

Marital Instability, Single Parenthood and Girl-Child Academic Performance in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo State

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Abstract

The study examined the upshots of marital instability and single parenthood on the academic performance of girl-child in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State Nigeria. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Findings revealed that low or lack of income is one of the major challenges faced by single parents. Furthermore, the study revealed that single parents lack partners that they can share both the monetary and child care responsibilities. The study concluded that most parents are encountered with various hindrances such as emotional, social, financial, and economic problems which results in behaviours which are unacceptable in the society by their children such as cultism, alcohol and drug addiction. Alcoholism and drug abuse can lead to serious health challenges. A girl-child who abuses alcohol and drugs is more likely to struggle with addiction later in life likewise have permanent and brain damage. It is therefore recommended that

couples with marital related issues should seek help from social workers for guidance. Marriage and family life counsellors should organize education seminars on the influence of marital instability and single parenthood on children especially the girl-child on educational performance. There is a need for vital consideration for policymakers, government and other stakeholders to promote the academic performance of children who are products of broken homes.

Keywords: Marital instability, Single Parenthood, Girl-child, Academic performance.

Word Count: 216

Introduction

Academic performance is refer to as the capability to assimilate in a learning environment. This is the outcome of a student's intellectual skills in an academic environment. The home is important to a child's development and total wellbeing. The family is an important part of society where the child's upbringing commences. As a child grow and move from infant to toddler and then proceeded to a preschooler, he or she learns how to communicate, read, write, and also listen, which later develop the child to develop academically. The influence of parent care on girl-child academic and total wellbeing cannot be over emphasized. Children without parental support, care and supervision find themselves at a higher risk of abuse, inadequate parental love and care. Parents are very influential in the lives of their wards. They are capable of modifying and raise children who will be attentive, smart, tolerant and deligent through their active participation in the educational activities and learning process.

In enhancing the academic performance of the student, parental and home environmental factors contribute a major part such as the following:

- I. **Provision of Resources:** This include, providing the children with the basic amenities which are used to promote learning such as reading materials, uniforms, school bag, stationary items, likewise a home lesson tutor. The provision of resources mainly rely on the financial strength and ability of the

parents. In a situation whereby parents are financially bouyant, they will be able to secure all the required materials and resources. While on the other hand, families that falls in the range of socio-economically backward sections of the society and nation as a whole are incapacitated to provide the needed materials and resources which helps in facilitating learning.

2. **Effective communication:** Effective communication among the family members, good interaction are also one of the factors that contribute significantly towards development of a pleasant home environment.
3. **Pleasant Home Environment:** Within one's home, the environmental conditions should be amiable and welcoming. The presence of a pleasant environmental conditions would make provision of room for the student to concentrate on his or her studies. Students develop peace of mind and are able to focus upon their learning in an proper way and manner.
4. **Encouraging Attitude of Family Members:** In order to accomplish academic goals, there should be mutual encouragement from the members of the family. When parents are encouraging towards their children and make adequate provision of sources for the children to acquire education, then children become motivated and ready to learn. Parents and siblings within the family are the ones that render an imperative contribution towards accomplishment of academic goals. Encouraging attitude of the parents majorly proves as a means of inspiration and motivation in order for learning to take place.
5. **Small Family Size:** This is known as a nuclear family, encompassing of father, mother and their children. A situation whereby children number is between one or two, then the family is regarded as a small family. When children in this type of family are just one or two, the parents find their job duties manageable, by being able to make provision of resources likewise manage the learning process, as well as the growth and development of their children.

6. **Parents Educational Level:** The educational background and qualifications of the parents are viewed as one of the crucial aspects which are used to enhance the academic learning of their wards. A well educated parents, will make an arrangement and provision of good education to their wards such as enrolling them in a high reputable schools and also provide them with all the needed materials and resources that are used while implementing learning. While on the other hand, parents who possess a low educational levels or are not educated, then too in the present existence, they encourage their wards towards acquisition of education.

Marital instability is a situation that occurs in a marriage, leading to series of physical, spiritual, psychological, socio economical, emotional, biological and cultural issues which bring about a severe damage in the home. A process whereby the relationship between a married couple erodes, such that they cannot ordinarily restore their relationship. It is the breach of domestic anticipation, often leading to a divorce or dissolution of the marital relationship.

Marital instability and single parenthood serves as an obstacle to the educational attainment of children especially girl-child. The children suffer most in an unstable home in society because it affects all ramifications of their lives most especially the female ones. In a situation whereby marital instability leads to divorce, the situation becomes more unbearable for the children in such a family. Marital instability and single parenthood lead to some factors which serves as hindrances in the academic performance of girl-child. Some of these factors includes the following: Early Pregnancy, Sexual Abuse and Harassment, Teenage Drinking, Unhealthy Relationship, Drug Abuse, Prostitution, Internet Fraud or Cybercrime and so on.

Marriage is human behaviour and a significant affiliation that involves a man and woman or woman who agree to be united and live in an intimate and intensive relationship and develop together. Marriage may be long or brief, successful or not. The quality of each marriage depends on what each partner brings into it, and what they make of it once they are together. Marriage involves a period of courtship, introduction between the families,

engagement, and a marital dowry, and a wedding celebration in most cases. These are all carried out for the marital relationship to last long. However, disagreement is a human attribute that may be unavoidable in any marriage. However, crises overwhelm many marriages. Marital instability is a situation that occurs between man and woman. A situation whereby the husband and wife have different opinions, perspectives, and views concerning a situation, activities or issues in the home which cannot be peacefully, mutually and amicably resolved. Marital instability usually occurs as a result of poor communication patterns between a couple, extramarital relationships, domestic violence, bad spiritual life, absence of romance, unfulfilled expectations, sexual problems, addictive behaviour, educational and social background etc. Thereby when it becomes unbearable for the individuals involved it can bring about divorce or separation among couples which invariably leads to singleness or single parenthood in a family where children are involved. This study or research work is focused to examine the effects of Marital instability and single parenthood on the academic performance of the girl child and also suggest ways of reducing their rate of occurrence in the society as a whole.

Marriage is a contract for Union and cohabitation between one or more males and females for the establishment of their families. Marriage involves joining in matrimony two individuals of a different gender to become one flesh as husband and wife, given the need for companionship, procreation, continuing and sustaining family ties (Gbenda & Akume, 2002; Abane, 2003; Bumpass, 2009 in Omorogiuwa & Omorogiuwa Tracy, 2016). Onwuasoanya (2006) in Omorogiuwa and Omorogiuwa, 2016 defined family as the household and those who live in one house, and a network of persons such as the couple, their offspring and kin intimately held together by a bond of social and kinship relationship. A family is an important unit in society. The family's most outstanding responsibility is to train and bring up the child in the norms and values of the society. (Santrock, 2006; Osborne & McLanahan, 2007 in Hassan, 2016 postulated that Changes in family structure are typically accompanied by changes in economic,

time, and parental resources; this in turn place stress on families and thus adversely affect child outcomes. Family instability also yields residential instability and a sense of insecurity concerning household rules. According to Crosnoe and Elder 2011, family stability and instability affect a child's social and personal relationships with his or her colleagues, mates and peers within and outside his or her environment. Odu and Ayodele 2007 in Falana, Bada & Ayodele 2012 opined that recently the number of single-parent families has been rising at an alarming rate. Many children live in single-parent homes today more than ever before and more than half of all children born today will likely live in single-parent homes before they reach adulthood. Although many single-parent families are the outcome of broken marriages, many others are the result of out-of-marriage childbearing most notably by teenagers out of wedlock. In some societies, especially those with high death rates due to malnutrition, diseases and regional conflicts, the loss of a parent is hardly uncommon. Nevertheless, in the extended families characteristics of these regions, the slack is typically taken up by other family members, and replacement marriages may be quickly arranged to ensure family continuity. Everybody including the children of single-parent families constantly responds to demands. People involve themselves in marriages due to their various mindsets and expectations without putting into consideration other crucial aspects and factors which are vitally important and also serves as guidance for keeping a home. When their expectations are not met then problems arise which invariably leads to marital instability and single parenthood. Lack of parental care, upbringing, love, attention etc. which are required for children development tends to leads to maladjustment and getting involved in behaviour that is frowned at and forbidden by the cultural, traditional, societal norms and values. Such as prostitution, stealing, abortion, drug addiction, examination malpractice to mention a few. In this research work, questions on marital instability and single parenthood and their effect on the academic performance of a girl-child would be asked. Love is the vital ingredient that forms the basis of all life on earth. It is a feeling which cannot be quantitatively measured but which

nevertheless is vital for the coexistence of all forms of living beings on this planet. Children from divorced or separated homes usually lack love. Cultivating some habits such as bedtime stories, playing video games, visiting amusement parks and cinemas with kids. Such gesture makes children believe that you as a parent love and care for them. This strengthens the family bond and relationship. Children from unstable homes may not have the opportunity to all these parent-child relationships and this can lead to emotional trauma and breakdown.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to determine the effects of marital instability and single parenthood on the academic performance of a girl-child. The specific objectives include to:

1. examine the effects of marital instability and single parenthood on the girl child's academic performance.
2. interrogate if inadequate communication in the home can lead to marital instability.
3. identify whether the immaturity of a couple can lead to marital instability.
4. investigate whether interference from members of the family can lead to marital instability.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has single parenthood expose the girl-child to bad influence?
2. To what extent has the immaturity of couples cause marital instability?
3. To what extent has marital instability has any effect on the academic performance of the girl child?
4. To what extent has single parenthood cause early pregnancy in girl children?
5. To what extent has marital instability brings about a broken home?
6. To what extent has marital instability brings about dysfunctionality in the girl-child's social adjustment?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There will be no significant effect of home on the academic performances of a girl child.

H₀₂: There will be no significant effect of single parenthood on the academic performance of a girl-child.

Methodology

In this study, the descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The design attempted to provide an accurate description or a picture of a particular situation that has happened in the past without manipulation. It enabled the researcher to collect data on the identified research problem without manipulating any of the variables of interest in the study.

The study adopted purposive and random sampling techniques. Through purposive sampling technique, at Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State Nigeria, twenty-four individuals comprising of parents and female teenagers were selected and used as a preliminary sample while the total sample will be six respondents drawn from the six areas in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State by using multi-stage sampling technique from each purposely selected slums. These are:

Akure South LGA	Oda	Oke Aro	Isikan
	Owode	Gbogi	Ijomu

This study was based on structured questionnaires, complimented with oral interviews and available records (mixed methods).

The questionnaire was tagged upshot of marital instability and single parenthood on academic performance of girl-child. (UMISPAAGC I).

The questionnaire consisted of two (2) sections "A" and "B" Section "A" consisted of questions on the demographic status of the respondents while section "B" focused on the variables under study that are related to the upshot of marital instability and single parenthood on academic performance of girl-child. The responses in section "B" were categorized into strongly Agreed (SA) Agreed (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly disagreed (SD) respectively.

Results

4.0 Reliability Statistics

The results of analysis in table 1 showed the reliability statistics of all construct that was used in the research questionnaire. The reliability statistics of all construct were examined using Cronbach's alpha; this is to ensure the stability and consistency of the research instrument. Based on previous research (Nunnally, 1978) the minimum requirement for Cronbach's alpha is a value of 0.60. The reliability statistics of the construct in table 1 below ranges between 0.961 to 0.983, which showed that all the constructs adopted for this study was above the minimum requirement (0.60). This implies that all items used for the construct in this study are very reliable and efficient.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	No of Items
Construct 1	0.983	10
Construct 2	0.972	10
Construct 3	0.968	10
Construct 4	0.961	10

4.1 Research Objectives

4.1.1: To examine effect of marital instability and single parenthood on the girl child's academic performance

The results in table 2 below present the first objective of the study. To examine the effect of marital instability and single parenthood on the girl child's academic performance, it can be observed from table 2 that majority of the respondents advocated that degradation to the society contributed largely to the poor academic performance of the girl's child ($M=2.05$). Also, lack of education leading to early pregnancy of girl's child ($M=1.78$),

cohabitant of girl's child leading to risky sexual behavior ($M=1.75$), porous environment influencing the academic performance of the girl's child ($M=1.73$) are all the leading factors affecting girl child's academic performance according to the respondents. However, items such as "Marital instability ($M=1.58$)", "Income of parents ($M=1.53$)", "Bad companies ($M=1.52$)" and were not strongly advocated as factors that affect girl's child academic performance as affirmed by the respondents.

Table 2: Effect of marital instability and single parenthood on the girl child's academic performance

	Construct (C)	M	SD
C1	Can porous environment influence the academic performance of the girl-child?	1.73	.905
C2	Can co-habitant of the girl-child leads to risky sexual behavior?	1.75	.840
C3	Does peer influence causes poor academic performance among the girl-child counterpart?	1.67	.764
C4	Is poor academic performance of the girl-child a degradation to the society?	2.05	.876
C5	Can lack of education lead to early pregnancy of the girl-child?	1.78	.947
C6	Is technological trend in the society a chance for poor academic performance of the girl-child?	1.68	.859
C7	Can marital instability disrupt the girl-child education?	1.58	.931
C8	Can bad companies of the girl-child influence her academic performance?	1.52	.679
C9	Can inadequate care of the parents affect the girl-child education?	1.70	.687
C10	Can income of the parents affect the girl-child academic performance?	1.53	.716

4.1.2: To examine if inadequate communication in the home can lead to marital instability

The results in table 3 below present the second objective of the study. To examine the effect of inadequate communication in the

home can lead to marital instability, it can be observed from table 3 that majority of the respondents advocated that hostility of the parents increases the risk of early pregnancy of the girl's child ($M=1.78$). Also, academic performance of the girl-child influenced by single parenthood ($M=1.75$), family disagreement disrupt the girl-child academic performance ($M=1.75$), separation of the parents pave ways for dropping out of the school by the girl-child ($M=1.75$). However, items such as "Broken home" ($M=1.55$), "Frequent fights between parents ($M=1.47$)", "Parental background ($M=1.45$)" and were not strongly advocated as factors that affect inadequate communication and marital instability as affirmed by the respondents.

Table 3: Inadequate communication and marital instability

	<i>Construct (C)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
C1	Can family disagreement disrupt the girl-child academic performance?	1.75	.870
C2	Can frequent fights between parents lead to improper upbringing of the girl-child?	1.47	.506
C3	Do broken homes increase high risk of sexual indulgence of girl-child?	1.55	.677
C4	Does negligence of the parents influence the academic performance of the girl-child?	1.70	.758
C5	Is academic performance of the girl-child influenced by single parenthood?	1.75	.670
C6	Can broken-home affect the proper upbringing of the girl-child?	1.60	.496
C7	Does parental background enhances the risk of poor academic performance of the girl-child?	1.45	.504
C8	Can poor economy status of the parent affect the education of the girl-child?	1.55	.677
C9	Does separation of the parents pave way for dropping out of the school by the girl-child?	1.75	.954
C10	Can hostility of the parents increase the risk of early pregnancy of the girl-child?	1.78	.974

4.1.3: To find out whether immaturity of couple can lead to marital instability

The results in table 4 below present the first objective of the study. Based on the study to examine whether immaturity of couple can lead to marital instability, it can be observed from table 4 that majority of the respondents advocated that lack of proper communication of the girl-child with her parents encourages sexual indulgent (M=2.00). Also, death of one of the parents affect the academic attainment of the girl-child (M=1.82), gender inequality be responsible for poor academic performance among the girl-child (M=1.78), non-challant attitude of the parents expose the girl-child to sexual activities? (M=1.73) are all the leading factors affecting immaturity of couple and marital instability according to the respondents. However, items such as “Tradition (M=1.45)”, “Intake of hard drugs (M=1.37)”, “Harassment (M = 1.35)” and were not strongly advocated as factors that affect immaturity of couple and marital instability as affirmed by the respondents.

Table 4: Immaturity of Couple and Marital Instability

	Construct (C)	M	SD
C1	Can death of one of the parents affect the academic attainment of the girl-child?	1.82	.844
C2	Does intake of hard drug by the girl-child leads to risky behaviors?	1.37	.490
C3	Can harassment of the girl-child leads to poor academic performance?	1.35	.483
C4	Can abuse of the girl-child by the male counterpart in the society leads to poor academic performance?	1.60	.483
C5	Can norms and belief of the society influence the academic performance of the girl-child?	1.45	.709
C6	Does tradition contributes to the literacy of the girl-child?	1.45	.677
C7	Can cultural attributes of immediate environment influence the academic performance of the girl-child?	1.50	.749
C8	Can non-challant attitude of the parents expose the girl-child to sexual activities?	1.73	.506
C9	Does lack of proper communication of the girl-child with her parents encourages sexual indulgent?	2.00	.905
C10	Can gender inequality be responsible for poor academic performance among the girl-child?	1.78	1.013

4.1.4: To Investigate whether Interference from Members of the Family can Lead to Marital Instability

The results in table 5 below present the last objective of the study. Based on the study to investigate whether interference from members of the family can lead to marital instability, it can be observed from table 5 that majority of the respondents advocated that teaching of sex education contributes to the poor academic performance of the girl child ($M=3.17$). Also, fear of the male counterpart leads to early pregnancy of the girl-child ($M=2.63$), use of contraceptive be a yardstick for early pregnancy of the girl-child ($M = 2.50$), introduction of abortion leads to early pregnancy of the girl-child ($M=1.65$) are all the leading factors affecting girl child's academic performance according to the respondents. However, items such as "Sexual desire ($M=1.47$)", "Watching pornography ($M=1.42$)", "Casual sex ($M=1.37$)" and were not strongly advocated as factors caused by interference from members of the family and marital instability as affirmed by the respondents.

Table 5: Interference from members of the family and marital instability

	Construct (C)	M	SD
C1	Is societal hatred for the girl-child education a cause for poor academic performance?	1.63	.705
C2	Can use of contraceptive be a yardstick for early pregnancy of the girl-child?	2.50	1.132
C3	Does sexual advances of the girl-child leads to early dropping out of the school?	1.62	.490
C4	Can introduction of abortion leads to early pregnancy of the girl-child?	1.65	.770
C5	Can watching of pornographic films enhances the risk of early pregnancy and poor academic performance of the girl-child?	1.42	.501
C6	Can desire for materials items lure the girl-child casual sex?	1.47	.716
C7	Do girl-child sees sex as a gratifying venture?	2.50	1.132
C8	Can casual sex of the girl-child leads to prostitution?	1.37	.490
C9	Can teaching of sex education contributes to the poor academic performance of the girl child?	3.17	.844
C10	Can fear of the male counterpart leads to early pregnancy of the girl-child?	2.63	1.125

4.2 Research Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant effect of home on academic performance of a girl-child.

The Results of analysis in then table below showed the Spearman correlation test on effect of home on girl's-child performance. The correlation test which can be reported as ($r=0.794$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$, $N=40$) is significant at 95% confidence interval level. Based on the correlation coefficient ($r=0.794$), there exist a positively strong relationship between a girl child academic performance and their respective home or background, and the relationship is statistically significant. This implies that girl-child's parental background or home settings has significant influence on academic performance of a girl-child.

Table I: Spearman Correlation test between Home and Academic performance of a girl child.

		C10	C7
C10	Spearman's rho Correlation	1	.794**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
C7	Spearman's rho Correlation	.794**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

** Correlation significant at 0.05

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of single parenthood on academic performance of a girl-child

The results of analysis in then table below showed the Spearman correlation test on effect of home on girl's-child performance. The correlation test which can be reported as ($r = 0.773$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$, $N = 40$) is significant at 95% confidence interval level. Based on the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.773$), there exist a positively strong relationship between a girl child academic performance and the parenthood status (single), and the relationship is statistically

significant. This implies that single parenthood has significant effect on girl's child academic performance or performance.

Table I: Spearman Correlation test between single parenthood and Academic performance of a girl-child.

		C9	C5
C9	Spearman's rho Correlation	1	.773**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
C5	Spearman's rho Correlation	.773**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

** Correlation significant at 0.05

Conclusion

The study examined the influences of marital instability and single parenthood on the academic performance of girl-child in Akure south local government area of Ondo state Nigeria.

Also, the study revealed that girl-child of separated parents encounter difficulty coping with their schooling, as a result of their parents' educational level, socio-economical status, and lack or insufficient income among others.

Furthermore, marital instability is a harbinger of many problems (socially, academically, and emotionally for the growing girl-child. Parents should be cognizant of their role modelling role to their children, especially the female child, when you train a girl, you train the nation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are thereby suggested:

- Couples with marital related issues should seek help from social workers for guidance.
- Marriage and family life counsellors should organize education seminars on the influence of marital instability and single

Parenthood on children especially the girl-child with their educational performance.

- There is the need for vital consideration for policymakers, government etc to promote the academic performance of children who are products of broken homes.

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