

## PARENTAL MARITAL STATUS AND PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigates the parental marital status on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Dutse municipal council, Jigawa state. The objective of the study is to find the behavior problem associated with the academic performance of primary school pupils and to find the gender difference on the academic performance of the victims of divorce in Dutse municipal council primary schools. This study adopted descriptive survey design which describes systematically the facts qualities or characteristics of a given population, events or area of interest as factually and accurately as possible to answer the question of the problem under the study. The population of this study comprises of the primary schools pupils from the seven primary schools in Dutse municipal, Jigawa state in which 253 pupils formed the sample size of the study using Krejcie and Morgan Formula. In the process of collection, the data of the study in the selected sample, the researcher developed teachers' questionnaires to collect the data. It was developed by the researcher under the guidance of the supervisor to extract information from the respondents. A simple percentile is used in analyzing the data from the respondents. The findings of the study revealed that children of divorce homes are disturbed psychologically, pupils suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves from other pupils, pupils of broken homes are antisocial and that has impact on their performance, single parentage pupils are more affected by their parents' separation than male pupils, and single parentage pupils end up dropping out of schools because parents are not there to monitor their education. The study recommended the government should provide rehabilitative programme for the pupils of divorced family in schools so that they can adjust in their academic performance, the schools should give proper attention to these pupils of single parenting in order to know more other challenges they face, counsellors, psychologists, social workers and teachers should identify students from divorced families and counsel them, and the parents should also be counseled on social needs of their children so that their academic work will not suffer at school.

**Keywords:** Marital status, academic performance, divorce.

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### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In ancient societies, marriage of a youth was part of the responsibilities of his parents, where a man was made to marry a wife that was chosen or selected for him by his parents, the young man had no choice but to accept his wife with joy and thanks. According to Landis, (1977), in the past, marriage were a matter within the clan and its environments, parents were not anxious to see their sons getting married to girls from distant places or other tribes. Marriages were arranged by parents on basis of family friendship and such marriages hardly break up because of the close relationship between both parents.

In Nigeria, there are four clearly defined types of marriages. The church marriage which is conducted in the church, statutory marriages which conducted in a court marriage, Islamic

marriage which is performed at the Moslem mosques and, marriages contracted according to the native law and customs of any given ethnic group known as the traditional marriage. In 1979, Fumilaya opined that marriage was made for the purpose of having children so as to establish a family because marriage was ordained by God to serve this purpose, when these children are eventually born, they are seen as God's blessing and as a gift to their parents as they are social and economic assets to their parents. Divorce is a legal dissolution of marriage bond. Once the couple decides to divorce, they are free to remarry again. Divorce in the ancient times was also very rare, because of penalties of proven infidelity and fear of offending with of both families.

In Nigeria, there has been the increase in the rate of divorce. There are two factors influencing the rising divorce rates in the Nigeria (Funke, 2019). The first factor is both men and women are relying less on one another for economic survival. As women gain status in their work place or on their businesses, they often want to stand on their own and prefer to control their lives' affair which enabling them to be less dependent on their husbands, the heads of household. Women who are gainfully employed and self-sufficient may be more willing to dissolve a marriage because they are not perceived as a financially dependent spouse. Financial stability allows for the female head of household to have more flexibility to exit a broken marriage. Secondly, when both male and female parents gain political status in the society, one seems to be superior over the other due to political gain. They don't seem to have chance to look after the family, especially the female ones which are more likely to be the victims of divorce.

According to Hargreaves (1991), student's resilience in a one-parent household is believed to be a significant indication of success in other areas of their lives, including academics. Similar to a domino effect, students under emotional heartache and stress at home often have emotions that interfere with concentration during the school day. Poor school performance often agitates the parent and the dominos continue to fall as the student loses self-confidence and experiences decreased performance in school. Students may have a difficult time concentrating on school work from divorce-related stress occurring at home. Students may face unique challenges of completing homework assignments when organizing their homework, backpack, and paperwork between multiple homes.

Over the years, investigations of the factors that influence academic performance of students have attracted the interest and concern of teachers, counsellors, psychologists, researchers and school administrators in Nigeria (Wiseman1973). This is because of the public outcries concerning the low standard of education in the country (Imoge 2002). The declining quality of education in the country and the breeding of graduates with little technical know-how has resulted in serious setbacks to the industrial development of the nation. Different factors are capable of influencing the academic performance of primary school pupils (Uwaifo, 2008). Such factors may be the student's internal state (intelligence, state of health, motivation, anxiety etc.) and their environment (availability of suitable learning environment, adequacy of educational infrastructure like textbooks and well-equipped laboratories).

Investigation of these factors has produced several findings by researchers. Clemens and Oelke (1967) and Emeke (1984) have attributed the cause of poor academic performance 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, Wiseman (1973), Sogbetan (1981) and Hassan, (1983) among others have examined the causes of poor academic performance among secondary school students. Some of the factors identified are intellectual ability, poor study habit, achievement motivation, lack of vocational goals, low self-concept, 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 Performance at West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE)" in 2006 identified and categorized problems responsible for students' poor performance to teachers, inadequate facilities in the schools, problem traceable to students, problems caused by parents and society at large and problems of government policies and low funding of the education sector (Ajila and Olutola 2007).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature reviewed for the study focused on assessing parental marital status on pupil's academic performance, the home environment that is tensed due to divorce or unhealthy atmosphere of quarrelling; fighting due to large family size and polygamy cannot favour learning, as the mind of the pupils will not be settled in order to give room for creativity. Ogbemudia and Aiasa (2013) maintained that physical and psychological conditions of the home environment affect the children academically. Ekanem (2004) stated that harmonious home create emotional stability in the child at home and subsequently throughout his school life. Hence the researcher was also concerned with the careful study of the influence of single parenthood due to broken home, death, widowhood and intact home on the academic performance of students. The parenting style (democratic, authoritarian, etc) is also influential both in the students' educational process as well as in family-school relations; research such as that by Rodriguez (1986) demonstrated that a positive family climate favours the development of well-adapted, mature, stable and integrated students, and an unfavourable family climate promotes non-adaptation, immaturity, lack of balance and insecurity.

The influence of family educational climate is defined by the amount and the style of help that children receive from the family; that is determined by elements of the family context, like the dynamic of communication and affective relationships, attitudes toward values, expectations (Diaz, 2004). Along these same lines, Marchesi and Martin (2002) reported that parental expectations have a notable influence on academic results, even when controlling for initial knowledge and socio-economic context. Castejon and Perez (1998) found indirect relationships with performance from the student's perception of how much importance his or her parents assign to study at home.

Mullens (2004) has it that juveniles from unstable families are more likely to run away from their family than children living in stable families. The core assumption is that single parenting has an imbalance and as a result is detrimental to a child's socialization, upbringing and personality adjustment. As a result, a child may be more susceptible to negative peer pressure and may ultimately commit acts delinquency not committed by children from stable families where there is a balanced structure of man and woman who act as good role models in the child acquiring more law abiding roles.

Alemika (2011), in their study of child delinquency behaviour administration in Nigeria averred that there is no significant relationship between single parenting and child delinquency. This

assertion contradicts Kimani's (2010) findings from a study of family influence on child delinquency. Kimani found a negative relationship between single parenting and child delinquency. This contrast may be as a result of differential focus of research and the methodologies adopted in the research.

According to Emery (1999), Children from divorced families are more likely to perform less well academically, have a lower academic self concept, and are less motivated to achieve. Different studies have reached conflicting conclusions. In measuring academic competence, Emery (1999) has found statistical significance in four types of academic outcomes in children from divorced homes: lower standardized test scores, lower grades and related indicators of performance in school, various measures of misconduct in school, and school completion and educational attainment.

In addition, Fadeiye (1985) and Uwaifo (2008) did a study and found that differences in academic performance of children exist in terms of those from single parent and those from two parent families. Fadeiye (1985) in particular found that in two parent homes, both parents have roles to play in child education. The father is to give the necessary tools for the educational advancement, while the mother is to supplement the father's efforts in this regard. Where the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the basic needs as well as supervised the academic performance of the child, the child will have poor academic performance. (Fadeiye,1985).

Uwaifo (2008) examined the effects of family structure and parenthood on the academic performance of Nigerian university students. The sample for the study consisted of 240 students drawn from the six randomly selected faculties in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, and Edo State. Uwaifo found that there were significant differences between the academic performance of students from single parent family and those from two-parent family structure. In their study, Ushie, et al., (2012) found that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of students from single parent families and those from two parent families. These scholars opined that their results might have been attributed to the fact that some single parents possess abilities to give the child all the necessary care than many married couples. They also found that children from broken marriages were able to adjust in the environment and their performance may improve with time.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The purpose of primary education is to develop quality of life of the learners so that they can properly serve the society according to their roles and responsibilities as good citizens. In other words, learners need to be motivated by their parents in whatever they do. Given this role, Government has deliberately made effort to improve on infrastructure, teacher's recruitment and other educational inputs such as breakfast and lunch for pupils.

According to Smith (2009), some students are flexible and adapt well to change largely due to implementing effective coping strategies, while other students may react in the opposite way. Students may lose confidence, blame themselves for the break-up, and see their parent's separation or divorce in a complicated way. A lot of people, educationists and counselors are complaining on non-chalant attitude of students to study and attendance to classes. The facts from above as well as personal observation have shown that widows and their children suffer great hardship at the demise of the husband and besides, financial constraints and economic responsibilities of children education is quite demanding and heartbreaking. This therefore raises salient questions as to what happens to the education of widow's children. How would

widows take care of them? How would they acquire good education to any level? Reports and observations on students from different family structure and family composition are indication to academic performance.

The purpose of this study is determine the effect of divorce on primary school pupils' academic performance and specifically, to determine:

- The effect of divorce on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Dutse municipal council.
- The gender difference on the academic performance of pupils in Dutse municipal council primary schools.
- To guide the study, two research questions were formed;
- What is the effect of divorce on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Dutse municipal council?
- What is the gender difference on the academic performance of pupils in Dutse municipal council primary schools?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design describes systematically the facts qualities or characteristics of a given population, events or area of interest as factually and accurately as possible to answer the question of the problem under the study. The population of this study comprises of the primary schools pupils from the seven primary schools in Dutse municipal, Jigawa state. Among the primary school in Dutse municipal, two primary schools were selected (Fagoji Primary School and Kazama Primary School). Using the Krecie and Morgan Formula in determination of the sample size, 253 pupils were selected as the sample size for the study. According to Fowler (1988) this was considered adequate requirement of the population. Therefore, the sample is a true representative of the present population.

The study made use of Purposive sampling technique. It is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their survey (Alchemer, 2000). This technique will enable the researcher to select pupils that are victims of their parents separation which may be as a result of divorce, widowhood etc.

In the process of collection, the data of the study in the selected sample, the researcher developed teachers' questionnaires to collect the data. It was developed by the researcher under the guidance of the supervisor to extract information from the respondents. It consists of two sections (section A and B). Section A deals with class teachers' name, school, class and sex. Section B measured the teachers' perception on the impact of divorce on primary school pupils' academic performance. The above section consist of (5) worded items including both positive and negative statement to which the respondent were expected to respond to by expressing their level of agreement or disagreement on a four (4) point scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagreement (SD).

## **PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

### **Answering Research Questions**

**Research Question One:** What is the effect of divorce on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Dutse municipal council?

**Figure 2.1** shows the respondents' response on the behavior problem associated with divorce among the primary school pupils.

Item	A	SA	D	SD
1. Children of broken homes are disturbed Psychologically.	81(32.0%)	72(28.4%)	67 (26.5%)	33(13.0%)
2. Most of the children suffering From parents' separation are Fearful and isolate themselves	90(35.6%)	61(24.1%)	52(20.6%)	50(19.8%)
3. Pupils of broken home become Antisocial which has impact on Their performance	87(34.4%)	94(37.2%)	38(15.0%)	34(13.4%)

The above table indicates that 81 of the pupils constituting 32% of the respondents agree that children of broken homes are disturbed psychologically and 72 of the pupils constituting 28.4% of the respondents strongly agree that children of broken homes are disturbed psychologically. On the other hand, 67 of the pupils constituting 26.5% of the respondents disagree that pupils of broken home are disturbed psychologically and 33 of the pupils constituting 13.0% of the respondents also strongly disagree that pupils of broken home are disturbed psychologically.

Furthermore, 90 pupils constituting 35.6% of the respondents agree that children suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves and 61 of the pupils constituting 24.1% of the respondents also strongly agree to that. In contrast, 52 of the pupils constituting 20.6% of the respondents disagree that pupils suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves while 50 pupils constituting 19.8% of the respondents strongly disagree that pupils suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves.

In addition, the above table also shows that 87 of the pupils constituting 34.4% of the respondents agree that pupils of broken home become antisocial and that has impact on their performance and 94 of the pupils constituting 37.2% of the respondents also strongly agree that pupils of broken home become antisocial. On the other hand, 38 of the pupils constituting 13.0% of the respondents disagree that pupils of broken homes are antisocial and 34 of the pupils constituting 13.4% of the respondents also strongly disagree that pupils of broken homes are antisocial and that has impact on their performance.



**Research Question Two:** What is the gender difference on the academic performance of pupils in Dutse municipal council primary schools?

**Figure 2.1** showing the respondents' responses whether the children of single parentage perform lower in academic activities.

Item	A	SA	D	SD
1. Children of single parentage Are affected academically by their Parents' separation.	79(31.2%)	87(43.4%)	29(11.5%)	52(20.6%)
2. Children of single parentage Perfomed very low academically Both parents are not there to monitor Them.	83(32.8%)	78(30.85)	30(11.9%)	62(24.5%)

The above table indicates that 79 of pupils constituting 31.2% of the respondents agree that single parentage pupils are more affected academically by their parents' separation and 87 pupils constituting 43.4% of the respondents strongly agree that single parentage pupils are more affected academically by their parents' separation. While 29 pupils constituting 11.5% of the respondents disagree that single parentage pupils are affected by academically affected by their parents separation and also 52 of the pupils constituting 20.6% of the respondents strongly disagree that single parentage pupils are more affected by their parents' separation.

In addition, 83 of the pupils constituting 32.8% of the respondents agree that male pupils dropout of school as parents are not there to monitor them and 78 of pupils constituting 30.85 of the respondents also strongly agree that male pupils end up dropping out of schools as parents are not there to monitor them. In contrast, 30 pupils constituting 11.9% of the respondents disagree that male pupils end up dropping out of school as parents are not there to monitor them, and 62 pupils constituting 24.5% of the respondents also strongly disagree that male pupils dropout of school as parent are not there to monitor them.

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The study revealed that children of broken homes are disturbed psychologically. That is to say there are behavioural problems that are associated with the pupils. Based on the results of the comparisons among the items that are related to behavior problems, children from broken families in our sample seem to have significantly more behavioral problems compared to those from a nuclear family. This is in line with the findings of Babalis (2013), who posits that children in broken families are about two times more likely than those in complete families to have serious social, emotional or psychological problems. The study also revealed that pupils suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves from other children in school. This finding concurred with that of Herington (2011) who states that, the type of family seems to have a greater effect on the intrapersonal behavior of preschool children, which means that children suffering from parents separation seem to be more isolated, shy and melancholic and get sick or angry when faced with a difficult problem. Moreover, smaller, but nevertheless statistically significant, appeared to be the effect of the type of family on the School adjustment, which results in pupils who come from a broken family finding it difficult to follow the instructions in the lesson, having difficulties in learning, being often abstract and not liking school compared to pupils who belong to complete family.

In addition, the study revealed that single parentage pupils are more affected by their parents separation which has a huge impact on their academic performance. This is in line with what Dacey and Travers (cited in Dykeman, 2003), cited that there are many contributing factors that impact pupils who have experienced divorce: the age and gender of the student at the time of the separation, the level of collaboration among the divorced or separated parents, and the intensity of conflict within the family. All of these factors may influence the mental health of the single parentage pupils, and additionally may influence the single parentage pupil academics. Poor attendance, decline in grades, and inability to concentrate are often warning signs that may show up in the classroom (Dykeman, 2003). The finding indicates that there is significant negative correlation between pupils of divorce and academic performance. The result shows that the divorce did not impact on academic performance. The finding disagrees with Carlson (cited in Dykeman, 2003) found pupils who have experienced a recent divorce in their family have more difficulty academically at school than pupils from intact families.

### **SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

- Children of divorce homes are disturbed psychologically.
- Pupils suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves from other pupils.
- Pupils of broken homes are antisocial and that has impact on their performance.
- Single parentage pupils end up performing below average because parents are not there to monitor their education.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that:

- Children of broken homes are disturbed psychologically.
- Pupils suffering from parents' separation are fearful and isolate themselves from other pupils.
- Pupils of broken homes are antisocial and that has impact on their performance.
- Single parentage pupils are more affected by their parents' separation than male pupils.
- Male pupils end up dropping out of schools because parents are not there to monitor their education.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDY**

From the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- The government should provide rehabilitative programme for the pupils of divorced family in schools so that they can adjust in their academic performance.
- The schools should give proper attention to these pupils of single parenting in order to know more other challenges they face.
- Counsellors, psychologists, social workers and teachers should identify students from divorced families and counsel them.
- The parents should also be counseled on social needs of their children so that their academic work will not suffer at school.

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