The State of the Home and Academic Performance of Secondary School Children in Nigeria

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is more on children's academic outcome when challenges like divorce occur in the home, and the emphasis is on children in secondary school level of education in Nigeria which are usually children aged 11 to 16 years. The primary environment of the child is the home and this can exert tremendous impact on students' achievement. The home is the primary agent of education, thus, the way the child lives, the food he/she eats and his/her life style are influenced by the home. Parent/child interactions are forces that can lead to better academic performance. Home in this context refers to a union of a man and a woman in marriage with children, all living together in the same house. The paper focuses on the academic achievement of children from such homes as against the academic achievement of children where the parents are no longer married and not living in the same house with their children. In order to differentiate this, two types of homes, the term "unbroken" and "broken" home, are used which is a common perlance for such homes in Nigeria where the study is carried out. Furthermore, the home (family) can be either broken (one-parent home as a result of divorce) or unbroken (two-parent home). Broken home is a family where father and mother are no longer married together and are not living together in the same house with their children, and the children are only living with either parent or relatives as a result of divorces, separation, death of one parent and illegitimacy; while unbroken home is a family where father and mother are married together and are living in the same house with their children.

Keywords

Home, Family, Academic-Performance, Nigeria, Environment

Subject Areas: **Art, Education**

1. Introduction

The home is an essential place in the upbringing of a child as the first environment within a family. The home, which is the traditional nuclear family, is the smallest unit and microcosm of the larger society. Therefore, the family is a universal organization and it is hard to imagine how society can function without the family [1]. Family members are related by blood, law and marriage. However the family is responsible for supporting, caring and preparing children for adulthood, which in turn will determine his/her personal development [2]. The family is the child's place of contact with the world; the child as a result acquires initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family. The family lays the foundation for the child before the child goes to school, and the personality that the child takes to school is determined by the home [3]. The family has great influence on child's physical, mental and moral development. [4] notes that the family lays the psychological moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. Thus parenthood is faced with great responsibility that requires the full cooperation of both parents who must ensure the total development of their children.

Hence, a family can be defined as a home where both parents are married and living in the same house with their children. From the definition, children who live with both parents may be privileged, because they will be taken care of by both parents instead of by only one parent, and they will be better socialized interacting with both parents. It is due to this fact that the process of socialization dependent on both parents plays a complementary role in raising children and that this impacts positively on the children during school years. [5] notes that children from homes where both parents are not living with them in the same house are commonly described as more hostile, aggressive, anxiety, fearful, hyperactive and distractible than children from unbroken home. [6] notes that if adolescents from broken homes are to be compared with those from unbroken homes, it will be seen that the former have more social, academic and emotional problems due to neglect and lack of instructional materials. Children from broken homes often fail in their exams and are at risk emotionally; however, this may not be completely applicable in all instances of broken home because some children irrespective of home background work hard and become successful in life.

This manuscript reviews the state of the home on academic performance of Nigerian secondary school students under the following sub-headings:
- Family as a Factor;
- The Influence of the Home on Students' Academic Performance;
- The Effect of Broken Home on Students' Academic;
- The Role of Parents.

2. Family as a Factor

The family is the child's first place of contact with the world, the child as a result acquire initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the family. In the same vein, [4] noted that the family lay the psychological, moral and spiritual foundation in the overall development of the child. The state of the family or home affects an individual since parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. Although the school is responsible for the experiences that make up an individual's life during school periods, yet parents and the individual experiences at home play tremendous roles in building the personality of the child and making the child what he or she is. Thus, [7] concluded that the home environment of the student can greatly influence the student's academic performance in school.

Although, the home or family has been recognized as having a lot of influence on the academic performance of student [8] [9], [7] stated that parents constant disagreement affects children emotionally and this could lead to poor academic performance in school. The family lays the psychosocial, moral and spiritual foundations in the overall development of the child. The mother's significant role in this cannot be over-emphasized; studies on father-child relationship suggest that the present of a father (this could be biological or a father-figure) in the home influences significantly the development of a child [4]. Thus, parenthood is a responsibility requiring the full co-operation of both parents (as both play complementary roles in the life of their children) who must ensure the total development of their children.

Structurally, a family is either broken or unbroken (intact). A broken family in this context is one that is not structurally intact for various reasons which may be death of a parent, divorce, separation, and illegitimacy in which the family was never complete. This explanation (analysis) becomes necessary, because life in a single

parent family can be stressful for both the child and the parent. Although, life could also be stressful for a two-parent home but may be more stressful if it is one-parent having to provide everything for the home as compared to two having to. One-parent families as identified by [10] are faced with the challenges of finance. Assumption of new roles and responsibility, establishment of new pattern in intra-familiar interaction and re-organization of routine, and schedules [4] are conditions that are not conducive for effective parenting. This is because when the single parent is over burdened by responsibilities and by their own emotional reaction to their situation, they often becomes irritable, impatient and insensitive to their children's needs [8]. Therefore, how a family is constructed, could go a long way in determining the upbringing of the child, which could be linked to his/her academic performance in school. But there are underlying questions that need to be addressed, such as how to create support systems to ameliorate the risk factors of poverty, inaccessibility to health care, stress, etc.

3. The Influence of Home on Students' Academic Performance

Family and school do not exist as island, they are located within an environment, and such an environment is dominated by human being who lives together in a manner that they share basic values and common belief. The home is very important as it influences the members of a family and determines the outcome of their activities. According to [11], the environment where the child finds himself/herself goes a long way in determining his learning ability and ultimately his academic performances in school. A healthy home environment offers emotional security to a child. [12] viewed that many students from low socio-economic homes respond incomprehensively to classroom teaching because their home environment is not intellectually stimulating, some students find it difficult to cope in school and eventually drop out of school. [7] noted that the environment in which the student comes from can greatly influence his performance in school. [8] [9] are of a similar view that the environment has been recognized as having a relationship with the student academic performance. Educators have greatly assumed that the home to a large extent is the start of the process of learning of an individual.

Furthermore, many children have been hindered from reaching their optimum level in academic pursuit due to some negative factors that comes from home environment [13]. These include lack of parental encouragement, lack of conductive environment, poor finances and poor feeding, ill health and lack of interest on the part of the students. Children whose school needs (physical and emotional) are not provided at home may forever remain under achievers and this could affect the general development (physical and human resources) of the country. Hence, it is noted from the onset that, the environment could determined the outcome of a child, if it not properly put in place, and it can later tell on the society. These setbacks from the home are not peculiar to only single-parent homes but to also to two-parent homes.

4. The Effect of Broken Home on Students' Academic

Broken home, could either be single-parenthood home, divorce or separated couple. In order words, broken home can be defined in which the parents are divorced or separated. While single-parenthood can be defined as when one out of two people who are responsible for bearing and as such nurturing the child is not available and the work meant for two parents, is now been carried out by only one parent, according to the Longman dictionary of contemporary English, single-parenting is defined as a mother or father who looks after children on their own, without the other partner. Single parent can be defined as a situation in which of one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for the upbringing of the child [14] (Levin, 1999). Single parenthood may arise when either the male or the female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock [15] (Ortesse, 1998).

In Nigeria, the existence of single parenthood was unknown and where they existed they are ignored as exceptional cases. However, nowadays, they are fast growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria. In Nigeria, among Yoruba's, the parental roles are culturally determined and distributed. The maternal roles are that of child's rearing home training and playing of complementary roles, while the paternal are that of economic responsibilities and disciplining of children. The child reared up with these complementary maternal and paternal responsibilities is morally, mentally upright and emotionally balances, *i.e.* when the caring responsibilities are carried out by both parents [11].

Sociology of education has it that the family is the first primary social group that the child first belongs to, come in contact with. And as such has a greater influence on the child's physical, mental, and moral development. The family lays the foundation of education before the child goes to school and the personality that the

child takes to school is determined by the home (family) [3]. [16] pointed out that both parents have their own roles to play in their child's education. The father is to provide every necessary tool for the educational advancement while the mother is expected to complement the effort of the father. But in the case where the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the necessary and basic needs as well as supervising the academic performances of the child, by checking the academic records of the child or by going through their class work and lesson notes or books everyday and also giving of counseling and support when needed, these will affect the educational status or level of academic performance of the child. So also, if a child is not well nurtured and mentally assisted, it will also affect his or her educational outcome. If it were to be a male child, there would be likelihood for the child to be anti-social in nature getting involved in anti-social vices like getting involved in cultism and gangsterism. Also if it were to be a female child, there is likelihood for her to become way-ward (badly behaved or unruly) or go into prostitution.

According to Salami and Alowode (1999), children from broken home (single parent homes) are more hostile, hyperactive and aggressive in nature. Many of the problems that single parents have are similar to those for two parent family, but these problems seem more difficult to bear or manage when the home is being managed by only one person. These are some problems that are exceptional, which are only faced by the single parents, which make it somewhat difficult to raise children. These problems include: bitterness toward the absent spouse, loneliness, poverty and insecurity about raising children alone without a help. It is widely believed that children from broken home have higher incidence of academics, emotional and behavioural problems than other children from unbroken homes. An analysis of data by NAEP (1986) (National Association of Education Procurement) data indicated that third graders living with one parent score considerably lower than third grader living with both parents [17]. In case of divorce, separation and death of a parent, children are at somewhat greater risk for symptoms of low self-esteem and poor performance in school. [15] found that most medical students whose father had been absent while they were at ages one to five were more psychopathic and criminalist in nature than those whose parents were present during this period of their age. According to [15], in most often times a child from unbroken home will be well taken care of and well socialized compared to a child from broken home. This is due to the fact that the process of socialization depends on both parents playing complementary roles in bringing up a child.

5. The Role of Parents

There are different types of family structures. The structure are based on whether both parents are involve in children's training or whether only one of the parent is involve in the training. In most society or communities, the role of the mother and father can never be over emphasis. The father plays a major role concerning the health care of the family, mother's function and roles are to complement that of the father. [18] Toynbee (1996) explained that the mother in the home is irreplaceable as the educator of her children in the early year of life (this is because the mother spends more time with the child at this early age compared to the father), during which a child's character and temperament are formed. The mother is the major environmental agency for character formation at the child's early age.

6. Conclusions

All the reviewed literatures have revealed the extent to which broken home or the environment can affect the behaviour and academic performance of students from such a home. The relationship that develops between a child and his parents is an important factor in the formation of his or her attitude towards learning. Anderson, Case and Lam (2001) and Bamisaye (1990) have asserted that a child's type of family affects his rate of socialization and later personality development. It also affects a child's measure of intelligence, because the first educational experiences of the child start from the home. The home of the child lays the desired social, moral, emotional, spiritual and intellectual foundations for the child. The parents (father and mother) do a lot for the child, which include socialization of a child, child care, protection, and emotional and social support. Both parents have their role to play in the child's education. As the sole originator of a congenial peaceful and lovely relationship among the member of the family, the mother is expected to complement the effort of the father, while the father is to provide every necessary tool for the educational advancement. But in the case where the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the necessities and basic needs as well as supervising the academic performance records of the child or by going through their class and lesson notes or books

every day, these will affect the educational state or level of the child.

Conclusively, in an ideal home where the father and the mother play their roles as expected and where there is a genuine cooperation and genuine relationship among the members of the family, the children will genuinely perform well in their academic engagement and general development. In families where there is only father or mother, there may not be adequate attention and complementary care to the children as compared to families where there are father and mother together with children, and this may affect academic performances.

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