

Perceived Influence of Single Parenting on the Academic Achievement of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

*Ukoima, Ruth Nkalo, Mina, Agnes Dick & Dimkpa, Chioma Ann
Department of Educational Foundation, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University,
Port Harcourt

*Corresponding Author's Email: ukoimaruth@gmail.com

Abstract: *The study examined the perceived influence of single parenting on the academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Rivers State. To achieve the purpose of this study, the researchers formulated three (3) objectives, three (3) research questions and three (3) hypotheses for the study. The design of the study was descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 1,530 teachers and SS 2 students from five (5) selected public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area. The sampling technique was simple random sampling technique with a sample size of (400) teachers and students. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Influence of single parenting on students' achievement" (ISPSA). The data gathered from the research questions were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation, while the null hypotheses were tested using z-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the analysis, the study revealed that students are adversely affected by circumstances that occur with single parenting. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that government should organize public awareness campaign on the causes of single parenting and how to overcome it.*

Keywords: *Single Parenting, Students, Influence, Academic Achievement, Public Schools.*

INTRODUCTION

Children with experience of separation, divorce or death do not perform well or achieve academically. When both parents are present, it implies that the child would obtain basic care (Nyarko, 2007). However, when one of the parent is absent in a child's life, a gap is created as the child would lose the support that would have emanated from that parent. Salami and Alawode (2000) have asserted that, single parenting results from, separation of various kinds, divorce, having children out of wedlock or death of one spouse which leaves the roles in the hands of a single parent. Researchers in the United State have consistently found effects of single-parent families on the child's educational achievement. For example, in reviewing research results from large longitudinal data (Zill, 2016) found out that, students from nuclear intact families had the best academic performance, while students from alternative family types such as stepparent families and single-parent families performed not so well. Children who are raised in a single parent family home are at risk of not reaching their full potential.

Similarly, Han and Huang (2000) in their study on college attendance and education expenditure in Taiwan also found out that, in Taiwan children from single-parent families had a lower rate of attending college than that from intact families. The research done by Amoakohene (2013) in Ghana on relationship between single parenting and academic performance of adolescents in senior high school, found that there are some problems that are exceptional, which are only faced by single-parents, which create difficulties to raise children. These problems include: bitterness towards the absent spouse, loneliness, poverty and insecurity about raising children alone without a help. The research concluded that academic performance and single parenting are negatively related, hence the more cases of single parenting the poorer the academic performance of students.

In Nigeria, the study conducted by Mrinde (2014) about challenges that students with single parents face in attaining secondary school education in Rivers State, realized that challenges that single parented students face in attaining secondary education are not only multiple but also self contradictory. They are complex because no single challenge that stand on its own and be able to explain the challenge without connecting to the other. Therefore the challenges revealed are economic hardship, lack of parental care, lack of supervision and monitoring, lack of guidance and counseling and socialization. It was also revealed that these have affected single parented students' education attainment as they have poor academic performance, poor attendance, drop out of school, and engaging in bad behaviors. In the view of the finding sit was recommended that single parent students who are living in economic hardship must be identified so as to be helped by the government in the payment of the fees.

The study conducted by Bashagh (2015) on relationship between parental involvement in learning process and students' academic performance in selected secondary in Rivers State, revealed that low income, teachers attitude towards parents, parents ignorance and low level of education, parents attitudes towards teachers, personal commitments on work and poor communication between teachers and parents were factors hindering parents involvement in learning process and students' academic performance. Hence there's no empirical study in the area of single parenting in relation to academic performance in secondary schools in Rivers State, therefore the researcher aimed at assessing the effect of single parenting on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Rivers State as the research gap.

Definitely, different factors are capable of influencing the academic performance of secondary school students, such factors may be the students intrinsic attributes (intelligence, state of health, motivation, anxiety etc) and their environmental attributes (availability of suitable learning environment, adequacy of educational infrastructure, like textbooks and well-equipped laboratories) The home has a great influence on the students' psychological, emotional, social and economic state. The state of the home affects the individual since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. This is because the family background and context of a child can affect the child's reaction to life situations, this could have subsequent effect on the child's level of performance. Although, the school is responsible for the experiences that makes up the individual's life during school periods, yet parents and the individuals experiences at home play tremendous role in building the personality of the child and making the child

what he or she is. The foundation of what a person becomes in the society is laid in the home at the initial stage of life. Parents, therefore, have important roles to play in seeing to it that the youths acquire the appropriate social, psychological, moral and academic development.

Generally, it is the responsibilities of the family to train and bring up the child in the norms and values of the society. Divorce and separation of various kinds, and of death of one spouse, however may leave the roles in the hands of a single parent. Single parenting can be defined as a situation in which one of the two individuals involved in the conception of a child is being responsible for upbringing of the child. Single parenthood may also arise when either the male or female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock. In Nigeria, the existence of single parents was formerly unknown and where they existed they are ignored as exceptional cases of moral aberration. In the case of death of one's spouse, he or she is advised and also expected to remarry and the children will be trained by the relations of both the man and woman that is why Chinua Achebe said "it takes a community to train a child in Africa". In the present dispensation, however, they are fast growing family patterns both inside and outside Nigeria. Although there are no available statistics of single-parent families in Nigeria, practical experience and newspaper reports showed that there is an increase in the number of single parents in Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

Time has really changed. Many of the old customs and traditions which were taught and practiced for several years are now obsolete. The modern culture has changed and outgrown the values and beliefs that were thought to be the core beliefs and values of our society. Even though, moralists and conservatives are experiencing disgust over the currently evolving belief and cultural systems. The truth is, what has been unacceptable in the olden days, is now becoming fast and rapidly rising trends. For decades and even centuries, one of the major concerns to the conservatives, is the issue of single-parenting. Single-parenting is already becoming a fast and rapidly growing trend in the society (Tenibiaje, 2011). The child is morally upright and emotionally stable when both parents cooperate in taking good care of him. The family is the first agent of socialization the child comes in contact with, and the family has a great influence on the child's physical, mental, moral, emotional, spiritual, and academic development. The family lays the strong foundation of education before the child goes to school and the personality that the child takes to school is determined by the home. "Charity begins at home," says the wise ones. Parents have roles to play in the child's educational development. It is in view of this that the researcher intends to investigate the influence of single parenting on the academic performance of secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of River State.

Students who experience separation, divorce or death of one of their parents do not always perform well or achieve. Also, they are at risk of not reaching their full potential. Different researches have been conducted relating to single parenting and its effect on students' academic performance but no study has been directed on single parenting in relation to academic performance in secondary schools in Port Harcourt. This study was, therefore designed to assess the effect of single parenting on the performance of students in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the perceived influence of single parenting

on the academic achievement of students in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

1. To identify the causes of single parent in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. To identify the challenges faced by single parent in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. To ascertain the effect of single parent on the academic performance of students in Public Secondary Schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The researcher made use of the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What are the causes of single parent in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What are the challenges faced by single parent in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. What are the effects of single parent on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. There is no significant difference on the mean rating of the respondents between causes of single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference on the mean rating of the respondents between the challenges faced by single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference on the mean rating of the respondents between the effects of single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development (1978)

Vygotsky's cognitive development theory (1978) stresses that parents play a central role in the process of making meaning. Vygotsky further states cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children and their partners co-construct knowledge. For Vygotsky, the environment in which children grow up will affect how they think and what they think about (Roth & Lee, 2007). He also believed that there were certain higher functions developed through the direct interaction with significant people in a child's life. The absence of the missing parent to guide, discipline, direct, model, and teach may be one of the causes that a

child from a single parent family may not perform at their full potential (Rothstein, 2004). To Vygotsky, the development of the mind is the interweaving of biological development of the human body and the appropriation of the cultural or ideal or material heritage which exists in the present to coordinate people with each other and the physical world (Bronfenbrenner, 2002).

Also, Vygotsky's concept of cognitive development suggests that the social world defines the way children think. Vygotsky (1978) believed that children learn more when their learning is best supported at opportune times when the caregiver aides them in learning new tasks. "When children raised in single-parent households are left alone for long periods or left in the hands of uninvolved caregivers, their academic skills are not being fully supported" (Knox & Virginia, 1996). Therefore, the researcher has employed Vygotsky's cognitive development theory because it places parents as partners in their child's life is crucial as he believed that everything a child learns is through the interactions with knowledgeable partners, Thus children who experience cooperative and assistive, rather than punitive styles of parenting, will quickly increase cognitive skills and be motivated to learn. This applies to practical skills like writing or building things from blocks, as well as the learning of ethical and problem-solving behavior (Brooks, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

The Figure below shows variables that guide this study. There are independent variables, intervening variables and dependent variable. Independent variables are represented by single parenting factors. While, intervening variables are parents' education, gender, parent occupation and family size and Dependent variable is students' performance.

Single Parenting

Single parenting as is called is becoming a rapidly growing phenomena in both the developed and developing nations of the world. Studies show that in some States alone, there are four single parents to every ten parents and there are two single parents for every ten (10) adults" (Memon *et al.*, 2010). Since the parents jointly take the decision of single parenting, one voice is mostly ignored and it is that of the child. It was reliably gathered that single parenting has major consequence on the child's mental, social, emotional, behavioral, financial and psychological outcomes (Duke, 2000). In fact, single parenting faces many challenges which have significant effects to a student as it has been identified in this paragraph. The direct effect of being raised by a single parent is especially visible in child's thinking and mental mindset. Psychologists and advocates have validated this over time. Tests and observations have consistently concluded and found that single parenting makes schoolchildren more aggressive and rebellious. Hence, these are transferred on their educational needs for survival in the society. Experts say the behavior could be the outcome of the anger and limitation the child experiences while growing up. These are obvious reasons to make the child feel abnormal, different and unaccepted (Mathu, 1999). Actually, children being raised by single parent face many limitations which lead influence their academic performance.

In similar veins, the research conducted by Usakli (2013), on Comparison of children with single and Two Parents in terms of Behavioral Tendencies in Turkey", it is found out that, the children with single parents are less assertive and more aggressive

and submissive in schools which lead to poor academic performance than children with two parents. As a matter of fact, Families, teachers, school administrators and school counselors should be aware of the behavioral tendencies of single parent children. Therefore, families, teachers, school administrators and school counselors should be aware of the behavioral tendencies of single parent children. As a result of the impact of single parenting Fadeiye (1985), argues that, in two parent homes, both parents should play roles in child education. With regards to this, the father is to provide the necessary tools for the educational advancement, while the mother is supposed to supplement the father's efforts in this regard. When the father is absent and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the basic needs as well as supervised the academic performance of the child, the child will be backward or withdrawn. Where both parents exist due care and socialization with children should be exercised in the best way possible (Ortese, 1998). This is because the process of socialization that starts from the family depends on the effort of both parents playing a complimenting role in the child's upbringing. Such a child is likely to achieve self-actualization while the other from a single parent suffers deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities. This customarily affects the way the student socializes in school and seat with those who will help such child learn (Curran, 1991). This implies that most of children from two parents achieve self-actualization as the result they tend to do well in the studies.

Additionally, Battle (1998) noted that, when the mother is absent and the father is not privileged enough, the education of the child will face the same problems. A child from homes where the father and the mother are present will be well taken care of and socialized in the best way possible. This is because the process of socialization depends on both parents playing complimentary roles in bringing up the child. Such a child is likely to achieve self-actualization later in life but, children from single-parent families are likely to go through deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities, which may have remarkable effects on their performance in real life situations (Cummings & Davis, 1994). As matter of fact, a single parent faces doubled responsibilities requiring time, attention and money of the parent as children can be affected in their studies.

According to Ortese (1998), single parents and their children may have need of professional help through counseling. Counselors can give reasonable advice to the child and the single parent to make sure every small conflict is resolved timely. Absence of this is transmitted into the school and as such, affects the academic performance of such learner. Therefore, it is a difficult situation for any child to be raised by one parent, though few of these children can perform well in their studies. On the other hand, Fadeiye, (1985) pointed out that; both parents play a complimentary role in child's education. Where however, the father is absent from the home and the mother is not privileged enough to cater for all the basic needs as well as supervise the academic performance of the child, he or she (the child) will be backward or withdrawn. The same thing occurs when the mother is absent and the father is not privileged enough (Ortese, 1998). In fact, both mother and father are responsible to guide academic performance of the child in all aspects.

A single parent faces doubled responsibilities requiring more time, attention, and money, which of course may not be enough. The stress of having to find the necessity of life such as food, shelter and clothing for the family by a single parent consequently

places them at risk of becoming detached from their children, and compromises their ability to succeed in their academics. Bowles (1989) attachment theory suggests that, insecure attachment (which is likely to be seen in the relationships between absent single parents and their children) can result in the ineffectiveness of parenting strategies, as in an overwhelming amount of stress on parents as they endeavor to carry out their academic responsibilities and vice versa. However, Single parenting have negative effects on the academic achievements of the adolescents, talents, abilities and interest may not be fully developed to allow them to achieve self-actualization in life.

In a report by Rothstein (2004) suggested that, the need for these critical issues to be looked into, as it does more harm than good to the proper and successful educational development of the school learners. The researcher was of the opinion that students raised by single parents may live a worthwhile life or otherwise depending on the circumstance, level of maturity or love shown to them by the environment they find themselves. Thus, a child could have mental feelings when s/he has a close relationship with the ouster parent and this indirectly affects the emotions of such child. This, the researcher expressed that such a child or children can be taken out of the environment and must likely return after sometimes when she has fully recovered.

In this kind of situation, the affected child or children may need to be kept busy with objects or things around that would make him or her to be happy at all times (Coon et al., 1993). On the part of helping the affected students to socialize and be provided with social rights and opportunities, the school and the society would not be exempted through the assistance they should offer as a form of support to the custodian parents. When they team up with them, the students would thus become a better person in life and succeed academically (Akinsanye *et al.*, 2011). The family structure, ideally, provides a sense of security and stability that is necessary for children. When there is a breakdown in the family structure, children and their ability to function ordinarily or achieve academically drop. In some situations, the child no longer has two parents to depend on (Grissmer, 2003). They have to rely on one parent to meet most, if not all their needs. With limited finances, time and availability parents are less likely to provide the adequate support a child needs to perform to the best of their ability (Musgrave, 2000). Indeed, Parent has vital roles to play in the life of a child as well as in their academic achievement.

The involvement of a parent on a child determines the future of such child. Parenting involvement is a catch-all term for many different activities including at 'home,' good parenting, helping with homework, talking to teachers, attending school functions, through to taking part in school governance. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in schools but also throughout life" (Memon *et al.*, 2010). Unfortunately, the problem arise when one parent is suddenly absent and sometimes not there at all in taking over his/her family anymore. "The absence of one parent adds the burden of taking care/parenting to the one who remain with the family". The lack of potentiality of the absent parent affects so much not only the academic performance of the child but also the future of the child (Rouse & Barrow, 2006). However, growing up in a single-parent family is frequently viewed as a risk factor in a child and it has negative impact in his/her academic journey, Single parent families are now a common phenomenon within our community due to dearth, divorce and other factors.

It would be not be prudent to conclude however, that such negative outcomes were the direct consequence of the parents in the home or, as has been suggested on occasion, the absence of a father figure in a child's life (Millar, Jane, Ridge & Tess, 2001). Instead, children are adversely affected by circumstances that concur with single-parent family configurations (such as economic disadvantage, residential instability, and inter-parental conflict) or the consequence of such configurations (such as disrupted parenting). Such circumstances are not uniformly present in the lives of all single-parent families. Consequently, children from different types of single-parent families are at differential risk for adverse outcomes associated with their living arrangements. A greater percentage of single parent families (57.4% in 1999) than two-parent families (6.3%) live below the poverty line (Duke, 2000). Therefore, the percentage of single-parent families below the poverty line is highest for single mothers and lowest for widowed mothers.

In addition, a higher percentage of single mothers than single fathers live below the poverty line. Economic disadvantage is linked with lower academic achievement and increased behavioral problems among children. Fewer economic resources are also linked with residential instability, which further contributes to children's academic and behavioral difficulties. Differences in well-being for children from single parent families versus two-parent families typically disappear when differences in economic circumstances are taken into account (Millar & Ridge, 2001). Therefore, single parented students' education performances are poor as it has been associated with poor attendance, drop out of school, and engaging in bad behaviors.

Families that attain their single-parent status through marital dissolution are disproportionately more likely to experience both residential instability and higher rates of inter-parental conflict (both prior and subsequent to marital disruption) due to change in circumstances and relationships (Park & Kem, 2011). Children who are exposed to inter-parental conflict are more likely to have trouble with regard to psychological and behavioral adjustment and academic achievement. Again, once levels of inter-parental conflict are taken into account, differences in well-being for children from single parent families versus two-parent families are reduced (Duke, 2000). Finally, children from all family types are at risk when they experience parenting that is inadequate in terms of warmth, control, or monitoring.

Eamon (2005) states that, less than optimal parenting is more likely to be observed in families that are experiencing economic stress and among adolescent mothers (although a large part of this association may be explained by the greater likelihood that adolescent single mothers will experience economic disadvantage). Psychologist Mavis Hetherington has found that the parenting skills of mothers tend to diminish in the years immediately following divorce, and children who are exposed to such disruptions in parenting experience concurrent psychological, behavioral, and academic difficulties (Gustafson *et al.*, 2011). It shows that challenges that single parented students face in attaining secondary education are not only multiple but also complex.

As mothers adjust to their new single-parent status, however, their parenting improves, as does their children's well-being. However, some research suggests that the factor that has the greatest impact on student achievement is not family structure

but income (Schnabel & Schnabel, 2002). Relying on the data above, single parenting has increased dramatically of late and this trend has the possibility of depriving many schoolchildren the opportunity to make academic excellence now and in the future (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001). Studies that consider the influence of both family configuration and income find that there is little difference in the academic performance of children from two-parent and single-parent homes when family income is equal (Maurice, 2008). Ghana statistical Data vol. 1 (2005) showed that, about 35% of Ghanaian children live in single parenting homes. Therefore children from single parent families face many challenges throughout their development.

Causes of Single Parenting

The increase of single parenthood is not a phenomenon isolated to the western world. Even in Nigeria and other developing countries, there have been a high percentage of single parents within the population caused by one factor or the other or combination of more than one. As in any country, single parenthood arises because of the following major causes: Divorce, Death or estrangement of a spouse and early pregnancy (Duke, 2000).

Divorce: The trend of increasing divorce rates has virtually continued for more than 100 years (Bumpass, 1990). According to Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2006), divorce is the legal ending of a marriage between a man and a woman in a law-court by their counsels. The dramatic increase in the number of divorces since the 1950s seems now to have leveled off starting at the beginning of 1980 in the United States (Goldstein, 1999). In any event, the current level of divorce is high and it is assumable that the majority of recent first marriages will not last a life time, although a stable marriage remains the ideal (Bumpass, 1990; Jallinogo, 2000). Different social circumstances, personal attributes and even genetic aspects may contribute to the risk of divorce.

McGue and Lykken (1992) found in their twin family study a significantly higher concordance for divorce among monozygotic twins compared to dizygotic twins. Based on this notion, they concluded that there exists a strong genetic component in the etiology of divorce, at least in the familial transmission of divorce. The researcher hypothesized that this genetic influence is mediated largely by inherited personality characteristics, such as impulsivity and moral conviction. The study further suggested that cultural factors influence the threshold for divorce while within given culture, variations in underlying aggregate risk are strongly influenced by genetic factors.

In 2006, a single parent, 80% of which were headed by a female, headed 12.9 million families in the U.S. In the United Kingdom, there are 5.9 million single parents as of 2005, with 3.1 million children. About 1 out of 4 families with dependent children are single parent families, nine percent of which have a male single-parent. Though, majorities of the victims of single parenting across U.S, U.K and parts of African continent are females (U.S. Census Bureah, 2010). In South Korea, there is a strong societal disapproval of unmarried mothers. In 1985, more than 25,000 children were products of a home run by a single parent. September 1990 data shows that 73 percent of children in South Africa come from broken homes and 150,000 children had been affected by divorce in the last four years (Locoh, 2000). These figures surely have shot up by now. However, the problem with divorce is that it is not only the marriage that disintegrates but also the children who are separated from one or both of the parents

creating an imbalance in their educational pursuit. A nation like South Africa is one of the worst hit countries with predominantly a patriarchal society and children have consequently suffered greatly due to absent fathers.

Death or Estrangement of a Spouse: According to Wilson, (1993) losing a partner is very stressful for the parent. The psychological well-being of single parents in Nigeria has been very poor primarily because of the reason on why the partner was lost. According to the researcher, this is often worsening by the positions of the lost one in the family and the society especially in the eastern part of Nigeria. The problem is compounded where properties of the deceased are involved resulting in the exclusion of the woman and the children to their fate. This being the case, had forced many children out-of-school or resulted to poor academic performance in the latter years. However, the families soon might have forgotten the cause of the death such as illness, assassination, accidents, and natural occurrence.

In South Africa, AIDS is the predominant reason of single parenthood across every of her society and families. Mostly affected by this already are the two layers of the population pyramid. This pyramid consists of those in the five year old age bracket and 19 – 45 age brackets. To salvage this situation, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups have resulted to help widows by providing cash and vocational training. Assistance aimed at making them self-employed, and self-reliant to provide a better future for their children, though the problem of large number of children left with the widow has not helped the situation especially with the present standard of living, which is astronomically high beyond the reach of the poor (Amato, 1994).

Early Pregnancy: Nigeria, like other countries in the world, is currently faced with social fragmentation as women continue to suffer a high rate of teenage pregnancy. Over the years, the situation particularly among teenagers had become unabated even to the researcher owing to her years of experience as a teacher trainer. Women single parents feel the stigma of being poor and unmarried, widowed or divorced and are under extreme pressure from the society. Single mothers as central to this, look for ways to support their children and are very much willing to take huge risks to put some bread on the table are very vulnerable to prostitution and trafficking (Wilson, 1993).

A report on the South Africa Operation (2012) shows a high-unmet need for contraceptive among teenagers and women living in the rural areas thus a very high teenage pregnancy turnout. The report therefore calls for empowerment programme for teenagers and rural women so that they can take control of their reproductive behavior. For mothers between 15-19 years, who are likely single parents, age in itself is not a risk factor, but additional risks may be associated with socio-economic factors relating to academic pursuit of the family. In the developed countries, data supporting teenage pregnancy as a social issue include lower educational levels, higher rates of poverty and other poorer “life outcomes” in children of teenage mothers. Within these societies, pregnancy is usually outside of marriage and carries a social stigma in its cultures.

The situation of teenage pregnancy is slightly different in developing countries as they are usually within a marriage and does not involve a social stigma (Locoh, 2000). Wikipedia (2010) had described early motherhood to have effect on psychosocial Development of the child. The occurrence of developmental disabilities and behavioral issues are increased in children born to teen mothers. Poor academic performance in

the children of teenage mothers has also been noted, with many of the being more likely than average to fail at the secondary schools (UNICEF, 2001).

Challenges faced by Single Parents

Parenting is a not easy and single parenting is tougher as it entails added responsibilities. A single parent has to face continuous newer challenges every day. For a single parent, these challenges appear in a series, in combination or even alone. Whatever the situation, there is no denying the fact that single parenting is full of challenges (Sander, 2001). The effects of growing up in single parent family have been shown to go beyond economics, increasing the risk of children dropping out of school, disconnecting from the labour force, and becoming teen parents.

Finance: In order to adequately understand and examine the negative contextual effect of the number of children from single-parent families at school, we first briefly elaborate on the reason why children from single-parent families perform worse at school than children from two-parent families. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) gave an extensive description of the three types of resources (i.e., financial, parental, and social) that are important in explaining the impact of living with a single parent on children's chances of future success. First, they underline the importance of financial resources and the loss of income that generally goes together with family disruption. In short, this is due to the fact that after a divorce two households need to be supported instead of only one and thus a lot of household expenses cannot be shared any longer, which is also called a loss of economies of scale. The most direct effect of this loss of income on educational performance of children is the fact that the quality of the school they attend generally is lower (Grissmer, 2003).

The higher the income of parents, the more possibilities they have to live in neighborhoods with good public schools or to send their children to a school of their preference. Income can also affect school outcomes through enabling a child to participate in extracurricular activities, like lessons after school, special trips, or summer camps. Such activities improve children's skills directly, but also indirectly via general intellectual stimulation, which affects subsequent learning (Sander, 2001). In addition to a loss of financial resources, a loss of parental involvement is generally associated with a divorce or separation. Parental involvement is supposed to positively affect children's educational outcomes" (Park & Kim, 2011). According to Richards and Schmiege (1993), Children raised in single-parent homes suffer more severe health problems when the custodial parent is unable to provide them with proper nutrition and health insurance. In such a situation, a single-parent is in one way or another obliged to play two roles in raising the child and many cases it becomes a problem to the children.

Furthermore, children of single parents are at a greater risk for involvement in dangerous behaviors, such as drugs, alcohol, criminal activity or self-injury due to the lack of adequate adult supervision (Millar, Jane, Ridge & Tess, 2001). To overcome the impact of limited finances, single parents should seek out community resources to supplement the needs of their families, including agencies that can help them collect overdue child support. Take advantage of state-funded childcare programs, and medical and dental insurance plans to ease some of the financial strain on your family. Also, involve your children in after school programs that will keep them active and safe during the hours you must work (Millar, Jane, Ridge & Tess, 2001). However, children growing

up in single-parent families experience negative consequences, but not all children. More importantly, focusing on the weaknesses and problems does not help single parents and their children become strong.

The Family: A Proclamation to the World states that adaptations in family life become necessary when disability, death, or other circumstances (such as divorce) make such adaptations necessary (Eamon, 2005). God loves us and will bless us in these circumstances. While it is not easy, single parent families can adapt and be strong families. According Eamon (2005), it mainly comprehends the time parents spend with their children on reading, helping with their homework, or by listening to the stories about their experiences at school, as well as the ability and willingness of parents to monitor and supervise children's social activities outside school, which reduces their opportunities to get in trouble.

Parents' occupation influences the students' achievement in academic works due to levels of their investments in their carriers that determine their level of purchasing capacity. Students' academic achievement is negatively correlated with the low level of parent's socio-economic status because it hinders the individual in gaining access to sources and resources of learning (Duke, 2000; Eamon, 2005). Low SES level strongly affects the achievement of students, dragging them down to a lower level" (Sander, 2001). It is also observed that, the economically disadvantaged parents are less able to afford the cost of education of their children at higher levels and consequently they do not work at their fullest potential (Rouse & Barrow, 2006). Thus, children from single parent are said to face economic hardship.

Parents' Occupation: According to Akinsanya (2011), concerning parental occupation, a child from a well-educated parent with high socio-economic status is more likely to perform better than a student from an illiterate family. This is because the child from an educated family has a lot of support such as a decent and good environment for academic work, parental support and guidance, enough textual and academic materials and decent feeding. He or she is likely to be sent to good schools where well-seasoned teachers handle his or her subjects. Farooq (2011) identified that, the type of parental occupation also has significant influence on student's achievement in the school, because the type of engagement of the parent will determine the amount of quality time they can give attention to the student at home and the level of their involvement in their ward's educational programmes. A very busy parent who leaves home before daybreak and returns when the child is already asleep can offer very minimum attention and input to his or her child's education needs at home and in school.

According to Graetz (2009), parental education and occupational status are highly correlated with children's educational choices and attainment; this implies that the higher the parental educational qualification, the higher the occupational status of such a parent; and vice versa. Further, Graetz reported that, children from parents having low occupational status face many barriers in transiting from one stage of education to the next; revealing that low parental occupational status has negative influence and effect on student's school achievement. Parents of different occupation classes often have different styles of child rearing, different ways of disciplining their children and different ways of reacting to their children. These differences do not express themselves consistently as expected in the case of every family; rather they influence the average tendencies of families for different occupational classes (Rothstein, 2004). Actually,

Parent's occupation for students from single parent family influences the average tendencies of the students as they are involved in income activities.

Time Management: From work to appointments, a single parents schedule is going to fill up fast. A significant step to take in managing these tough schedules is to first prioritize the tasks. If possible, a single parent should try to work with their employer in finding a work schedule that will assist with other priorities. Parents should also try to plan things ahead. In example, by marking down all of the family's appointments, meetings and events onto a central calendar that is accessible by all. Than by planning things accordingly to that calendar, a single parent can successfully tackle their daily regimen (Grasser, 2003). Musgrave (2000) explained that, managing time is a key challenge for single parent students. Because these students often carry more responsibilities than traditional students do, they have less time to devote to their education. They must balance school, children, work and their own well-being. Pressures to perform academically and achieve satisfactory academic progress are added to those they already feel from their home and child rearing responsibilities.

In a study on the effect of sociological and psychological belief factors on the academic success of single-mother college students, multiple participants were concerned about balancing their time. For participants of the study, working hard not only meant compromising their family life to meet their academic responsibilities, but compromising their social and personal needs as well (Davison, 1994).

Money Management: This means that single parents will need to budget their monthly income. This is probably the most tangible challenge they will face, because now the household only has one income versus a dual, monthly stipend. Alterations in spending and lifestyle may need to be changed if their budget is in a deficit. To better manage their money, a single parent may cut back on how much they are spending, try to conserve energy, thus saving money on bills, and/or partake in economical entertainment for the family and for themselves (Battle, 1998). Therefore, managing time can be a huge challenge for single parents, especially those who are also working. To help simplify your life and save valuable time, consider the following tips: Make lists and prioritize the tasks in order of importance.

Ask yourself if everything on your list is essential. Consider whether your expectations are realistic and scale them down to attainable levels if necessary. Simplify tasks for example, purchase food that is easy to prepare, combine errands into one trip, and set aside a block of time to do tasks (e.g., returning telephone calls, paying bills) (Rothstein, 2004). Avoid waiting until the last minute to meet deadlines or fulfill obligations. Prepare your workspace for the next day; make lists; lay out clothes; and pack briefcases, lunches and book bags at home the night before work. The more organized you are, the less time you will waste scrambling to get things done (McDonald, 2007). Prioritize your activities, if you feel overwhelmed with requests for your time and help (e.g., coaching your daughter's soccer team, chaperoning your son's field trip, volunteering for a local organization), choose those activities that are most important to you and learn to say "no" to others (Graetz, 2009). Actually, parent is supposed teach his or her child about taking responsibilities in different aspects.

METHODOLOGY

This section deals with the methodology used in carrying out the study. Specifically, it is discussed under the following sub-headings: research design, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques, instrument for data collection and method of data analysis.

Research Design: The study made use of descriptive survey design. This design provides descriptive overview of the data elicited from the respondents concerning the single parenting and academic achievement of students in public secondary schools. The population of the study consists of the teachers and SS 2 students in five (5) selected public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State with a total population of one thousand five hundred and fifty (1,550) teachers and students. The study made use of simple random sampling technique for the sampling technique with a sample size of four hundred (400) teachers and students. The instrument used for the study is a self developed questionnaire. The items were ranked and weighted using four-point Liker scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The data gathered for the study were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using z-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

This presents the results of the study. The data gathered were analysed and used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses as presented.

Data Presentation

Research Question 1: What are the causes of single parent in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on the Causes of Single Parent in Public Secondary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Responses					(\bar{X})	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Remarks
		SA	A	D	SD	N				
1.	Divorce emanating from the husband or wife will cause single parenting in the family	210 (840)	170 (510)	10 (20)	10 (10)	400	1380	3.45	0.93	Accepted
2.	Death of husband or wife can cause single parenting in the family	175 (700)	190 (570)	20 (40)	15 (15)	400	1325	3.31	0.91	Accepted
3.	Early pregnancy without marriage (husband or wife) can cause single parenting	180 (720)	165 (495)	30 (60)	25 (25)	400	1300	3.25	0.90	Accepted

	in the family))							
4.	Estrangement of a spouse can also cause single parenting in the family	190 (760)	165 (499)	25 (50)	20 (20)	400	1325	3.31	0.9 1	Accepted

The analysis in table 1 revealed that the respondents accepted the view that divorce emanating from the husband or wife will cause single parenting in the family. The table still indicated that the respondents also accepted the point that death of husband or wife can cause single parenting in the family. It was still observed from the table that the respondents accepted the point that early pregnancy without marriage (husband or wife) can cause single parenting in the family or home. The table also showed that estrangement of a spouse can also cause single parenting in the family.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges faced by single parent in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on the Challenges Faced by Single Parent in Public Secondary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Responses					(\bar{X})	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Remarks
		SA	A	D	SD	N				
5.	One parent providing finance is a major challenge in single parenting home or family	170 (680)	180 (540)	30 (60)	20 (20)	400	1300	3.25	0.9 0	Accepted
6.	Parents' occupation may also be a challenge in single parenting home or family	165 (660)	195 (585)	30 (60)	10 (10)	400	1315	3.29	0.9 1	Accepted
7.	Time management is also a challenge in single parenting home or family	185	170	35	10	400	1330	3.32	0.9 1	Accepted
8.	Money management is a challenge in single parenting home or family	190 (760)	165 (499)	25 (50)	20 (20)	400	1325	3.31	0.9 1	Accepted

The analysis in table 2 indicates that the respondents accepted the fact that when one parent provide finance is a major challenge in single parenting home or family. The table still showed that the respondents accepted that parents' occupation may also be a challenge in single parenting home or family. It was still observed from the table that the respondents accepted that time management is also a challenge in single parenting home or family. Also noticed from the table is that the respondents accepted the view that money management is also a challenge in single parenting home or family.

Research Question 3: What are the effects of single parent in the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Responses on the Effects of Single Parent on the Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Responses					(\bar{X})	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Remarks
		SA	A	D	SD	N				
9.	Some students from single parent home find it difficult to pay their fees	180 (720)	165 (495)	30 (60)	25 (25)	400	1300	3.25	0.90	Accepted
10.	In single parent home, load of two persons is given to only one parent	210 (840)	170 (510)	10 (20)	10 (10)	400	1380	3.45	0.93	Accepted
11.	Academic performance of students from single parent home is poor because of some factors	165 (660)	195 (585)	30 (60)	10 (10)	400	1315	3.29	0.91	Accepted
12.	Students from single parent home still do very well academically and financially in school	40 (160)	30 (90)	130 (260)	200 (200)	400	710	1.77	0.67	Rejected

The analysis in table 3 showed that the respondents accepted the view that some students from single parent home find it difficult to pay their fees. It was still indicated in the table that the respondents accepted the point that in single parent home, load of two persons is given to only one parent. Also noticed from the table is that the respondents accepted the fact that academic performance of students from single parent home is poor because of some factors. However, the respondents rejected the view that students from single parent home still do very well academically and financially in the school.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference on the mean rating of the respondents between causes of single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis of the Difference on the Mean Rating of the Respondents between Causes of Single Parent and Academic Achievement of the Students in Public Secondary Schools

Variables/Status	No. of Resp.	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Z-cal	Z-crit	Level	Decision
Female teachers	180	3.31	0.91	0.63	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Students	220	3,41	0.93				

Analysis on table 4 reveals that the z-cal of 0.63 is smaller than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is smaller than the given critical value of z-ratio. So, the hypothesis I is thus accepted and the conclusion is that no significant difference exist on the mean rating of the respondents between causes of single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference on the mean rating of the respondents between the challenges faced by single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State

Table 5: Z-test Analysis of the Significant difference on the Mean Rating of the Respondents between the Challenges Faced by Single Parent and Academic Achievement of the Students in Public Secondary Schools

Variables/Status	No. of Resp.	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Z-cal	Z-crit	Level	Decision
Female teachers	180	3.25	0.90				
				0.83	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Students	220	3.45	0.93				

Analysis on table 5 indicates that the z-cal of 0.83 is smaller than the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is smaller than the given critical value of z-ratio. Therefore, the hypotheses 2 is thus accepted and the conclusion is that no significant difference exists on the mean rating of the respondents between the challenges faced by single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference on the mean rating of the respondents between the effects of single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State

Table 6: Z-test Analysis of the Significant difference on the Mean Rating of the Respondents between the Effects of Single Parent and Academic Achievement of the Students in Public Secondary Schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State

Variables/Status	No. of Resp.	Mean \bar{X}	SD	Z-cal	Z-crit	Level	Decision
Female teachers	180	3.25	0.90				
				0.83	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Students	220	3.29	0.91				

Analysis on table 4.7 shows that the z-cal of 0.83 is smaller than the z-crit of 1.96. So, the calculated z-ratio is not statistically significant at a 0.05 level of significance since it is smaller than the given critical value of z-ratio. So, the hypotheses is 3 is hereby accepted and the conclusion is that no significant difference exists on the mean rating of the respondents between the effects of single parent and academic achievement of the students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis of the data, the findings of the study in research question 1 revealed that there is a negative relationship between the causes of single parenting

and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Rivers State. These findings are in collaboration with Duke (2000). He observed that single parenthood arises because of the following major causes: divorce, death, estrangement of a spouse and early pregnancy without marriage. Wilson (1993) asserts that losing a partner is very stressful for the parent. Also in the same vein, Locoh (2000) observed that mothers between 15-19 years who are likely single parents, age in itself is not a risk factor, but additional risks may be associated with socio-economic factors relating to academic pursuit of the family.

The study in research question 2 indicated that there are several challenges faced by single parent in the research area. This finding is in line with Sander (2001). Sander observed that single parent has to face continuous newer challenges every day. And these challenges appear in a series, in combination or even alone. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) have identified the following as the challenges facing single parent: finance, parent's occupation, time management, money management etc.

The findings of the study in research question 3 showed that there is a negative significant relationship between effects of single parent and academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding is in collaborating with Mathu (1999). He noted that single parenting has major consequence on the child's mental, social, emotional, behavioural, financial and psychological outcomes. Also in line with the findings, Duke (2000) also asserts that single parenting faces many challenges which have significant effects to a student as it has been identified.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that children are adversely affected by circumstances that concur with single parent family configurations. Also, that the involvement of a parent on a child determines the future of such child hence parenting involvement is a catch-all term for many different activities including at home, good parenting, helping with homework, talking to teachers, attending school functions, through to taking part in school governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made by the researcher:

1. Government should organize public awareness campaign on the causes of single parenting and on how to avoid or overcome them.
2. Government should encourage the single parent by supporting them in areas of their needs or challenges like finance, job and occupation.
3. Government through the school management should organize orientation programme to the students and parent on the effects of single parenting and on how to remedy those effects.

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