



Parental separation and its' consequences on the educational achievement of children in schools and society

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the consequences of parental separation and how it affects the educational achievement on primary school pupils. The study recommends that parents should avoid unnecessary separation to give their children best education that will help them to live a better life, Parents should avoid unnecessary separation to give their children best education that will help them to live a better life Parents should try as much as they can to train their children in schools as this would aid family, community and societal development at large.

Keywords: parental separation, educational achievement, consequences

Introduction

As substantial percentage of children experience the divorce of their parents, they experience its effects on the immediate, intermediate and long term basis.

Amato (2001) ^[2] reports the effects of divorce/broken home in research conducted in the 1990s. They include 67 studies that met two criteria:

1. The studies had to include a sample of children living in a single parent family as a result of divorce/broken homes and a sample of children living with continuously married parents.
2. The studies had to report data on at least one measure of child outcome that could be represented.

Amato (2001) ^[2] reports that compared to children of continuously married parents, children with separated parents as a group perform poorly on a variety of measures. For all the outcomes variables, children with divorced parents performed statistically lower. Children with separated parents had more conduct problems, poorer psychological adjustment, lower self-esteem scores and weaker social relationship.

Van deli and Waugh (2000) in a related study found out the effects of parental separation and divorce on every young child. This study provided more information about the effects of parental divorce on young children. Participants consisted of:

- Children from single, never married families
- Children whose parents separated/divorced before the child was three (3) years old.
- Children from intact married families.

The children were administered assessments at 15, 24 and 36 months in the areas of cognitive ability, social ability, behavior problems, attachment to mother and mother/child interaction. However, the result showed that children who experienced parental divorce prior to age three (3) scored lower on measures of cognitive ability, social ability., behavior problems, attachment security with the mother than children from intact families.

Uche (2000) ^[17] strongly argues that the application of discipline among Nigerian families is the concern of both parents (husband and wife). It is the responsibilities of the father and mother to bring about discipline in their children. Their roles in this regard are not identical. The father, being the head of the family, has roles which only himself can effect better and the mother who interacts more with the child than the father disciplines the child more frequently. However, in the event of any serious breach or violation of the rules of the family, the father may make decision with regard to disciplinary measures. Uche's argument shows the importance of united family rather than a broken one. It specifically explains parental roles in children upbringing. An aberration of these roles in marital life would definitely affect the children adversely in the family and probably in school too.

The family has an important influence on the child's academic achievement. What the child learns at home and how his family motivates him towards education contributes to child's success or failure in school. This implies that the way of life in the family has a considerable influence on the ease or difficulty with which the child gains a place in school academic achievement.

Writing on the consequence of family disintegration, Amachi (2002) ^[1] observes that the home without her children. In most cases, the man takes those children to his mother or relatives where they are likely to be brought up without affectionate marital care. In many cases, such children, according to psychologist, become delinquents.

Similarly, Goode (2004) ^[5] earlier points out that another element in the link is the failure of adequate role model for the children to serve as an added source of authority in conformity with the social roles. Consequently, the children become delinquents. Most of these delinquent children become problems for their families and failure in later life.

Furthermore, children from broken homes are often taken to serve as house-servant or maids elsewhere. In such a situation, the child is exposed to insecurity and unstable life. Hence, the more limited the family is, the more secured the child will feel in the home. Supporting this assertion, Morrish (2002) remarked that the child living in the shadow of broken family will feel bewildered by the comings and goings and by the mere fact that essential relationships are not prompted or are broken off and disrupted at a very impressionable time. Dubey, Edem and Thakut (2009) in their research work point out that some of the deprivations in broken homes include values, attitudes and aspirations. It has been discovered that children from broken homes are deprived of many things and, these deprivations affect their learning greatly.

Ogadinma (2003) ^[10], in his research states that it has been agreed that just as orphans suffer some mental deficiencies so also do children from broken homes without mother or father. In this relationship, the children's educational capabilities are hampered. If the home is broken, children from such an environment will not be enthusiastic over their studies because of lack of parental encouragement and they express themselves through anti-social actions in the society and in school.

Separation/Divorce

Yongm and Yuanzhang, (2008) makes it clear that in some cases, children who experience separation or divorce do not always perform well or achieve good result academically. Downey (2004) informs us that students from two parent families are consistently outperforming their peers who happen to live in a single parent home. According to Wagnat (2002) ^[19], there is a need to address single-parent children and academic achievement. She points out four major areas effecting children from single parent homes. They include: stability/structure, acceptance, adult attention and parental involvement, which are extreme areas of concern that she believes are lacking in the lives of children with single parents. Many studies have shown that children from single parent families perform less well in education than children from intact families: negative effects are found for a range of their educational outcomes (Amato and Cheadle 2008; Fischer, 2004; Fomby and Cherlin 2007; Jonsson and Gahler 2007; McLanahan and Sandefur 2004; Pong, Drorikers and Hampden-Thompson, 2003) ^[8].

McLanahan and Sandefur (2004) ^[8] assembled data from a number of American surveys showing that children who grew up with both of their biological parents performed better on school achievement tests, had fewer children as teenagers, finished high school more often, attended college more often, and earned more in early adulthood. Omebe, (2002) speaking on post-divorce and single parent stated that one of the major task facing parents in divorce is that of determining who the children should live with and making such arrangement is always a difficult task. This put children at risk of dropping out of school. However, Mallum (2003) noted that most children may cope with their new status and adapt well to changes in their parents marital status even though they may well have to cope with multiple adverse circumstances.

The Family/Home

The influence of the home on the educational achievement of a child is considered very important to note as it concerns the development and maintenance of social emotional balance and the socialization into certain universal norms and values necessary for life in the immediate community. As Morrish (2002) put it that the education which the family provides before the child enters an educational institution should assist him in fulfilling his needs and relieving these inner tensions".

Okeke (2002) ^[11] asserts that, there exists a strong relationship between the family's socio-economic background and educational achievement which she reviewed under:

- Parents' Social-Economic Status
- Material and Financial requirements
- Parental Interest and Encouragements
- Social Environment.

Furthermore, Okeke (2002) ^[11] points out the presence of low income population, which occupies the rural environment as one of the causes of poor academic performance is associated with the rural areas. This situation makes the parents prefer sending their children out to help in family domestic responsibilities. This makes the child's school attendance inconsistent, results in lateness to school, subjecting to different school punishments, dismissal, or voluntary withdrawal from school, truancy and other anti-social activities. She further states that children whose parents are interested in their education usually obtain the highest average scores in the test while the marks are from those whose parents are the least interested.

Uche (2008) points out that the family has an important influence on the child's academic achievement. What the child learns at home and how his family motivates him/her towards education contribute to the child's success or failure in school. This means that the life-style of the family members has considerable influence on the ease or difficulty with which the child can gain a place in school, and he can devote to school activities and study.

Onile (2000) stated that the education of the child and his achievement at school are not only influenced by the school, but also by the family of which the child is a member. This shows that the life of the child is influenced by the school. The child suffers the consequences that will emanate as a result of parental neglect towards his education. Psychologists believe that children from single parent homes have lower academic performance than those in united homes. This assertion agrees with Uche (2008), that the influence of the family background on child's academic performance in school is significant. The reason is that, the home is the basic institution for providing the child's primary socialization.

In the watch Tower (2008), an Australian carried out a study of over 2,100 adolescents and found that teens from disrupted families had more general health problems, were more likely to be sexually active than kids from intact families. A study conducted by the US National Institute of Health statistics revealed that children from broken homes were 20-30 percent more a grade of school, and 70 percent more likely to be expelled from school. And a policy analyst reports that children from single parents homes are, far more likely to get involved in crime than those growing in a traditional home.

Salami and Alawode (2009) revealed that there was a significant relationship between the academic achievements of adolescents from single parenting homes and those from intact homes with adolescents from intact homes scoring higher than those from single-parenting homes. Children from single-parenting homes exhibit lower self-esteem, lower achievement motivation, lower tolerance for delay of gratification and lower academic achievement than those from intact homes where both father and mother are present. The explanation for the poor academic achievement of adolescents from single-parenting homes is that the single- parent has so much work and family responsibilities that require time, attention, and money which he/she cannot meet with the consequence of paying less attention to the education of his/her children. The result is poor academic achievement on the part of the children from single-parenting homes.

Since single parenting have negative effects on the academic achievements of the adolescents, their talents, abilities and interest may not be fully developed to allow them to achieve, self-actualization in life. Their parents should be educated on the need to reduce the amount of housework assigned to the students so that they can face their studies better.

Mau and Bikos, (2000) ^[7] also added that, children in divorced families are more likely to have academic problems than children in non-divorced families (like anxiety, depression, moody and self-reclining behavior, acting out and the exhibition of delinquent behaviors). Children in this situation most often have social and relationship problems, they are always found in solitary places finding it difficult to mix and associate freely with peers. They often have personality disorder and the sense of inferiority. When situation like this arise, the children in this situation may not have any choice but to drop out of school. Even within the school settings, such children may begin become prone to and have tendencies to less intimate relationships, drop out of school, to become sexually active at an early age, to take drugs, to associate with anti-social peers and to have low self-esteem. While this is true, it must also be borne in mind that most of the children in divorced or single parent families do not have significant adjustment problems (Eneji, Ubom, Obogo and Dunnamah, 2013) ^[3]. Therefore, the absence of one element affects the functioning of the other elements. Single parenting implies that, the family does not function properly because of the absence of the other parent (Mallum, 2003).

Educational Achievement

Educational achievement is the educational goal that is attained by a student, teacher or institution over a certain period. This is measured either by examination and or continuous assessment and the goal may differ from an individual or institution to another. Gray and Bryan (2009) observed? That the School Effectiveness Improvement (SEI) is a theoretical-practical movement that attempts to find out how schools can carry out satisfactory processes of change that increases all students' development by optimizing teaching and learning processes and the centre's organizational structures, in order to apply

this knowledge to improve in the school with an eminently practical objective of helping teaching centres to change in order to achieve their educational objectives more effectively (Gray and Bryan, 2009). This movement pursues the objective of encouraging students' specific achievements because success in educational practices is students' progress in academic, personal and social areas more than in innovation itself. In other words, the main indicator of a school's improvement is related to students' achievements, not to teaching practices or to the curriculum or the management of the centre, all of which are only significant in relation to the main objective. This idea means that teaching must be contextualized, considering the different elements and dimensions of the real community, hence the teaching-learning process must be adapted to the students in each centre.

In a learning context, educational achievements become learning processes for students and for teacher. In this way, the components that refer to the results in the school effectiveness improvement programmes correspond to two kinds of objectives: Students achievements, which constitute the criterion of efficacy, and the intermediate products of the change process, commonly referred to as the criterion of improvement. However, these programmes will only be successful, if they develop in terms of equity (all the students must benefit equally) and if they take added value into account (if they take the initial context and each student's record into account when they consider the results) (Murillo, 2002).

The consequences of Parental Separation

Single parenthood has increasingly become a contentious issue, with some arguing that, it has 'become a serious problem for society. Scott (in Fletcher 2008) ^[4] says; a vast majority of the population would still agree that the normal family is an influence for good in society and that one-parent families are bad news. Since not many single parents can earn a living and give children the love and care they need, society has to support them, the children suffer through lacking one parent.

According to Murray (2009), single parenthood has contributed to creating a new stratum of society, "the underclass". He believes that members of the underclass are not simply the poorest members in the society, but are also those whose lifestyles involve a type of poverty and particular forms of behaviour. Other types of deplorable behavior are committing crimes and having illegitimate children. It is only a minority who act in this way, but ultimately their behaviour will influence others. However, while most people agree that single parenthood can create problem for individual parents, many sociologists do not see it as a social problem, and some believe it as a sign of social progress (Murray, 2009).

Psychological problems

A single parent (widow) who loses her husband is dazed and loses concentration and memory. Haper and Thanatos (2005) list some behaviours that are associated with single parenthood (widow). Nnabuo (2004) asserts that the ugly practice of widowhood have continued to dent the psyche of the widow especially in moments of grief. He further commented that for a woman to lose her husband in a lifetime is more than enough trouble. In his view, Okolo (2004) ^[12] reveals that violence against women under the cover of widowhood practices invariably cause emotional, mental or physical pain, degradation and injury on a person. Similarly, Ikeano (2002) asserts that nothing could be more fermenting than losing a dear one, for it touches the souls, spirit and body. No amount of money, high technology invention, medicine or intellectual sagacity can heal this type of psychic wound. He further states that in nearly all instances when sorrowful experiences hit, they are like a bolt from the blues. All these have psychological effects on children of educable age.

Family -source problem

One of the most comprehensive studies designed to determine whether material happiness can be predicted was conducted by Kurt and Allen (2000). In the course of their article, they tested thousands of individuals and after an intensive analysis of their investigation, their findings were as follows:

- Marriage of parents (spouse) not being a happy one
- Unhappiness during childhood
- No firm and consistent discipline during childhood.
- Premarital attitude of disgust at sex.

According to Igbinedion (2000), the causes of divorce includes, cruelty, drunkenness, barrenness, fornication, charges of witchcraft, incompatibility, poverty, starvation and lack of detailed knowledge of each other. Lack of communication has also been identified as one of the most causes of broken homes. Partners being unwilling to discuss issues the couple to drift apart. Shittu (2000), states that communication in marriage is the life-wire of a successful home. It is like the water that plants need to thrive. Consequently proper communication in marriage institution is essential in every home as it reduces separation and lesser divorces.

In a related study, Okwara (2005) ^[13] in his research work found that communication within the family is essential in the maintenance of the home. Laudis (2009) in his study of 116 husband and 160 wives reporting various in-laws conflicts, found that 50 percent (50%) of the wives had a problem with their mother-in-laws making this the most frequent in-law conflicts, which is a possible of divorce. This also agrees with Gluckman (2003), where he stresses that the happiness of a marriage sometimes depends not so much upon the husband or wife but upon their parents and other relatives among whom they lived with.

Ogadinma (2003) ^[10] states that psychological effects of marriage breakdown may be largely from lack of social support, the absence of an intimate relationship and loss of self-esteem, increased financial problems and difficulties of loss of contact with children or of having to bring them up alone. Olusanya (2000) ^[14] states that, change of marriage contracts from traditional to other forms brought about by western culture, appears to be one of the most factors causing instability in marriage institution. He maintained that certain features noticeable in the traditional marriage which sustains stability have either been changed or completely eliminated by the influence of social changes in the society.

Deviant Behaviours and lack of social Control

Odedunmi in Nwaugha (2005) points out that there are more cases of deviant behaviours in broken homes where parents are divorced or estranged; homes experience death of one parent and prolonged absence to a parent; cases of single parenthood and incessant fighting. Rose (2003) ^[16] sees society control as the system of devices whereby society brings its member into conformity with the accepted standard of behaviours. Healthy behaviours in children are as a result of successful socialization process which involves social control measures. The presence of both parents in a home will enhance the processes of checking juvenile delinquency.

Conclusion

Indeed, family disintegration has real, prime and lasting influence in the home, school and society in general. One limitation of the review is the lack of attention to diversity issues. Certainly, gender, ethnicity, race, age and other demographic 'variables contribute to how children report experiencing parental separation. These variables influence individual's outcomes on many levels.

Finally, it was revealed that successful single-parents foster open communication and manage their families well. These parents encourage clear and open expression of thoughts and feelings in the family as a key to developing honest and trusting relationships. They foster individuality within a supportive family unit. These parents strive to accomplish this individuality and independence by each member having individual interests and building individual skills. They strive to be well organized and dependable, and they work hard to coordinate their family schedules and practices. They take pride in their ability to financially provide for the family, although finances still remain a struggle.

Recommendations

1. Practitioners are encouraged to consider these characteristics as they review other research and as they contemplate the specific needs of the students they serve.
2. Parents should avoid unnecessary separation to give their children best education that will help them to live a better life.
3. Parents should try as much as they can to train their children in schools as this would aid family, community and societal development at large.

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