

## Psychological Implications of Single and Double Parenting Background on Nigerian Adolescents' Academic Performance

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**KEY WORDS** Marriage system; marital imbalance; child; Nigerian society.

**ABSTRACT** Marriage institution in Nigeria is a product of a bicultural influence (The African traditional and the colony influenced western oriented marriage system). This largely accounts for the confusion and the less exactitude of description that marks the institution and its concomitant influence on child upbringing in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. This study, employed simple research methodologies to attract attention to a modern day psychological scourge (Marital imbalance) that is responsible for a large percentage of the social ills in the Nigerian Society. The study, not too unexpectedly, found that adolescents from households with double parents (father and mother) record higher academic achievement than those from single parent households. Answers to the three research questions asked in the study support the above finding. The implications of the findings were highlighted, while future researchers were encouraged to concentrate in the area of the social implications of this trend, particularly for the African child.

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Within the context of this study, single parenting shall be understood to describe a home characterized by only one nurturant (i.e. one of two parents), while double parenting background shall denote a family setting presided over by both parents (in this case, the mother and the father).

The family as a study focus has been more prominently identified with sociology rather than psychology. But with the contemporary technological trend the individual as a product of his family background has become a research issue considered quite desirable in psychology. Evidence of this manifests in newly cultivated psychological research topics such as; gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) personal attributes and sex stereotype (Spence (1975), etc. This is not to over-look the pioneering works of Sigmund Freud ("Oedipal Complex" 1936), Erik Erickson ("Identity, 1968) Sears, R.R., Maccoby, E. and Levin, H. (Social learning theory, 1957) and Albert

Bandura (Role Modelling, 1977). Even when these scholars explore family setting in their analysis of human behaviours, personality development theories have been their underlying intention. In the computer age as we have it today, a significant change has become noticeable in the family setting owing to the fact that parents, more than ever before, have had to abandon their homes and children in pursuit of career aspiration. For this reason, boarding nursery schools, baby sitters and maids have inherited the nurturant role of parents. This trend has its corollary effect on children's psychological development.

In Nigeria, the case of unwanted pregnancy became rife and assumed an alarming dimension in the mid 1980s. A number of preventable and needless deaths attended the development because of a symbiotic parallel increase in the activities of quack doctors and misuse of available contraceptives. This practice was prevalent among teenagers and youths who were by far not prepared either psychologically or occupationally for starting a family. Some of these unwanted pregnancies were successfully aborted when handled by expert abortionists, even though such practice is illegal in Nigeria, some resulted in death when handled by quacks and some matured to be delivered. Oftentimes, pregnancies of this nature that resulted in births always occur outside wedlock and the offsprings are most likely to be raised outside wedlock. The concomitant effect of this is a large collection of children who have to grow knowing only the mother as the sole nurturant without the presence of a father or any balanced home setting worth the name.

Single parenting also result from divorce cases. This phenomenon was inherited alongside the cultural diffusion that came in the wake of African colonization. The extended family setting and polygamy that characterized the

marriage institution in Africa had gradually begun to give way to the nuclear family type. Marriages are contracted in court thus introducing a legal dimension and the institutionalization of the culture of monogamy. With the merit and demerit of this practice came a legally recognised divorce procedure. Many of such divorces that occur have children and mothers gives the custody of children of a divorced marriage. When growing, these children are only exposed to single parents (the mother).

Another reason for the increase in single parenting borders on cases of sudden death of a spouse, in which case the bereaved partner becomes the sole parent who under-takes the nurturance of the existing children. The peculiarly gender motivated women liberation syndrome had set many a women chasing after career success with the view of acquiring economic independence. This trend has also lent a hand to the increase in single parent households.

Many researchers have been conducted with the aim of establishing the fact that many family variables such as; socioeconomic status of parents, educational level of the parents, type of family, birth order (etc.) are quite important in determining the academic performance of students. (Guildubaldi et al., 1983 and Herzog, 1970). The studies of Meyer-Krahmer and Katirin (1980) focused attention on the effect of parental separation on the development of sex-role identification and the relationship between parental deprivation and sex role performance and the role of the father in child development. Their findings revealed the significant role of the father in the development of the child. Earlier research on the consequence of father absence (Biller, 1971a) indicates that negative effects are noticeable in the different aspects of the child's personality development. Another aspect of the study established a correlational congruence between sex role identification, moral and intellectual development of the child.

It is important to note that the early relationship established with one's family (the feelings of love and acceptance, the fears, the disappointments and frustration) can affect the rest of one's life. Whatever an individual is, and what he becomes are a product of the kind of relationship he has with his own parents. Parental influence

is therefore not unimportant in the intellectual and moral development of the child.

In discussing family situations, it is not too easy to make statements which assume that children have two natural parents at home. In America where there are demographic records of single parent families, it is discovered (Mitchel, 1990) that there is an increasing prevalence of divorce, and a growing number of children are found to be living in single-parent families and many other children live in a typical family situation, such as having adoptive or foster parents. The number of families headed by a lone parent is given as one in seven, about two thirds of whom are separated or divorced women. 14 per cent of the total of the households are headed by single fathers. The 1981 U.S. census projected a total of 900,000 one parent families by the year 2005.

In the United States; about one third in five lives in a household headed by a single parent, as does about one child in six in Sweden and one in nine in Canada (Amato, 1987). That of Nigeria is guessed to be around one in ten children (the statistics becomes clearly undefined as the marital culture prevalent in Nigeria favours a mixture of both nuclear and polygamous households).

The children of teenage mothers are essentially brought up under unfavourable circumstances which include poverty and limited educational opportunities. It seems also that being raised by a teenage mother who has limited education combined with poverty contribute largely to the development of both behaviour problems and learning delays. If the mother finishes high school and has social support from her family and friends, her child will likely develop at a similar rate with the children from double parent households. Sroufe, Cooper and Dettart (1992) found that if conflict still exists between the parents after divorce or if the child has infrequent or no contact with one of the parents after the divorce, the child is likely to experience negative consequences from the divorce (for example, anxiety, self control problems, learning problem, aggression or withdrawal). Decreased parental conflict and frequent interaction with both parents seem to reduce many of the adverse effect of divorce. Many family variables could be implicated as being responsible for poor academic

performance of children adolescents, but there is an evident paucity of local literature on the exact influence of single parenting background on adolescents academic performance, which this study has set out to achieve.

### Research Questions

Answers to the following three research questions shall facilitate the articulation of the findings of this study.

1. Would there be any significant difference between the academic performance of subjects from single parent home and those from double parent homes?
2. Would any similarity exist between the academic performance of children from Father Present (FP) and Father Absent (FA) households?
3. Would there be any difference in the academic performance of children from Mother Present (MP) and Mother Absent (MA) households?

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

The study design adopts the comparative method by which means both the independent variables (Single and double parent household subjects) shall be compared on the criterion of academic performance.

### Sample

Study sample were drawn from the selected secondary schools in Ile-Ife (n = 150). Choice of school was made through the purposive sampling technique with the selected schools having similar academic standard. 50 subjects were randomly selected from each school. Sample selection took cognizance of the objective dimensions of the study thereby ensuring that fair percentage (45% and 55% in favour of double parent household) of the subjects are from both double and single parenting homes.

### Instrument

The major psychological instrument used for cue measurement in the study was author-designed and tagged Parenting Background and

Academic Performance Checklist. The sections contained in the questionnaire are four (A - D) A, addresses biodata issues, B, focuses on parent-rating scale, C, contains items on parental attitude to academic achievement, while D, addresses the issue of learning facilities in children's homes. The questionnaire has a total of 39 items.

Congruent and Face validity were established for the study. The pilot study conducted prior to real testing yielded a set of scores that were correlated with the pilots' scores on Bakare's (1977) Study Habit Inventory (SHI) which is itself, is a well-known instrument whose validity was established by showing that it correlates with other well-known instrument in the expected direction. The validity coefficient for the study instrument was  $r = 0.56$ . Face and content validity were established jury-styled by subjecting the questionnaire to the scrutiny of experts in the field of Psychology and Sociology whose advice were duly considered.

The test retest reliability coefficient was located at 0.68 after two weeks re-examination.

### Data Analysis

As the statistical analysis of the data must be analogous to the structure of the relationship being examined and also must agree with the form of the variables under consideration, the t-test statistics was found appropriate and therefore used to assess the influence of single parenting background on the academic performance of subjects.

## RESULT

When the performance of the two groups (Double - parenting and Single parenting background) in English language and Mathematics respectively were compared, the mean scores of the two groups were significantly different ( $t = 4.26, P < 0.05, t = 2.90, P < 0.05$ ) as illustrated in the two tables below:

Judging from the above illustration, the answer to the first research question is positive, hence there is definitely a significant difference in the academic performance of subjects from single and double parenting background with the weighting in favour of subjects from double parenting household.

**Table 1: Comparison of subjects' performance in English language**

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Single Parenting	62	2480	40.29	10.16	148	4.26	0.05
Double Parenting	88	4147	47.12	9.32			

**Table 2: Comparison of subjects' performance in Mathematics**

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Single Parenting	62	2388	38.52	11.52	148	2.90	0.05
Double Parenting	88	3898	49.29	12.69			

The scores representing the academic performance of subjects from Father Present (FP) household was pitted against the scores of subjects from father absent (FA) household and the following results were obtained from the performance in Mathematics; mean score ( $\bar{X}$ ) for FP = 43.07 and for FA; 37.06 and a *tc* of 2.27,  $P < 0.05$ . This result shows a significant difference between the performance of the two groups. The result of

The results presented in the two tables above reveal a significant difference between the performance of both Father Present (FP) and Father Absent (FA) subject in mathematics and English Language with the advantage on Father Present Subjects. This therefore provides a negative answer to the second research questions. Thus, no similarity exists between the academic performance of FP and FA subjects.

**Table 3: Comparison between the performance of FP and FA subjects in Mathematics**

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>tc</i>	<i>P</i>
FP	25	1077	43.07	8.09			
FA	25	927	37.06	10.17	48	2.27	0.05

**Table 4: Comparison between the performance of FP and FA subjects in English language**

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>tc</i>	<i>P</i>
FP	25	107.25	43.13	10.34			
FA	25	912	36.48	9.12	48	2.27	0.05

the performance in (English) language for the two groups stand at; mean score; FP = 43.13 while FA = 36.48 with a *tc* of 2.37,  $P < 0.05$ . This result equally shows a significant difference between the performance of the two groups. The following two tables will present a better graphic illustration.

In attempting to provide an answer to the third research question Mother Present (MP), and Mother Absent (MA) Subjects' scores were compared in English Language and Mathematics as was done for Father Present and Father Absent subjects (see tables 3 & 4). The results are as follows, MP  $\bar{X}$  = 36.67 and the *tc* = 2.37

**Table 5: Comparison between academic performance of MP and MA in Mathematics**

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>tc</i>	<i>P</i>
MP Subjects	25	1084.75	36.95	10.13			
MA Subjects	25	923.75	43.36	8.57	48	2.37	0.05

**Table 6: Comparison between academic performance of MP and MA in English language**

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>X</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>tc</i>	<i>P</i>
MP Subjects	25	1091.25	43.65	12.47			
MA Subjects	25	916.75	36.67	10.30	48	2.37	0.05

( $P < 0.05$ ). In Mathematics, the score for MP is  $\bar{X} = 36.95$  while MA is  $\bar{X} = 43.36$  and a  $t_c 2.37$  ( $P < 0.05$ ). These results are illustrated in the following two tables.

From the above tables (5 & 6) significant difference exists between the academic performance of both mother present and mother absent samples in Mathematics and English language, thus providing a positive answer to the third research question. That is, a significant difference exists between the academic performance of both MP and MA subjects in favour of MP subjects.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Answering the first research question in the affirmative, owing to the results obtained from the data collected, did not present a serious picture of surprise because the finding is in consonance with previous findings reported in the literature review to this study. For example Emery (1984) conducted a study in which he found that children whose parents have divorced achieve less in school, are less happy at home and are more disruptive in the community than intact families. Also the results of the study by Guildubaldi et al. (1983) showed that children from homes where the parents are divorced enter school with significantly less academic and social competence than those from the intact families. The reason for this is not far fetched, particularly when viewed against the background that many children from single parent homes are raised under unfavourable conditions such as poverty, poor educational background, inadequate parental supervision etc.

Response of subjects to various sections of the Parenting Background and Academic Checklist (PBAPC) indicates that a good percentage of the subjects from single parent homes have low income and low educational background. The answer to the second second research question as was supplied by the analysis of the data collected is to the direction that a significant similarity does not exist between the academic performance of subjects from father present (FP) and father absent (FA) households, rather a difference in performance in favour of father present subjects was found. There are corroborating evidences of a similar findings in the lit-

erature. For example, Reis and Gold (1977) found that boys with the more available fathers perform better than boys with the less available fathers. While Blanchard, and Biller (1971a) before him similarly discovered that the academic performance of the boys whose fathers were more available was very superior to the performance of the boys whose fathers are less available.

Incidentally, these previous studies appeared to have concentrated on boys and their academic performance when the father is either present or absent. Whatever reasons adduced for this would not be sound until such reasons can cut across gender boundaries. For example, one would like to know what happens when the subject is a girl in a Father present (FP) home or boy in a mother present (MP) home. This present study has been able to answer this question, even though a major hypothesis is not set for it. When the scores of mother present subjects in Mathematics and English language are compared with the scores of father present subjects in the same performance area, the result expressed in simple mean score comparison showed that subjects (both male and female) performed better ( $x = 43.08$ ) when the father is available and performed less (40.30) when it is the mother that is present. Reasons for this can be located in the fact that a father's positive involvement is capable of facilitating the development of the cognitive functioning of a sibling, while the presence of a mother would probably help the child more in the affective domain of character development. Since this study is using as a dependent variable subjects' academic performance which is a cognitive yardstick, one is not too surprised at the outcome of the result in the stated direction. Apart from this is also the fact that the father is associated with the traditional role of breadwinning. Hence he is expected to meet both the financial and the material needs of the child. Where a father performs this role creditably, the child might excel in academic performance.

The third research question attracts a positive answer from the analysis of the data gathered. This finding, which is not unlike the others reported above finds support in the literature because as far back as 1970, Herzog and Surdia had made the assertion that mother's presence and effective functioning has a positive

corollary effect on the child's development, this kind of development is essentially recorded in the affective domain of human development since the mother is adjusted adept at offering the best emotional support to the child.

### CONCLUSION

It could be inferred from table 7 (in appendix) which reflects subjects response to a section of the checklist that fielded questions on parental income, educational level socio-economic background, child measuring techniques and relationship with sibblings, that the difference obtained between FA and MA academic performance are largely due to the inavailability of one of the parents at home. This situation definitely lent a hand to the incidence of financial difficulties in single parent homes, since the income of single parent households are substantially lower that of double parent households, particularly where the parent is female.

In sum, this study has been able to highlight the fact that single-parenting as a variable is capable of affecting childrens' academic performance. For future research activities in the area covered by this study, it is suggested that larger size drawn from a large population and more family variables be considered as capable of providing germane information in the area.

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### APPENDIX I

#### PARENTING BACKGROUND AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE CHECKLIST (PBAPC)

#### SECTION A

#### BIODATA

1. Name .....
2. Sex: (a) Male ..... (b) Female: .....
3. Age: ..... Year .....

4. With whom are you living?
  - (a) Father
  - (b) Mother
  - (c) Both father and mother
  - (c) Guardian (e.g. family friend)
  - (d) Relatives (e.g. Uncle, aunt, Grandparent e.t.c)
5. Why you are living with your present Custodian(s)?
  - (a) Because they are my parent
  - (b) Because my father/mother is dead
  - (c) Because of divorce
  - (d) Because of quarrel between my parents
  - (e) Because my father/mother is not around for reasons other than divorce

**SECTION B**

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANDEducational RELATED FACTORS**

1. Your father's occupation .....
2. Your mother's occupation .....
3. What is your parent's average monthly income?
  - (a) ₦ 1,000 - ₦ 5,500
  - (b) ₦ 5,500 - ₦ 10,500
  - (c) ₦ 10,500 - 50,00
  - (d) ₦ 50,000 - ₦ 100,000
  - (e) ₦ 100,000 and above
4. What is the educational qualification of your parent?
 

	Father	Mother
No formal education	.....	.....
Primary education	.....	.....
Modern School Education	.....	.....
Secondary (Post Primary education)	.....	.....
Tertiary (Coll. of educ. Polytechnics, University, etc.) education	.....	.....
5. Do you attend lesson after school hours or your lesson teacher comes to teach you at home?
6. Have you ever been sent away from school on the grounds of not paying your school fees?
7. Have you ever missed class test or examinations because of your parents inability to pay your school fees?
8. Do you consider yourself a brilliant student, tick your range of performance.
  - (a) excellent
  - (b) very good
  - (c) good
  - (d) fair
  - (e) poor

9. If your answer to five (5) above is 'No', why do you not attend lessons after school hours? ....  
 .....
10. Do you love school enough to continue with your education after secondary school education?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
11. Do you receive pocket money from home when going to school?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
12. Are your meals regular at home?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
13. Do your parent(s) make you sell things at home before coming to school in the morning or after school hours?  
 (a) Yes (b) No

### SECTION C

#### STUDENTS RATING OF PARENTS

Rate your parents on the following attributes:

1. How do you rate your parents in terms of caring? circle one.
- (a) Mother is kind, father is unkind  
 (b) Father is kind, mother is unkind  
 (c) Father and mother are both kind  
 (d) Father and mother are both unkind  
 (e) I don't know
2. How do you rate your parents in terms of hardwork? Circle one
- (a) Father is hardworking, mother is lazy.  
 (b) Mother is hardworking, father is lazy.  
 (c) Father and mother are both hardworking.  
 (d) Father and mother are both lazy.  
 (d) I don't know

### SECTION D

#### PARENTAL ATTITUDE, CHILD-REARING TECHNIQUE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

1. Which of your parent is happiest when you perform well in school?  
 (a) Father (b) Mother (c) Both Father and Mother
2. Are you punished often for reasons you don't know?  
 (a) Yes (b) No



3. How does your custodian treat you at home?  
 (a) Kindly (b) Badly (c) Lovingly (d) Too strict with me
- Question 4 - 6 should be answered only by the students whose both or one of their parents is absent.
4. My absent parent(s) pay me regular visit.  
 (a) Yes (b) No
5. Have you ever seen your parents quarrelling or fighting before?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
6. If your answer to 5 above is 'yes', how do you normally feel and respond during such instances?  
 (a) I feel happy (b) I feel sad  
 (c) I feel I should never have been born into the family  
 (d) I cry (e) I refuse to eat  
 (f) I feel indifferent (g) Other feelings.....

Questions 7 - 8 should be answered only by the students whose both parents are present.

7. \* Do you judge the relationship between your parents are warm?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
8. If your answer to '7' above is 'No', what effect does this have on your feelings.  
 (a) I feel happy (b) I feel sad  
 (c) I feel I should never have been born into the family  
 (d) I cry (e) I refuse to eat  
 (f) I feel indifferent (g) Other feelings.....
9. Do your parents check your homework each day you come back from school?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
10. Rate your feelings toward your parents on a scale of ten. Score of 10 represents 'most loved parent' while a score of 1 represents 'least loved parent'. Circle
- |        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Father | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Mother | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

#### SECTION E

##### HOUSEHOLD FACILITIES

1. Do you have access to the family television, video, radio, library, fan, refrigerator etc.?  
 (a) Yes (b) No
2. Do your parents buy you textbooks and reading materials?  
 (a) Yes (b) No

3. Do your parents provide you with a comfortable table and chair for reading at home?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
4. Do you have access to the family library?
5. In terms of household facilities, your home is
  - (a) average
  - (b) well furnished
  - (c) sparsely furnished

## APPENDIX II

Table 4: Patent income level in percentage

Patents monthly	Single-parent home		Double-parent home	
	Absolute frequency	percentage	Absolute frequency	Percentage
N1,00 - N5,500	49	32.67	30	20
N5,500 - N 10,500	30	20	21	14
N10,500 - N 50,000	22	14.67	28	18.67
N50,000 - N 100,000	23	15.33	42	28
N100,000 & above	-	0.00	-	0.0
None-response	26	17.33	29	19.33
Total	150	100	150	100

## APPENDIX III

Table 5: Parent educational qualification in percentage

Education qualification	Single-parent home				Double-parent home			
	Father		Mother		Father		Mother	
	Frequent	%	Frequent	%	Frequent	%	Frequent	%
No formal education	4	2.67	10	6.67	7	4.67	13	8.67
Primary education	21	14	18	12	9	6.00	8	5.33
Modern school	23	15.33	20	13.33	18	12	13	8.67
Secondary education	10	6.67	6	4	8	5.33	9	6.00
Tertiary education	12	8	6	4	23	15.33	17	11.33
Non-response	80	53.33	90	60	85	56.67	90	60
Total	150	100	150	100	150	100	150	100

## APPENDIX IV

Table 6: Response of students to students from double-parent home academic achievement questionnaire (SAAQ)

	Double-Parent Home							
	Sections							
	B	%	C	%	D	%	E	%
Oluorogbo Memorial High School Ile-Ife	422	88.84	138	92	271	63.75	144	96
Oranmiyan Memorial Grammar School Ile-Ife	417	87.79	139	92.67	278	65.41	139	92.67
St. Philips Anglican Grammar School, Ile-Ife	435	91.58	144	96	275	64.71	135	90
Total	1274	1268.21	421	280.67	824	193.87	418	1278.67