

Science Education Students' Perceptions of Single-Parenting Impacts on Science Learning

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Abstract

The study investigated science education students' perceptions of single-parenting impacts on science learning. The research was a survey design that employed a self-designed questionnaire validated by science education experts. One hundred and ninety-seven science students selected randomly participated in the study. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics. Results show parents are critical in the educational development of students in Nigeria. The finding offers that a single parent (father or mother) training students leads to low academic performance, financial problems, and other socioeconomic problems like depression, hunger, deprivation, stress, and frustration. Finding also indicates that the number of single-parent sponsored students are low as against the notion that they are increasing in Nigerian schools. The research concluded that parents' involvement in students' training is critical to science learning. Finally, the author suggests some recommendations to forestall single-parenting in Nigeria, such as the government should discourage Childbirth outside marriages.

Keywords: academic performance, depression, hunger, parenting, socioeconomic problem.

Introduction

Parents are considered critical to the learning of any student worldwide (Hamid & Salleh, 2013). However, studies have revealed that lapses in these crucial roles negatively impact students' learning (Essien & Bassey, 2012; Olaleye, Ajayi, Oyebola & Ajayi, 2017; John & Shimfe, 2020). Different situations may lead to parents not giving proper education to children. One difficult situation that hinders parents from adequately supporting students' learning is the issue of single-parenting. This is a situation where only the father or mother is responsible for the upbringing and training of a child (Adegboyega, 2019). Single-parent is attributed to many factors such as divorce, death, jobs, poverty, war and conflict (Essien & Bassey, 2012; Hamid & Salleh, 2013; Ali & Soomar, 2019).

In Nigeria today, single-parenting is a challenge to the education of young students, and it is on the increase (Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo & Adeniyi, 2017). The challenge has been influencing students learning at all levels of education. Divorce, separation, domestic conflict, and death occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic have broken many families, resulting in single motherhood or fatherhood, which impacted students' learning differently. According to Awoniyi (2019), children from broken families have social problems than children who grew up under both parents. Students from broken families have emotional, mental and financial challenges (Lanozo, Tabieros, Solmiano, Paras & Tus, 2021), affecting their learning. Loneliness and depression are common problems of students with single mothers (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). Leizl, Abrantes and Casinillo (2020) research finding revealed no significant difference in academic performance of single-parent students of a school in the Philippines. Single parenting in Nigeria has lots of impacts on the education of children. According to John and Shimfe (2020), the financial challenges encountered by Nigerian single-

parenting most of the time resulted in poor academic performance. Oyediran (2019) observed that the academic performance of single-parent students in some selected schools in Oyo state is low. Children from a broken home lack parental attention for their educational activities (Chukwuka, 2018), leading to poor performance.

Single-parenting has socioeconomic impacts on Nigerian students, such as hunger, unemployment, stress, etc. Children from single-parent in Nigeria are characterised by poverty, aggression, anxiety and abuse, which suggest why some are into drug and other social menaces (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010). According to Mbah (2019), children from single-parent home suffers psychological trauma leading to anti-social behaviour and drug abuse. In addition, inadequate social interaction and unemployment are expected consequences for children from a single-parent home (Ali & Soomar, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The Bowen Family System Theory supports this study. Family Systems Theory holds that families are units interconnected, where members influence one another reciprocally (Boss et al., 1993). According to Ray (2018), Family Systems Theory focuses on exchanging behaviour in a moment of interaction between family members. The theory believes that the pattern of interaction in the family is responsible for prolonged problematic and non-problematic behaviour. Family systems theory is about family dynamics, which involves structures, roles, ways of communication and power relations (Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie & Uchida, 2002). Family functions are conceived through interaction patterns that deeply become part of habits difficult to change (Barreto, Adams & Daly, 2014). Each family member is impacted by the type of family system in which an individual participates (Berger, 2000). According to Fasina (2011), changes in any part of the family will impact the life of any member of the system. Death of any parents, temporary or permanent separation, and divorce would affect children part of the family system. Bowen family system theory focuses on the interdependent relationships between family members, transmitting emotional messages from person to person (Cochran, 2011). Bowen family systems theory states that others share any emotion experienced by one member of a family in some ways, which could be immediately or intergenerational (Gilbert, 2006). Given this, there is much relationship between this theory and the present study. Children are a vital member of every family system, and their development depends upon their relationships with their parents. Changes in the system resulting in single parents through divorce, separation, or death come with different emotions that impact every member, including children. Critical among the impacts is the educational development of the children because, according to Cochran (2011), children's education depends on multiple family units working within a societal system.

The Bowen family system theory identifies eight concepts, of which two are considered related to this study. The Bowen family system theory model's eight concepts are listed below. Only two relevant to this research will be discussed and applied.

Differentiation of Self

Triangulation

Nuclear Family Emotional Process

Family Projection Process

Emotional Cutoff

Multigenerational Transmission Process

Sibling Position

Societal Emotional Process (Cochran, 2011; Brown, 1999).

Triangulation brings a third party into a family system when stress exists between the dyad (Cochran, 2011). Brown (1999), triangulation occur when unavoidable anxiety in a dyad is relieved through a third party who provides another direction for or support the concern. The emotional cutoff is the loss of communication due to an individual's emotional reaction to a specific situation, which may come through physical distancing or emotional withdrawal (Cochran, 2011; Brown, 1999).

Two of the concepts critical to this study are triangulation and emotional cutoff. Children from a single parent have an emotional problem which brings anxiety in most cases because of the absence of either father or mother. The pressure may also be in anticipation of security as children's safety depends to some extent on the parent's attachment to one another (Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie & Uchida, 2002). In addition, a third party may come in, such as teachers, friends or other relations (Gilbert, 2006) to help, which in most cases have vital educational impacts. For the emotional cutoff, children in single-parent lost communication from one of their parents due to death, divorce or separation (permanent or temporary).

Purpose of the study

The specific objective of the study is to investigate science education students' perceptions of single-parenting impacts on learning. However, to achieve this purpose, the study looked at the educational implications of single-parenting on the College of Education science students. It also investigates the socioeconomic impact of single parenting on College of education science students. Additionally, the study determined the sponsorship status of science education students at the College of Education. College of Education in Nigeria is a teacher training institution established to train primary and junior school teachers. Coordinating and monitoring the College's programme is the responsibility of the National Commission for Colleges of Educations [NCCE]. Students admitted to the College will spend three years to obtain the Nigerian Certificate in Education [NCE] (Osuji, 2009). Currently, the Nigerian government makes the NCE the minimum qualification to teach in Nigerian schools (Tom-Lawyer (2015). The College of Education started as the Teacher Training College [TTC] and later upgraded to the present status. In Nigeria today, many of these Colleges train teachers in Sciences, vocational, technical, art and humanities education.

Research Questions

The research answered three questions to know science education students' perceptions of single-parenting impacts on science learning. The questions are stated below.

Q1: Does single-parenting have any educational impact on Nigerian College of education science education students?

Q2: What is the socioeconomic impact of single-parenting on Nigerian science education students?

Q3: What is the sponsorship status of science education students in the Nigerian College?

Research Methodology

The research methodology includes aspects such as the sample, setting, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, reliability and validity assessment of the instruments and trustworthiness of the data, mainly in the quantitative findings of the research. The research design employed for this study is a survey type. A survey design is a flexible research paradigm that uses questionnaires

to investigate different topics (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2009). It is a design that enables researchers to collect information from individuals through responses to questions (Ponto, 2015).

The population for the study were all science education students in a public College of Education in a Nigerian state. Two hundred participants were randomly targeted, but only one hundred and ninety-seven (197) returned correctly filled copies of the questionnaire. These students were sampled from biology, chemistry, computer science, integrated science, mathematics and physics.

A pilot study was conducted among Vocational Education students who were not participants in this research using the Single-parenting Questionnaire (SpQ) that experts had scrutinised. The pilot study was carried out before the actual intervention took place. The reliability of the instrument was calculated using the SPSS software package. The outcome of the reliability test deleted a question amongst those scrutinised by the experts, bringing the SpQ questions to only fifteen.

Reliability and Validity

The degree to which a measuring device has measured what it was supposed to measure is validity (Ramaligela, 2013). The reliability of an empirically developed instrument is the extent to which collected data may be interpreted consistently across diverse settings. For example, the reliability statistics for the current instrument were determined using SPSS software, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.908; according to Pallant (2011), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.7 indicates a reliable instrument.

Results and Discussion

This section considered two tables based on the analysis of the data collected and the discussion of results under the extant literature on single-parenting studies. Table 1 presents the impacts of single-parenting, while Table 2 presents student sponsorship status.

Table 1

The Impacts of single-parenting on students

N = 197			
s/n	Item	Mean	SD
1	Parenthood has no impact on the students' academic achievement	2.1218	1.53376
2	The absence of a mother in the family does not affect a student's learning	2.1218	1.53376
3	The lack of a father in the family does not affect a student's learning	2.3807	1.50246
4	The presence of both parents in the family has influenced a student's learning	2.3807	1.47850
5	The company of both parents in the family is a motivation for a student's learning	3.3604	1.48360
6	The challenges most students have in education is due to single parenting	3.7868	1.44110

7	A student's academic achievement is impacted because of single parenting	3.2741	1.45896
8	Students have financial challenges due to single parenting	2.8934	1.39745
9	Students have psychological problems in learning due to single parenting	3.0508	1.48718
10	Single parenting affects student's social interaction in the classroom	2.8934	1.52657
11	Students' Cumulative Grade Point (CGP) will be high if they have both parents	2.7716	1.58230
12	Hunger and deprivation are significant challenges of single parenting affecting a student's education	3.2386	1.49111
13	Student's low academic achievement in school is associated with single parenting	2.7817	1.45969
14	Students sometimes want to stop schooling due to single parenting	3.1827	1.52433
15	The stress and frustration a student's experienced in learning is due to single parenting	2.7005	1.54743

Source: Author

Items 1-7, 11, 13 and 14 are on the educational impacts of single parenting. Items 8, 9, 10, 12 and 15 are on socioeconomic implications of single-parenting. From Table 1, the respondents disagree with items 1-4 (mean < 2.6). It implies that parents have an impact on students' learning. The absence of a father or mother affects students' school learning (mean > 2.6). Students having both parents is a motivation for learning (mean > 2.6). Low CGPA of students may be due to single parenting (mean > 2.6). Students have educational challenges due to single parenting (mean > 2.6). Most single-parent students have a low academic achievement (mean > 2.6). Some students dropped out of school because of single parenting (mean > 2.6).

Students face financial challenges due to single parenting (mean > 2.6). Single-parent students have Psychological problems (mean > 2.6). Single parenting impacts student social interaction in the classroom (mean > 2.6). Hunger, deprivation, stress and frustration are socioeconomic challenges due to single parenting (mean > 2.6).

Table 2:

Students' sponsorship status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
father	37	18.8	18.8	18.8
mother	25	12.7	12.7	31.5
both	116	58.9	58.9	90.4
self	19	9.6	9.6	100.0

Total	197	100.0	100.0
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Source: Author

Table 2 shows that both parents sponsored 58.9% of the respondents, while 18.8% were single father funded and 12.7% were single mothers. Only 9.8% were self-sponsored students.

Discussion

The outcome of this study has some similarities with many previously published empirical studies and is also different from some. The finding of the current studies that parents impact children's education is consistent with Hamid and Salleh (2013) that parents play a critical role in their children's education. Achieving good academic results depends on a family's control of a child (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) suggested collaboration between parents and schools because of parents' role in children's academic success. The involvement of parents in children's education is critical because it promotes children's social relationships, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Fasina & Fagbeminiyi, 2011). Parents have many functions in the success of their children's education (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010; Olaleye, Ajayi, Oyebola & Ajayi, 2017; Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo & Adeniyi, 2017; Sabejeje, Bello, 2021; Lanozo, Tabieros, Solmiano, Paras & Tus, 2021). According to Herawati, Rizkillah and Hernawati (2020), Parent is expected to be the children's teacher at home and implement strategies that will positively and significantly contribute to children's development. According to Ali and Soomar (2019), students from single-parent homes are always inattentive, lose concentration in class, and abandon schooling. However, some studies revealed that broken homes have no impact on the academic performance of children (Olaleye et al., 2017; Leizl et al., 2020).

Literature established families with only a father or mother (Essien & Bassey, 2012; John & Shimfe, 2020) in our societies. The present research findings indicate that the absence of a father or mother impacts science students' education in Nigeria. This is similar to Falana, Bada and Ayodele (2012) finding that the lack of a father puts more family pressure and poverty on the mother, negatively impacting the student's education. A single mother family bears many responsibilities that affect students' upbringing in education (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2012). Harkness, Gregg and Fernandez-Salgado (2020) asserted that single-mother families affect students' cognitive development in this family. Caputi, Lecce and Pagnin (2017) averred that the mother-child relationship is a critical variable responsible for children's success at school. The role of women in students' education is significant because a mother is closer to children (Erawati, 2016) than a father.

The role of a father in children's education is undoubtedly critical. The presence of a father in many homes in the Nigerian society is essential because of children's discipline. Father is affirmative about child discipline, which makes children always cautious in misbehaving. A significant percentage of erring or misbehaved students are grown up in a home with no father. Children from homes with no father are educationally backwards or withdrawn (Stephen & Udisi, 2016). Children from homes with no father are sometimes wayward because they do not fear the mother like the father. The absence of a father in a family makes the children disobedient, dependent and aggressive (Rahman, Abdullah, Darus & Mansor, 2017). The father's role in providing for children is critical, and when it is unavailable, it impacts children's development (Herawati, Rizkillah & Hernawati, 2020). Study shows fathering influences verbal skills, intellectual functioning and academic achievement of young children (Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, Children's Bureau, 2006). Father involvement in children's development is critical because it involves academic growth, cognitive development, behavioural development and others (Tekin, 2012).

Students from single-parent homes have low academic performance in school (Oyediran, 2019). However, students' academic performance is better when they are trained by both parents (Stephen & Udisi, 2016). Rohmalina (2019) believed the father's place in children's development should not be forgotten because his roles include making the brain function for children's cognitive development. The current study shows that science education students from single-parent backgrounds have some socioeconomic challenges. This outcome has similarities with many previous pieces of research and is also at variance with some. John and Shimfe (2020) revealed that single-parent students have socioeconomic problems such as hunger, deprivation and financial challenges. For Mbah (2017), students from single-parent backgrounds are prone to hard drugs, stealing, street life, and sexual abuse. According to Olaleye and Oladeji (2010), students from single-parent families have challenges of poverty, aggression, and anxiety, making them street children. Lanozo et al. (2021) worried that students' problems from many single-parent homes are financial, mental, emotional, social and behavioural, which influence their academic performance. Harkness et al. (2020) linked single parenting to socioeconomic circumstances like poverty and poor mental health.

Parents' socioeconomic status significantly impacts students' academic performance in Africa and other continents. Okioga (2013) observed that parents' socioeconomic background critically impacts a student's academic performance. Parental socioeconomic status is a variable that has affected students' academic performance in Nigerian schools (Ogunshola & Adewale, 2012). The impact of the socioeconomic variable on the students' academic performance is not only in Nigeria. Caro (2009) said a positive correlation exists between socioeconomic status and students' academic performance in Canada. For Dahie, Mohamed and Moalim (2016), parent education, occupation, and income influence students' academic achievement in Somalia. Similarly, Ovansa (2017) research shows parents' socioeconomic is a critical factor to consider about the academic performance of secondary school students. Baht, Joshi and Wani (2016) posited that differences exist between students of high socioeconomic status and low socioeconomic status.

Cedeño, Martínez-Arias & Bueno (2016) observed that a predictor of students' academic performance is socioeconomic status. Aliyu (2016) said family socioeconomic status and students' academic performance are two constructs that have a significant relationship. According to Islam and Khan (2017), secondary schools' socioeconomic status and academic performance are positively correlated. Research shows that the relationship between students' socioeconomic status and educational achievement is an issue that cannot be ignored (Thomson, 2018) in any society.

The current result on science education students' sponsorship status in Nigerian schools is inconsistent with previous research findings. However, most authors believe that students with single parents are on the increase due to the prevailing economic situation in Nigeria. This suggests most students in Nigerian schools may be single parent sponsored.

Essien and Bassey (2012) concurred that single mother parent is increasing in Nigeria, which suggests single-parent students are rising. John et al. (2020) queried the recent increase in single-parent families in Nigeria. Mbah (2019) is worried about how single parenting is increasing in Nigeria today due to divorce and other factors mentioned in the literature. There was a concern by Falana et al. (2012) some years back that childbearing outside legal marriage was increasing, suggesting the increase of single-parent children.

The present study indicates that science education students from a single parent are not many compared with the above pieces of literature. However, it may mean that single-parent students are

growing, but this cohort of students is minimal in the sampled school. Therefore, Anyebe, Lawal, Dodo and Adeniyi (2017) that single parenting is on the increase in Nigeria may not hold among science education students of the sampled College.

Conclusion

The study examined science education students' perceptions of single-parenting impacts on science learning. The research used a questionnaire to elicit students' views. Findings revealed the following:

- Parenthood is critical to science learning
- The involvement of both parents is essential for good academic performance in science
- Single-parenting invoke some socioeconomic challenges on science students
- The numbers of single-parent sponsored science students are lower than those with both parents.

Given this, undermining the position of both parents in science learning is not the best for any society. Science education is critical to the technological advancement of any nation. Learning science starts from home with a good environment that includes an intact dyad. Therefore, some recommendations based on these findings are imperative.

Recommendations

The author suggests the following because of the findings of the research:

- The government should discourage Childbirth outside marriages.
- The government should provide jobs for every young couple in a family system to avoid the temptation of permanent or temporary separation.
- There should be improved health care for every Nigerian to reduce mortality.

All Nigerians must strictly follow the COVID-19 guidelines to avoid untimely parents' death.

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