

**THE EFFECT OF SINGLE PARENTING ON ACADEMIC PURSUIT AND BEHAVIOUR
OF ADOLESCENTS IN POST PRIMARY INSTITUTIONS**

by

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of single parenting on academic pursuit and behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The sample comprised 200 respondents obtained through purposive sampling technique. Structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were the statistical tools for data analysis. The entire questionnaire administered to the respondents were correctly completed and used for data analysis. The study among others revealed that school dropouts, financial difficulty in training adolescents, learning a trade in place of schooling, engaging adolescents in work during school hours, sending adolescents to public schools for lack of money for training, sending adolescents out as maids due to hardship etc are the effects of single parenting on academic pursuit and behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions. It was recommended among others, that government should introduce scholarship scheme in post primary institutions to help the adolescents who their single parents cannot afford to train them alone.

Keywords: *Effect, single parenting, academic pursuit, behavior and adolescent.*

Introduction

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. Onyeye (2006). It is social group made up of man and women living together in a common residence for the purpose of procreation and cooperatively taking care of themselves and their children. The family is the foundation of human development. Every member of the family particularly the husband and wife have crucial roles to play in the child's upbringing. The first contact of a child in the world is his immediate family. When a child is born, the family nurtures the child to make him adapt to the wider society. The role of upbringing is the joint responsibility of husband and wife on the immediate parents of the child. The family is a basic social unit and the most unique human institution while the parents are the cradle of education and civilization. These significant roles of the family are also crucial at adolescent stage of life which is a period of storm and stress. Onyehalu (1988).

To this end, parents perform the function of socialization, care and protection, clothing, feeding, provision of shelter, payment of school fees, health care, love and security to the adolescents. Parents are responsible for the economic life of the adolescents until he can take care of himself, parents generally steer them to the right direction. These essential roles of parents are denied to most adolescents of single parent homes when a parent is not able to cater for the children. Shying away from this role by parents in the cases of single parents affects the life of the child to a great extent. Osunloya (2002) on the other hand, a single parent, is described as either a mother or a father who raise up a child or children alone as a result of death, separation, divorce of a couple, same sex marriage etc or a parent who is not married. Deborah (2010). This parent is a care giver who is not living with a spouse or partners or one who is at transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. An adolescent is neither a child nor an adult but falls between childhood and adulthood.

Onyeye (2006), when an individual reaches sexual maturity and capable of bearing children, he or she is an adolescent. Adolescent experience a lot of role conflict, their control by parents is essential and should be intensified at this stage of life. The absence of a parent and the resultant inability of the adolescents to meet their needs may have a profound negative influence on their behaviour and academics. This situation exerts the feeling of instability, insecurity and resultant delinquent behaviour in the adolescents. At this juncture, it is pertinent to investigate the consequences of single parent families on behaviour and academic pursuit of adolescents in post primary institutions.

Statement of the problem

It appears that most single parent families are unable to take adequate care of their adolescent children. These in most cases, have adverse effects on their academic pursuit as well as social and moral behaviours. Social scientists for example have found that adolescents of single parent families are at the risk of the following anti-social behaviours:

- i. Twice likely to drop out of school
 - ii. More likely to become teenage parents
 - iii. More in conflict with their parents
 - iv. Less supervised or controlled by adults
 - v. More likely to become truants in schools
 - vi. More frequently abuse drugs and alcohol
 - vii. More at high risk of sexual mis-behaviour
 - viii. Twice likely to go to jail
 - ix. Four times likely to need help for emotional and behaviour problems
 - x. More likely to get divorced in marriage
 - xi. More likely to participate in violence
- Deborah (2010)

Research findings also show that:-

- i. The number of school children 15-17 years of age in good health is lower in the group of children from single parents.
- ii. The number of children becoming pregnant at 15-17 years is increasing in single parents home.
- iii. Children who have experienced divorce of parents may have problem of depression, emotional stress and difficulties in school.
- iv. Adolescents from single parent families are found to be three times more depressed than those living with two parents.
- v. Adolescents from single parents are associated with criminal activities, and adolescents from single parent families account for 72 percent teenage murderers, 60 percent of people who commit crimes and eleven times more likely to exhibit violent behaviour Otubanjo (2013).

Studies on genetic transmission of crime revealed that 40 percent of delinquent boys had paternal

criminal heritage while 55 percent had maternal heritage with respect to serious crimes, suggesting a òlike mother, like sonò effect. The general transmission rates for alcoholism, drug dependence, mental disorder and sexual deviance are also significant. Otuanjo (2013). In view of the problems faced by adolescents, this study sought to investigate the effects of single parent families on the behaviour and academic pursuit of adolescents.

It is the objective of this study to:-

1. Determine the single parent families on behaviour and academic pursuit of adolescents in post primary institutions.
2. Ascertain the effects of single parenting on moral and social behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions.

The study sought to answer two research questions, they are:-

1. What are the effects of single parenting on academic achievement of adolescents in post primary institutions?
2. What are the effects of single parenting on moral and social behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions?

Njikoka and Dunukofia Local Government Areas of Anambra State, Nigeria were used for the study. Njikoka is made up of the following six communities namely: Abagana, Aba, Nimo, Nawfia, Enugwu-Agidi and Enugwu-ukwu. The headquarters of Njikoka Local Government areas is Abagana. Dunukofia Local Government area is made up of the following six communities namely:- Ukpo, Ifitedunu, Nawgu, Ukwulu, Umunachi and Umudioka. The headquarters of Dunukofia Local Government area is Ukpo. There are many adolescents who are raised up by single parents in the two local Governments.

A survey research design was adopted for this study because data was collected from respondents who are the representatives of the population. The sample comprised 200 respondents. Five communities were selected from each of the two Local Government areas studied given a total of 10 communities. The communities are from Abagana, Aba, Nawfia, Nimo and Enugwu-Ukwu from Njikoka area. From Dunukofia area, the communities studied are Ukpo, Ifitedunu, Nawgu, Ukwulu and Umunachi. Twenty (20) respondents were selected from each community to give a sample of 200 respondents. Purposive sampling technique was to ensure that only the subjects that can complete the questionnaire are included in the sample.

A structured questionnaire developed based on two research questions were used for data collection. The questionnaire was a 5 point likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree in which the respondents

were requested to tick the options that best respond to the 15 items questionnaires. The draft copy of the questionnaire was given to two experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe for face validation. The questionnaire was pre-tested by administering it to 5 randomly selected members of the sample who completed and pointed out the problems they observed in completing the

Result and discussion

The results of the data analyzed were presented in tables in serial order of the stated research questions below.

questionnaire. The modified instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher, collected back at the spot at 100 percent return rate. The questionnaire were correctly completed and used for data analysis.

Descriptive mean statistics was used to analyze data while standard deviation was used to compare the result from the two Local Government areas studied.

The first research question sought to determine single parent families on behaviour and academic pursuit of adolescents in post primary institutions. The results of the data are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on single parent families on behaviour and academic pursuit of adolescents in post primary institutions

Items	Effects of single parenting on the adolescents academic pursuit.	N = 100			N = 100		
		Njikoka			Dunukofia		
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	Remark	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	Remark
1	Dropping out of school.	3.26	1.38	Agree	3.22	1.31	Agree
2	Lack of attention on the academic of the adolescents.	3.41	1.33	Agree	3.2	1.35	Agree
3	Difficulty in training adolescents.	4.4	0.65	Agree	4.38	1.35	Agree
4	The adolescent is sent to learn a trade.	3.73	1.44	Agree	3.85	1.33	Agree
5	Engaging adolescents in work during school period.	3.63	1.45	Agree	4	1.39	Agree
6	Sending the adolescents to public school.	3.17	1.45	Agree	3.07	1.56	Agree
7	Irregular attendance to school due to late payment of fees.	2.81	1.5	Disagree	3.04	1.5	Agree
8.	Poor performance due to lack of assistance in assignment.	2.66	1.6	Disagree	2.56	1.11	Disagree
9	The adolescent is sent out as maid in place of going to school.	3.77	1.17	Agree	3.19	1.47	Agree
10	The Adolescents refuse to go school because parents cannot control him.	2.76	1.45	Disagree	3.01	1.58	Agree

As shown in table 1, the two groups of respondents agreed to the dropping out of school by adolescents, lack of attention to the academic pursuit of adolescents, difficulty in training the adolescents, learning of a trade in place of schooling, engaging the adolescents in work during school periods, sending the adolescents to public school, and sending the adolescents out as maids are the effects of single parenting on the academic pursuit of adolescents in post primary institutions. This is indicated by the mean scores of items, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9 for Njikoka and Dunukofia. The two groups disagreed that poor performance of adolescents is the effects of single parenting on the academic pursuit of adolescents. On individual group basis,

group 1 disagreed with the mean scores of items 7 and 10 which group 2 agreed.

The result for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9 for Njikoka and Dunukofia are in agreement while items 7 and 10 are not as indicated by their mean scores and standard deviations (2.81 and 1.5); (2.76 and 1.45). Effects of single parenting on moral and social behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions.

The second research question investigated the effects of single parenting on the social and moral behaviour of adolescents. The results of the data analyzed are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Mean and standard Deviation on effects of single parenting on the social and moral behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions

Items	Effects of single parenting on the social and moral behaviour of adolescents.	Njikoka			Dunukofia		
		\bar{X}_1	SD ₁	Remark	\bar{X}_2	SD ₂	Remark
1	Involved in quarrels and fighting.	3.61	1.56	Agree	2.76	1.45	Disagree
2	Unfriendliness, aggressive, hostile and abusive to people.	2.92	1.17	Disagree	2.96	1.44	Disagree
3	Involve in stealing and cultism.	2.95	0.69	Disagree	2.81	0.89	Disagree

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4	Bearing children outside marriage.	3.49	1.54	Agree	3.29	1.62	Agree
5	Take much alcoholic drinks and drugs.	3.65	1.29	Agree	3.47	1.87	Agree

As shown in table 2, the two groups of respondents agreed that bearing children outside marriage, and intake of much alcoholic drinks and drugs are the effects of single parenting on social and moral behaviour of adolescents in post primary institutions as indicated by the mean scores of items 4 and 5. They however, disagree with items 2 and 3. The results of Njikoka and Dunukofia are in agreement with items 2-3 while 1 is not in agreement as indicated by the mean scores and standard deviation in the table. On individual group basis, group 1 agreed with item 1 while group 2 disagreed.

Discussion of the findings

The findings revealed that school dropout, lack of attention to the academic pursuit of adolescents, difficulty in training the adolescents, learning a trade in place of schooling, engaging in work during school periods, schooling in public schools, sending adolescents out as maids and refusing to go to school against the wish of parents are the effects of single parenting by the mean responses of the respondents to the questionnaire items. These findings are consistent with the view of Agada (2004) that the family a child belongs, to a great extent hinders or enhances his or her access to schools as well as the academic achievement. The academic pursuit of a child is automatically affected or even terminated by the death or separation of parent or parents. Supporting this view, Deborah (2010) asserted that adolescents in single parent families are twice likely to drop out of school than those living in two parent families. This is because the affected adolescent may not be given the maximum attention by poor single parents, especially in his academic endeavours. The issue of payment of school fees, provision of reading materials and encouragement, assistance in home work among other necessities for academic pursuit will be seriously affected for example, Dwayne (2012) in a study found that 56 percent of single parents responded that they find it difficult to train their children in school because of funds. The problem also affects the adolescents of poor parents drastically.

The findings also show that bearing children outside marriage, excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs are the effects of single parenting on the social and moral behaviour of adolescents.

Summary of findings

The findings of the study are as follows:

1. Dropping out from schools, financial difficulty in training adolescents in school, learning a trade in place of schooling, engaging the adolescents in work during school hours, sending the adolescents to public schools for lack of money, and

sending them out as maids due to hardship are the consequences of single parenting on the academic pursuit of adolescents in post primary institutions.

2. Bearing children outside marriage and taking much alcoholic drinks and drugs are among the effects of single parenting on social and moral behaviour of adolescents.

Conclusion

The study showed that single parenting affects the well being of adolescents negatively particularly their academics, social and moral behaviour. It is indicated that adolescence stage is a period when parents are supposed to pay proper attention and take adequate care of the adolescents to prevent or reduce the negative behaviour that are likely to affect their lives and academic pursuit. Most single parent families live below poverty level and cannot cope with the financial and training needs of their adolescents. Living in poor financial condition is stressful and may result to increased anger, frustration and violent behaviour of adolescents. The upbringing of children should be the joint responsibility of both parents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward for adoption.

1. The government should introduce scholarship scheme in post primary institutions. This will enable the adolescents from poor single parent families have access to education since their parents find it difficult to train them alone. Education will make them to be gainfully employed, and in turn reduce the incidence of social vices drastically.
2. The adolescents should be educated on the effects of teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and other anti-social behaviours through mass media, moral institution in schools, churches, mosques etc. This will help them to be abreast of the consequences of social and immoral behaviours and refrain from doing wrongs.

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