory courses taken in the previous semester in their various schools (Departments). The instrument was adapted by the researchers because the items were structured based on adolescents. The first part of the form seeks information on the subjects' biometrics, family structure, sex and course of study. The instrument was re-validated by four experts in the field of education measurement and Evaluation and Educational Psychology. The instrument reliability coefficient (0.68) was obtained through a test re-test form of reliability.

The researchers personally went to each of the schools to request for the scores of the participants in the compulsory courses taken in their various schools. However, the students that were involved in this study were informed and the purpose of the study was clearly explained to them. They were assured of the confidential nature of the results of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research questions were analyzed using means and standard deviation, while the research hypotheses were analyzed using t-test.

RESULTS

The results are presented below:

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the academic achievement behaviour of students from single- parent family and those from two- parent family.

The data in Table 1. Indicate that there is a significant difference between academic achievement behaviour of students from single-parent families and those from two-parent families. The calculated t-value (4.66) is greater than the critical t-value (11.96) at 0.05 significance level and 238 degrees of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Table-1: t-test of difference in the academic achievement of students from single-parent families and those from two-parent families.

Types of parent	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	Df.	t-cal.	T-table
Single-parent family	120	49.64	4.92			
				238	4.66	1.96
Two-parent family	120	57.51	5.68			
*Significant at P<0.05.						

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of male students from

two-parent family and male students from single-parent family.

Table-2: Difference between the academic achievement behaviour of male students from two-parent family and male students from single-parent family.

Types of parent	N.	\bar{X}	SD	Df.	t-cal.	T-table
Two-parent family	62	8.77	12.86			
				118	2.35	1.96
Single-parent family	56	6.54	7.08			
*Significant at P<0.05.						

Data in Table 2: show that there is a significant difference in the academic achievement behaviour of male students from single- parent families and male students from two-parent families. The calculated t-value (2.35) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 significance level and 118 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis also is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of female students from single-parent families and female students from two-parent families.

Table-3: Difference between the academic achievement of female students from single-parent families and female students from two-parent families.

Types of parent	N.	\bar{X}	S.D.	Df.	t-cal.	T-table
Two-parent family	62	62.47	10.37			
				118	2.43	1.96
Single-parent family	58	78.45	7.99			
*Significant at P<0.05.						

The above Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of female students from two-parent family and female students from single- parent families. The calculated t-value (2.43) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significance and 118 degree of freedom. Thus, the null hypothesis is also rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that there is a significant difference between the academic achievement behaviour of adolescent students from single parent family and adolescent students from two-parent family. The study also indicates differences in the achievement behaviour of male adolescent students from the two-parenthood. These findings agree with the conclusion of Nwayoku [22] that there is a significance difference between adolescent students from single parent families and those from two-parent families in

terms of attitude to examination malpractices, attitudes to studies and academic achievement behaviour. This finding could be explained by the fact that life in a single-parent family can be traumatic and adolescent brought up in such a family often suffers some emotional problems, problems which may hinder their academic behaviour. On the other hand, adolescent raised in two-parent family tend to be more stable emotionally and they suffer less emotional problems thereby making them less anxious in the pursuit of their academic.

It should be noted that this situation might not be true all the time since there are some adolescent students in single parent family who still achieve academically better than adolescent students from two-parent family [23]. This situation may however be attributed to other factors inherent in the personality of the adolescent. Whatever result, parental separation tends to affect younger adolescents more

than the adolescents who are the subject of this study. However, early adolescent hood problem may have negative impact on the later life development. It should also be mentioned here that the presence of other adults in a single parent household might bring some positive influences on the degree of tension that may be suffered by adolescents from such backgrounds. Also, the cultural practice in Nigeria, which allows support for widows, widowers and other categories of single parents, helps to reduce inconsiderable terms, the negative effect of single parenthood. In a Nigerian single parent family, some of the functions of the absent parent may be sufficiently taken over by the members of the extended family, friends and neighbours.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the result of the study, the following recommendations are made:

There is the need for the recognition of individual differences in adolescent students and the need to deal with them accordingly. Counselors should provide the necessary assistance and psychological support for adolescent students from single parent family so as to overcome their emotional problems.

There is also the need to keep enlightening the parents on the importance of the parents' structure on the life of the adolescents. This is necessary so that parents can understand the implications and consequences of parental separation and thus mobilize all resources to curtail the problems arising from the situation.

There is need to combat the continuing declining state of education by providing more funds and materials for the upliftment of our education system. The government, private organizations and individuals concerned with the business of education should endeavour to address the obstacles hindering effective academic achievement behaviour of adolescent students. This can be done by developing achievement motivation strategies in adolescent students through achievement motivation training.

Finally, school counselors, administrators should be employed in institutions of learning and adequate supervision to be put in place to ensure provision of necessary guidance services to adolescent students.

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