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## **Parental Separation and Its Effects on Junior Secondary School Students Behavior**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper x-rayed the parental roles in the behaviour of the child in his childhood period. Parental separation may arise from several indicators such as death, Insincerity on the part of a spouse, Polygamy effects, job transfers and divorce among others. In such situation, the child is left under the care of a single parent and where such parent had little default in the care of the child the consequential effect is always enormous on the behaviour of the child either in the school setting or in the society at large. Two hypotheses are tested at 0.04 level of significance and the results indicated a significant difference in behaviour of children raised in the intact home and those raised by a single parent. There is also no significant differences between male and female children raised in single parent home and intact home. A recommendation made among others was that parents should endeavour to settle their differences and avoid separations for the sake of children behaviour development.

**Keywords:** Parental separations, Behaviour, childhood, single parenting

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### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

One of every four Nigerian children lives in a single parent home while some single-parent homes are the results of divorces some are raising their children alone for other reasons as well. Some parents may be alone due to the death of a spouse, while some have children out of wedlock and other may be the outcome of divorce. Some people may adopt a child without a partner. In all societies, throughout the world, parenting is a complex activity that includes much specific behaviour that works individually and together to influence child's outcomes (Darling, 1993). The home is the first social institution the child is exposed to in life, as he grows older, he extends the social contacts to other people within the neighbourhood and beyond. The parents play a very important and crucial role in the education of their child.

During this process, the child, his home and the school constitute a part which stands as a triangle. Whatever the child learns at home as he finds him/herself in, motivates him/her towards his education and this in return contributes to the child's success or failure in the school and whether the child turns out to be a well behaved child or not (Fraser, 2003).

There are lots of factors which can cause one to become a single parent. According to Hammer (2001) a death in the family is one factor. Losing a parent is one of the most traumatic events that can happen to a child. A child under 5 years may not understand that it is permanent but older children do understand and this may affect the child and parent in many ways. Also, unplanned pregnancy could cause it; such mother would not find it easy to cater for such a child. Money would be tight and there will not be enough time to cater for the child in the process of looking for survival. Furthermore, it is increasingly common for a single person to adopt a child on his/her own and as Brooks (2001) rightly observed adoption can bring special challenges for someone who does not have someone to lend a hand during crisis to him/her.

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Bankston (1998) also posited that nearly two third of all single parent families are the result of divorce or separation. Divorces or separation often leaves parents angry with each other and as Richards (1993) reported, these children sometimes suffers a loss economically which limits, among other things, their abilities to perform well in their academic works and which also transform them into a truant in the community or society. A child who experiences parental separation by death, divorce or mutual consent to separate, undergoes a great deal of pain, confusion and anger. This may destabilize the child the child and may cause the child to rebel.

According to Quinlan (2003), it is difficult for a child to realize that two people who love themselves do not love each other again. Most children could not comprehend the complexity of strains that led to the rapture of marital love.

Fraser (2003) contends that performance and behaviour of children living with a single parent is below that of children living with the two parents. He observed that children who lives with a parent especially a divorced one, usually feels unsecured, always attention seeking and anxious that his/her education may be seriously hindered or disrupted through these feelings and at the end it would affect the child's total behaviour. It has been statistically proven that children in single parents home fare worse than those with two parents (States News Service, 2005). It has been established that family structure contributes to five characteristics of a child's well being. These include lower birth rates and higher death rates among infants when there is just one parent.

Frazer (2010) affirmed that children between 15-17 years of age that are in school and in good health are much lower from single parent families than from two parents. Also, that the number of children from single parent families becoming pregnant at these ages are increasing. Pong (1998) further explained that there are also signs that children who have gone through divorce have problems in schools, depressions and emotional stress. He believes that problems like this may not emanate from the fact that they do not like the parents that raised them, but can be linked to other things related to single parenthood.

It has also been established by the Geographic Distribution (2005) that single parent homes are also associated with criminal activities. He asserted that children from a single parent household account for 72% of teenage delinquencies. Reason for this have to do with the fact that these children are generally less supervised, their actions are less monitored and there is usually less communication between the child and parent. Chauhan cited in Hawkins (2001) asserted that the emotional disposition of a child is influenced by the type of home he or she comes from. He further said that children from broken homes are often mal-adjusted than those from intact home. He thus concluded that parental separation always have a negative and lasting effect on the behaviour of the child especially during the schooling period/years. The psychological problems they are suffering from at home have tremendous effect on their conduct at school. In other words, students from parental separation are not likely to perform academically well and their delinquent behaviour are always negative and bad when compared with students from stable homes.

In the study conducted by Richard (1997) as cited by Alabi (2009), he found that students from separated families/homes experience unique difficulties as compared to family whose parents were in jail or died.

In another dimension, parental separation in urban and rural areas was also considered as problem which affects the delinquent behaviour of students. Many students who perform poor in schools exhibits outrageous behaviour and highly immoral are likely from homes where thee is parental separation. In homes where parents are no longer living together for whatever reasons, the resultant children, normally have emotional instability and their behaviour and emotions change often, and suddenly their minds are upset emotionally, mentally and unstable.

Students from unstable homes are always at the receiving end of such separation and this usually do not support academic performance of affected children. It has been established by the Geographic Distribution (2005) that single parent homes are also associated with criminal activities.

He asserted that children from a single parent household accounts for 72% of teenage delinquencies. Reasons for this have to do with the fact that these children are generally less supervised for their actions and are less monitored and there is usually less communication between the child and parent that most likely they come from poor families. Also a team of Guidance Counsellor and Psychologist

in their investigation in (2001) attributed cases of academic failure and indiscipline in the school among the students to poor parental control and supervision while Ferner (2002) in an article discusses the fact that the father and mother have a very important role to play in meeting the emotional need of their children.

It therefore becomes necessary to investigate the parental separation and its consequential effects on junior secondary student's delinquent behaviour in Ibadan North local government area of Oyo State.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Marriage is the bedrock of every society which impacts every child to have high self esteem. It has been discovered that many people go into marriage today without adequate preparation in terms of growth and maturity to meet the challenges of marital life. Hence, many marriages have been known to end up in divorce. As soon as divorce/separation occurs, the result can be on the parents themselves, their children and the entire society. Therefore, divorce has become a subject of serious concern to researchers at various levels. Although researches have been conducted on the issue of parental separation but this research was carried out among junior secondary students in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State for yet another generalization.

## **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

Two research hypotheses was formulated to guide the study as stated below:

**HO1:** There is no significant difference between the behaviour of male students from single-parent home and those living with both parents.

**HO2:** There is no significant psychological effect of parental separation on students behaviour.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

A descriptive research design of ex-post-facto type was used for this study.

## **POPULATION**

The population for this study consists of all the junior secondary school students in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria.

## **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

Stratified and simple random sampling was used for this study. The sample consisted of 200 JSS II students with single parent randomly selected from five selected junior secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government area of Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State. The sampling techniques ensure the selection of students of different sexes and single home background. The study consisted of 120 females representing 60% and 80 males representing 40%)

## **INSTRUMENTATION**

The researcher utilized a questionnaire tagged "Effect of Parental Separation on Delinquency Behaviour of Junior Secondary Students (EPSDBSQ) by Ojeniyi (2002).

The instrument has 3 sections, Section A on the personal data of respondents, sections B and C sought information of the students' family background and academic performance and their behaviour.. Section B has 11 items and they are rated by Strong Agree 4 points: Agree 3 points: Disagree 2 points and Strongly Disagree 1 point.

## **VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENT**

The instrument was given to experts to ensure content and face validity while the number of researchers that have used the instrument was also considered.

## **RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT**

The reliability of the instrument was sought using test-retest method. The reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained using Cronbach coefficient of Alpha formula level of 0.05.

## **PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The questionnaire was administered on the respondents; questionnaires were responded to and returned immediately.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected on this study was analyzed with the use of ordinary percentages mean score, standard deviation and t-test method at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**HO1.** There is no significant difference between the behaviour of male students from single-parent home and those living with both parents.

**Table1.** Showing the sex distribution of respondents

SEX	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGES (%)
Male	80	40%
Female	120	60%
Total	200	100%

**Table2.** Showing the significant differences in the behaviours of male students from single-parent home and those living with both parents.

Gender	N	X	Sd	Df	T	Sig.
Male	80	44.78	5.66	199	0.425	0.671
Female	120	44.59	5.36			

The table shows a t-value of 0.425 which is not significant at 0.05. This is an indication that there is no significant difference in the behaviour of male and female students from single parent home and those living with both parents.

**HO2:** there is no significant psychological effect of parental separation on students.

	N	X	Sd	Df	T	Sig
Has psychological effect	106	46.81	4.55	199	0.627	0.0621
Has no psychological effect	94	42.59	4.23			

The table shows a t-value of 0.627 which is significant at 0.05. This is an indication that there is significant difference in the psychological effects of students from single parenting and those from homes where parents live together and have joint effect on the children training.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

From the two hypothesis tested above, it is obvious that the behaviour of students are similar in all circumstances and thus there is the need for parents to settle disputes for the sake of their children development. The above corroborates the findings of Olayinka (1999) that parental separation has a greater role to play in the behaviour and performance of students in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher made recommendations that parents should endeavour to solve their social problems and thereby improve the standard of living of homes and parenting attitudes so that children would be able to learn good behaviours. Teachers in the school system should also made all possible efforts to identify students with behaviour disorders arising from the home front of the child.

Therefore, the recommendations are directed to parents, the government, the potential researchers and authority of schools in general.

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