

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY STRUCTURE AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN OWERRI EDUCATION ZONE I OF IMO STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The major source for the provision of basic needs usually comes from the family. Children/students require basic necessities which provision is based on the family. The structure of the family is one of the major variables that can influence the provision of basic needs to the students. When the basic needs of the students are not met due to family structure, this can lead to poor school attendance and lack of concentration in class which will result to poor performance. This study therefore, sought to investigate the influence of family structure on students' academic achievement. A total of 360 senior secondary I students from Owerri education zone I of Imo state of Nigeria were used for the study. Researcher – made questionnaire was used to assess the students' family structure while students' school performances were used to determine their academic achievement. The data obtained were analyzed using chi-square test. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Contingency coefficient C was used to interpret correlation coefficient between the variables. The result revealed that there is significant relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement.

Keywords: Home, school, family structure, students' academic achievement

Introduction

Family is considered by many as a crucial institution in the society. Ejiofor as cited in Mbakwe (2005) defined the family as consisting of the father, mother and children. In some families however, the father or mother or both may be absent and family structure refers to how family is structured along the line of mother/father absence. Social interactions and good relationships that exist among members of the family greatly predict children's behavioral outcomes. Gerald & Bruce (2000) observed that good family support is associated with less depression and family dysfunction. Depression and family dysfunction reduce positive and encouraging parenting.

The family plays an important role in shaping an individual, which includes motivating the child to get involved in school. Family structure is affected by life occurrences which can influence child's development such as remarriage, divorce, death and other changes. These changes may have persistent negative effects on child wellbeing. In some ways, a child in single families is three times more likely to drop out of school than a child from two-parent families. Being the primary and frequently sole source of financial support for the family, single parents have less time to help a child with homework, less likely to use consistent discipline, and have less parental control, and all of these conditions may lead to lower academic achievement.

Among children in single-parent families, those from mother absent households earn lower science grades than children from father absent homes, and structural changes such as divorce may impede the parent's ability to supervise and control their children. Cohen and Felso as cited in Lingxin Ross (2000). No matter which parent is missing, children from single parent families generally find it more difficult to connect with school.

A very essential tool through which a student's capable and successful contribution to the development of the society is measured is academic achievement. Meanwhile, the society sees the students that perform above the average of the standards set by it as those that can contribute meaningfully to the growth and sustenance of the society. In Nigeria, researches have shown that students' academic performance is declining at a disturbing rate (Tenibaje, 2009). Akinleke (2010) identified some of the reasons for such decline are personal factors such as individual's intelligence, knowledge, study habit, achievement motivation, anxiety, self-esteem and locus of control Also Ushie, Emeka, Ononga & Owolabi (2012) acknowledged school factors in terms of student-teacher relationship, the school's background characteristics, the environment and classroom's conditions.

Educational attainments of students without doubt are determined by the above factors. Importantly also, is the family background of the students which stands as the bedrock of the students' overall wellbeing with regard to their social, psychological, moral, emotional and economic state. (Ajila & Olutola 2000) were of the view that the state of the home affects the individual since the family is the first point of contact and socializing agent in an individual's life.

Family Structure and Students' Academic Achievement

It is important to structurally analyze families since the family is the first agent of socialization that molds the child in the society and the child's future depends on it. For the purpose of this study, family structure is being perceived as single or two-parent families.

A single parent is a person who is separated and bears the regular burden of raising a child or children. More often than not, single parent families include a mother and child whose original father no longer lives in the home. Similar to income and parent education, father absence is also a risk factor that makes it more difficult for a child to succeed in school. When parents separate or divorce, the child often loses both the financial and emotional support of his father, which can have a negative impact on academic performance. Although child support does not resolve all of the issues involved, it does make significant difference.

Salami and Alawode (2000) noted that single parents are fast growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria nowadays. According to them, the existence of such parents is formerly unknown in Nigeria and where they existed, they are ignored as exceptional cases. Billings (2012) argues that children from such homes become delinquent because they are most often denied security, protection and love that should come from both parents and these affect their academic activities negatively.

Children who regard their parent as warm, firm, and involved in their education earn better grades than their classmates with uninvolved parents. In these families, parent support acts as a protective factor countering some of the risk factors these children encounter. Although economic pressures often limit or prevent parent involvement in single-parent families, when single parent make the effort to support their child education, their effort acts as a Protective factor. Although many single parents remarry, researchers contend that blended families do not eliminate all the risk factors children experience in single-parent home. The family income of child in blended families mirrors that of a child who lives with both of their original parents. However, many children in blended families actually receive less parental support than those with single parents. Remarriage often change parental behavior as a formerly single parent enters a new relationship.

This disruption can be hard on children who may feel that they are losing another parent. The presence of stepsibling also reduces time and assess to parents, further decreasing the amount of support the child receives. Although children in blended families may tend to have higher academic achievement than those living with single parent, some children

will replace academic problems with emotional and behavioral difficulties, essentially eliminating many of the positive effects brought on by increase in family income. Parent-child interactions can be greatly weakened by the presence of step parents which can generate a conflicting environment for the child.

High educational expectations of children are achieved mainly through mothers' investment in their children. Regardless of whether they are single or married, mothers who work full-time often have less to spend with their children, a condition that, may lead to lower achievement and increases in behavior problems at school. However, the fact that children from low-income, single parent families sometimes earn higher grades than children from two-parent home with similar income suggests that single parents who work, teach their children coping strategies that limit the impact of financial hardship, low parent involvement, and other risk factors. Single parenting is not the sole predictor of academic failure for the child; there are many risk and protective factors that interplay to encourage a Child's education from elementary school through high school and beyond to help them maximize their academic achievement.

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

Stone (2012) opined that children from single parents are more likely to show, to a large extent, the effect of under-nourishment, illness, insufficient rest as well as negative attitude towards school, which manifest in infancy, which is a factor that can affect achievement and performance negatively. Single parent families have on the average, lower income than two parent families and are therefore, more constrained in ensuring adequate financial resources to meet their children's learning needs.

Statement of the problem

The obvious differences in student's academic achievement have brought about a great concern to Nigerian educators, examiners and the public at large. The academic performance of students in most cases do not correspond with human efforts, time and money spent during the teaching process. Feldman (2000) opined that both nature and nurture interact to produce specific developmental pattern and outcomes that determine intelligence. Also, Nnachi (2008) proposed that differences in human intelligence cannot be by hereditary factors alone nor could it be by environmental circumstances alone. The present study therefore shall examine family structure as an environmental factor that affects students' academic achievement.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement.

Scope of the study

This study was delimited to secondary schools in Owerri Education zone I of Imo state. The study equally looked into family structure and students' academic achievement.

Research Question

The researcher raised this research question as a guide for data collection.
To what extent does students' family structure affect academic achievement?

Research Hypothesis

Based on the statement of the problem, this hypothesis was formulated and was tested at 0.05

Level of significance.

There is no relationship between family structure and student's academic achievement.

Methods

Correlation research design was employed to find out the relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement in Owerri Education Zone I of Imo State. The population of the study constituted of all the senior secondary one (SS1) students of public (Government owned) secondary schools in the study area. Simple random sampling technique (balloting) was used to select twelve secondary schools in Owerri education zone I. One school in each local government area was selected by the researcher. Thirty (30) SS1 students were selected from each chosen school according to

their academic performances. Their academic performances were categorized as **above average**, **average** and **below average**. All categories have equal number of respondents. Hence a total of 360 respondents were used for the study.

The instrument for data collection was a 14 item questionnaire titled Family Dynamics Questionnaire (FDQ). It was used to elicit information from the students as regards their family background. It was developed by the researcher. It is a structured questionnaire whereby respondents are expected to tick against the preferred option. Students' school performances were used to determine their academic achievement.

A reliability coefficient was re-established to be $r = 0.82$ through a pilot study.

The instrument was given to the respondents from selected schools in Owerri Education Zone I of Imo State by the researcher. Adequate time (one hour) was given to the respondents to go through the instrument and respond to the research question. The completed instrument was collected immediately by the researcher.

Results

Research Question

To what extent does students' family structure affect academic achievement?

Table: Data showing response on academic achievement with respect to family structure for answering research question

Family structure	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Total	%
Single parent	12	12	56	80	22.22
Both parent	100	92	52	244	67.78
Non parent	8	16	12	36	10.00
Total	120	120	120	360	
%	33.33	33.33	33.33		100.00

In the above table students from single parent households were 12 students above average, 12 on average and 56 students below average. Total of 80 students are in this group representing 22.22% of the entire sample. Students from both parents' households are 100 students above average, 92 students on average, and 52 students below average. A total of 244 students fell in this group forming 67.78% of the entire sample. Non parent includes 8 students above average, 16 students on average and 12 students below average. A total of 36 students made up this group representing 10% of the entire sample. The total number above average was 120 (33.33%), average was 120 (33.33%) and below average was 120 (33.33%).

Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between students' family structure and academic achievement.

Table: Chi-square Test Analysis for Testing Hypothesis

Cell	Fo	Fe	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
1.	12	26.6	7.8
2.	100	81.2	4.2
3.	8	12	1.2
4.	12	26.6	7.8
5.	92	81.2	1.4
6.	16	12	1.2
7.	56	26.6	32.4
8.	52	81.2	10.4
9.	12	12	0.0
χ^2 (calculated)	-		66.4
$\chi^2_{4, 0.05}$			9.49

Critical value of χ^2 for 4df and 0.05 level of significance ($\chi^2_{4, 0.05}$) = 9.49

χ^2 calculated = 66.4

χ^2 critical value = 9.49

Since χ^2 tabulated is less than the calculated value of 33.2, null hypothesis is therefore rejected and the conclusion is that there is significant relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement. Contingency coefficient $C = 0.40$. Contingency coefficient C which is 0.40 indicates a moderate relationship thereby providing answer to research question.

Discussion of the Findings

The research question was to find out to what extent family structure affects students' academic achievement. The result highlights that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. Family structure has a significant relationship with students' academic achievement. Students living with both

parents perform higher academically than children from single-parent homes and blended homes. This finding supports Amato and Booth as cited in Lingxin & Ross (2000) that divorces occurring early in the child's life had persistent negative effects on child wellbeing. Charlin as cited in Lingxin & Ross (2000) posits that the presence of step parents can create conflicting expectations for children and undermines parent-child interactions which would lead to poor academic achievement. They are of the opinion that a child from dual parent home has the advantage of available facilities and necessary stimulation which enhances learning ability.

More so, the child would have good relationship between with the parents unlike in the blended family. There must be parental warmth in the dual parent home which the child must value much. This supports Mgboro in Eke (2005) findings that parental warmth as perceived by the child is related to certain cognitive functions such as creativity. In dual parent homes, parents put heads together to see that they raise the educational standard of their children unlike in the single parent homes or blended homes.

Recommendations

1. From the above findings parental separation should be avoided. This can be achieved through tolerance between partners as regards individual differences.
2. Parents should avoid matrimonial issues to deteriorate to conflicts but both should be committed to the wellbeing of their family.
3. The government should assist by providing adequate learning facilities like libraries to help children from disadvantaged homes.
4. The need for good parental care and the necessity for resolving family conflicts are recommended.
5. It is necessary for teachers to devise the way of handling children from different home backgrounds.
6. There should be an enlightenment campaign organized by religious leaders, counselors, government and school communities to create awareness of the influence of family structure on students' academic achievement.

Conclusion

This study aims to examine the relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement. Assessment of the senior secondary one students of Owerri education zone 1 of Imo state, Nigeria was conducted and there was significant relationship between family structure and students' academic achievement. The finding supports Stone (2012) that children from single parents are more likely to show, to a large

extent, the effect of under-nourishment, illness, insufficient rest as well as negative attitude towards school, which manifest in infancy, which is a factor that can affect achievement and performance negatively. The study indicates that children from two parent families experience social, economic, psychological, physiological and emotional stability. They stand to perform better in academic work or functions than those from single parent homes. Poor academic performance of students will still be on the increase if nothing is done to curb the factors responsible for this, one of which is the family structure.

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