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## **Influence of Single Parenting on the Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Lagos State.**

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### **Abstract**

*There has been a remarkably low level of academic performance among students in Lagos State Secondary Schools due to a number of factors. This study focuses on the role of single parenting on the study habits and English language competence of secondary school students in Lagos State. The objective of this study is to identify the types of homes and to find out the role of single parenting on study habit as related to the student's competence in English language. The population consists of five secondary schools randomly selected. One hundred and fifty senior secondary school students were used. Fifteen hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. A Questionnaire was constructed and administered to the selected sample in the study. Findings reveal that students from intact homes performed better than those from broken homes though the difference was not significant ( $t=1.17(df=70), P=0.21$ ); students of legally married parents performed significantly better than those whose parents were not ( $t=4.38(df=37), P=0.005$ ). Students who live with both parents also had higher means score (9.23) in English language than those who live with single mothers (8.80) and those who live with single fathers (8.79). It is therefore recommended that parents must do all within their capability to settle differences amicably and avoid separation or divorce in order to ensure peace in all homes and in the larger society which in a long run would ensure higher academic performance.*

### **Introduction**

For over a long period of time, it has been alleged that there is a fall in the standard of education among students in Nigerian schools. The result of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) 2011 showed that 79.6% (1 million) of the students failed. Similarly in 2009, only 31% out of 342,443 students that registered for WASSCE, had five credits. (NBF News, 9 Jan., 2011).

Teachers without borders (2006) look at educational standard from how the product of the school can be measured in terms of outcome, while for Dike (2002) the standard of education is how education contributes to the public health or socio-political and economic development of a nation.

The issue of falling standard of education has remained foremost in the minds of educationists, policy makers, parents and the society at large. Efforts to examine the genesis of the problem have been directed to the educational system. It is believed that the prevalence of this phenomenon is as

a result of lack of necessary teaching aids and the emergence of untrained teachers due to the economic situation of the country. For example, Dike (2002) noted that only 23% out of the 400,000 primary schools in Nigeria have Grade II Teachers' Certificate, even when the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) is now the minimum qualification for teachers at primary and junior secondary schools. He went further to report that research result shows that over 2,015 primary schools in Nigeria do not have buildings but study under trees, talk less of teaching materials.

However recent research has shown that the problem is traceable to the home. Okebukola (2011) remarked that while the school doubtlessly exerts a profound influence on the child, the home has a greater influence on the student's behaviour than the school. In other words, the home matters a lot in a child's educational attainment. Psychologists such as Piaget (1985) and Akinade (1997) in Akinade and Sulaiman (2005) as well as Bryan and Jan (2004) project the view that the earliest years of a child centre around the home and these years (0-6) are known as the formative years where a man is made or marred.

According to Makinde (2003), home background influences academic and educational success of students and school work. This view is further supported by Tongpan (2011) who noted that the emotional atmosphere of the home has considerable effect on the intelligence level of children and that collective responsibility of child's upbringing is the primary base of socialization.

A Brazilian proverb as quoted by Ekpu in Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2008) says;

When the father leaves the home, the household trembles, when the mother leaves the home, the house crumbles. (pg. 170) Single parenting is a social phenomenon that has always been in existence and it is as old as mankind. But recently, the number of single parent family has increased drastically gaining a global dimension. This wind of change has also affected the Nigerian society where the idea of single-parenthood seems to be a norm, rather than an anomaly and children born out of such families are legitimized (Adelani and Ogunbanwo, 2008).

In Nigeria however, there is no precise demography on single parents as a result of dearth of information on the status of single parenting (Nwachukwu, 2006).

Single parent usually refers to a parent who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities in the raising of the child or children and they are known as the dominant caregiver (Hetherington and Parke, 2003). In other words, the dominant caregiver is the parent that the child spends majority of the time with. Single parenting is often as a result of divorce and separation. Divorce can be seen as the legal ending of a marriage while separation could be legal or non-legal. Legal separation is a court action by which couples remain married but live apart. The marriage itself is not dissolved but the parties are free to remarry (Sulaimon and Akinade, 2005). Banjo (2003) posits that some parents may be divorced and are therefore living separately while others might have remarried and living with a new or re-ordered family.

In other situations, parents may have a judicial separation or a separation agreement and have ceased to co-habit, while still, others may perceive themselves to be separated but are not yet living apart. According to Bryan and Jan (2004), children differ considerably in their experiences of parental separation sometimes even within the same families and therefore it is not possible to conclude that separation is either a negative or positive experience for children. Webster-Stratton (2003) submitted that the challenge is more prominent for the parent that is committed to dispelling all the attendant problems of single parenting, which may include; financial constraints, increased aggression and disruptive behaviours on the part of the children which in turn, seem to lead to peer rejection, academic failure and other anti-social behaviours.

Nwachukwu (2006) observed that teachers commonly describe children from single parents as more hostile, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive and distractible than children from intact homes. Hence, Hamburg (2004) opines that marital separation commonly involves major emotional distress for the child.

Educationists such as Malone (2003), Robinson (2004) and Omotere (2011) have advocated that most problems students encounter in the course of learning in school are essentially connected with their study habits. Poor academic performance has been traced to be the aftermath of poor study habits and good performance as a result of good study habits.

Ossai (2011) opined that study habit connotes students' way of study, whether systematic, efficient or inefficient and this has negative or positive effect on academic performance whether low or high. Self study habit is one of the foundations of educational achievements. Those who excel in school have the strict practice of self study habit. Learning in school is not enough for learners to fully learn. They must have personal time of study time when they can concentrate and reflect.

Study habit can be seen as the attitude of students towards studying and how studying is being achieved. Study habits can be good ones or bad ones. Students with good study habits will go to the extreme, never satisfied with present performances and put more effort on their studies to improve their grades. This explains why Festus (2004), remarked that brilliant and successful students do what mediocre students do occasionally. Malone (2003) identified motivation, interest, planning or preparation for study, attention, time, concentration and environment as the major factors affecting study habits. The assumption is that students from different home fronts differ on these indices. It is therefore important to examine the influence of single parenting on the students' study habits and concomitant achievement in English language. This is premised on the status of English as the medium of instruction as well as the official language of communication at the secondary school level. It is also worthy of note that English language in Nigerian schools is an English as a Second Language(ESL) situation which implies that it does not come as naturally as the mother tongue to the learners, and as such, environmental factors will have huge consequence on its learnability.

### Research questions

1. Is there any difference in the academic achievement of students from intact homes and those from broken homes?
2. Is there any difference in the academic achievement of students based on the form of marriage?
3. To what extent does single parenting affect the academic achievement of students?
4. To what extent does custodian affect the academic achievement of students?

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students from intact homes and those from broken homes in English language.
2. There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students whose parents are legally married and those whose parents are not in English language.
3. There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students of single parent due to death and those due to divorce in English language.
4. There is no significant relationship between students of different custodians and their academic achievement in English language.

### Methodology

The descriptive survey research was adopted for this study. The population comprises male and female students whose parents had either separated or divorced and those who live in intact homes in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. Using simple random sampling technique, fifteen boys and fifteen girls were selected from five secondary schools (thirty (30) students from each school and one hundred and fifty (150) students in all). A structured 50-Item questionnaire on

students' study habit and a 20-Item Achievement test in English comprising aspects such as comprehension, speech work, lexis and structure, vocabulary development and letter writing. The instruments were reviewed by a panel of experts to establish validity. Using the Crombach Alpha's statistic formula, the reliability of the questionnaire was established at .60 while the Achievement Test was subjected to the test-retest procedure and using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, a reliability Co-efficient of .61 was established.

### Results

Means, standard deviation, independent t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyse data collected for the study.

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students from intact homes and those from broken ones in English language.

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### Results

Means, standard deviation, independent t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyse data collected for the study.

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students from intact homes and those from broken ones in English language.

**Table 1.1: Summary of Means [X] and Standard Deviation of Students' Scores on English Language Achievement Test Based on Homes.**

Group Statistics				
Types of Home	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Intact	111	9.52	3.598	.341
Broken	39	8.77	3.013	.482

**Table 1.2: Independent T-test Analysis on Students' Performance on English Language Achievement Test Based on Homes.**

#### Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.881	.172	1.171	148	.244	.753	.643	-.518	2.025
Equal variances not assumed			1.274	78.782	.206	.753	.591	-.423	1.930



Table 1.2 is an independent T-test analysis of students performance on English language achievement test based on homes. It shows that the mean difference between conditions was 0.75 and 95% confident interval of the estimated population mean population is between -0.42 and 1.93. The independent T-test shows that the difference between conditions was not significant ( $T = 1.17$ ,  $df = 70$ ,  $P = 0.21$ ; two tailed). The hypothesis is therefore not rejected.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of students whose parents are legally married and those whose parents are not in English language.

**Table 2.1: Summary of Means [X] and Standard Deviation of Students' Scores on English Language Achievement test based on Marriage.**

Group Statistics				
Legally Married	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
YES	28	10.00	2.981	.563
NO	12	6.67	1.775	.512

Table 2.1 is a summary of mean [X] and standard deviation (SD) of students' scores on English language achievement test based on marriage. It shows that students with legally married parents performed better ( $X = 10$ ;  $SD = 2.98$ ) than those whose parents are not ( $X = 6.67$ ;  $SD = 1.78$ ).

**Table 2.2: Independent T-test Analysis on Students' Performance on English Language Achievement test based on Marriage.**

	Independent Samples Test								
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Equal variances assumed	2.186	.148	3.593	38	.001	3.333	.928	1.455	5.211
Equal variances not assumed			4.377	33.640	.000	3.333	.762	1.785	4.882

Table 2.2 is an independent T-test analysis of students' performance on English language achievement test based on marriage. It shows that the mean difference between conditions was 3.33 and at 95% confident interval of the estimated population means difference is between 1.79 and 4.88. The effect size was very high ( $d = 1.4$ ). The independent T-test analysis shows that the difference between conditions was significant ( $T = 4.38$ ,  $df = 37$ ,  $P = 0.005$ ; two tailed). The hypothesis was rejected.

$H_{03}$ : There is no significant difference in the academic achievement between students of single parents due to death and those due to divorce in English language.

**Table 3.1: ANOVA of Students' Scores on English Language Achievement Test Based on Single Parents.**

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	27.355	3	9.118	.964	.420
Within Groups	340.645	36	9.462		
Total	368.000	39			

Table 3.1 shows an ANOVA analysis of students' scores on English language achievement test based on single parent. It shows that there is no statistically significant effect on presentation of conditions; [ $F(3,36) = 0.96, P=.42$ ]. In other words, it shows that the reason of having single parents does not influence students' performance in English language achievement test.

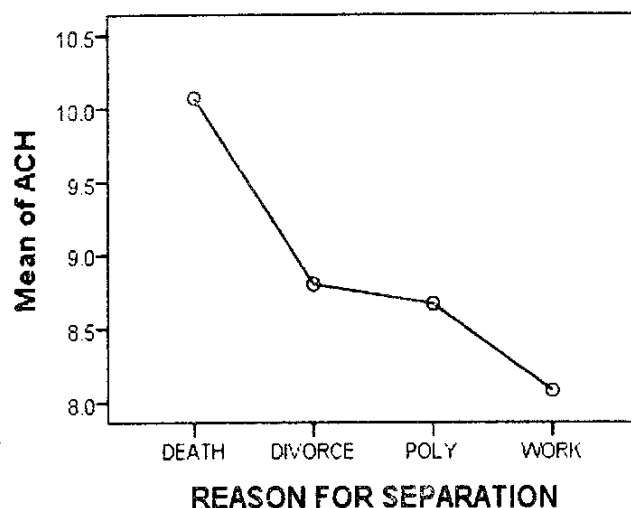
**Table 3.2: Means Plots of Students' Scores in English Language Achievement Test Based on Single Parent.**

Table 3.2 is a graph showing the means plot of students' scores in English language achievement test based on single parent; students with single parent due to death performed better at mean score of 10.2, followed by those caused by divorce at 8.7, then those caused by polygamy at 8.6 and lastly those caused by work at 8.1. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

$H_{04}$ : There is no significant difference between students of different custodians and their academic achievement in English language.

**Table 4.1: ANOVA analysis of Students' Performance in English Language Achievement Test based on Custodians.**

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.966	3	3.655	.301	.825
Within Groups	1774.028	146	12.151		
Total	1784.993	149			

Table 4.1 shows an ANOVA analysis of students' scores on English language achievement test based on custodians. It is that there is no statistically significant effect on presentation of conditions; [ $F(3,146) = 0.30, P = .83$ ], that is, students custodians do not influence their performance in English language.

**Table 4.2 Means Plots of Students' scores in English Language according to Custodian**

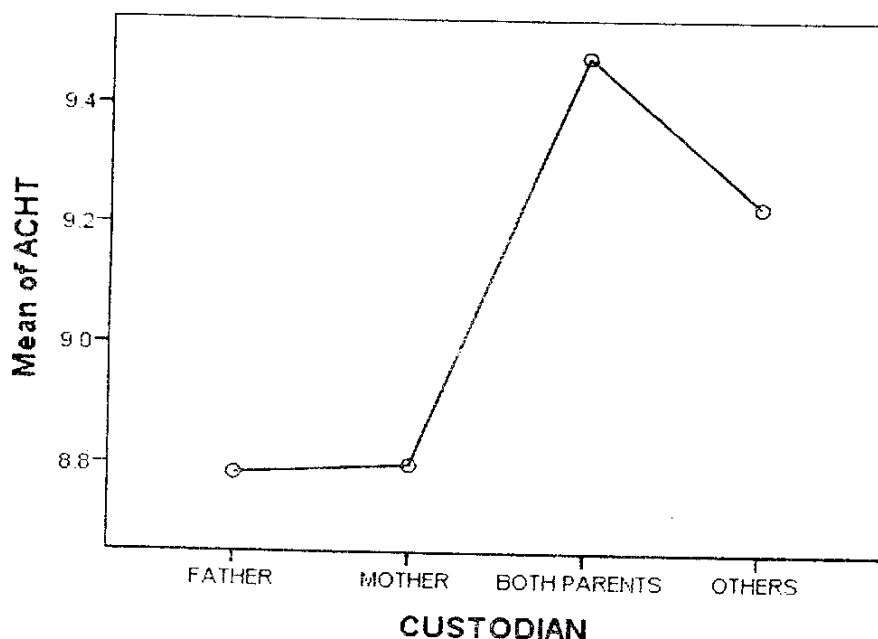


Table 4.2 is a graph showing the means plot of students' scores in English language achievement test based on custodians. Students with both parents performed best with mean score of 9.23, followed by students with mothers only at 8.80 and students with fathers only at 8.79. This finding is further buttressed by David and Rooney (2010) who submitted that parents' involvement in a child's education is consistently found to be positively associated with a child's academic performance. The null hypothesis was retained.

### Discussion

Findings indicate that students from intact homes performed better than students from broken homes. This result is in consonance with Danesy and Okediran (2002) which lamented that maternal and paternal deprivation of the essential needs of the young students have prompted their poor performances in examinations. This is supported by McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) who commented that children who grow up living in an intact household with both biological parents do better on a wide range of social indicators than children who grow up in single-parent households.

The independent t-test shows that the mean difference between conditions was 0.75 and 95% confident interval of the estimated population mean population is between -0.42 and 1.93. This indicates that the difference between conditions was not significant ( $t = 1.17, df = 70, P = 0.21$ ; two tailed). This must be what Bryan and Jan (2004) meant when they noted that it is not possible to conclude that separation is either a positive or negative experience for children as they differ considerably in their experiences.

The independent t-test analysis of students' performance on English language achievement test based on marriage shows that the mean difference between conditions was 3.33 and at 95% confident interval of the estimated population means difference is between 1.79 and 4.88. The

effect was very high ( $d=1.4$ ). The independent t-test analysis shows that the difference between conditions was significant ( $t=4.38$ ,  $df=37$ ,  $P=0.005$ ; two tailed). This finding is in contrast with the findings of Banks (2011) that summarized that, children with married parents fare no better academically or economically on the long run than their born-out-of-wedlock counterparts.

Results also show that performance has no statistically significant effect on presentation of conditions of single parenting whether due to death or divorce; [ $F(3,36)=0.96$ ,  $P=.42$ ]. In other words, it shows that the reason of having single parent does not influence students' performance in English language achievement test. Students with single parents due to death performed better at mean score of 10.2, followed by those caused by divorce at 8.7, then those caused by polygamy at 8.6 and lastly those caused by work at 8.1. Awake (1995) revealed that children of widows performed generally better than other single parent.

ANOVA analysis of students' scores on English language achievement test based on custodians indicate that there is no statistically significant effect on presentation of conditions; [ $F(3,146)=0.30$ ,  $P=.83$ ], that is, students' custodians do not influence their performance in English language. This result opposes Hussain in Omotere (2011) who found that public secondary school students often come from economically poor or average income families. These families face various problems causing emotional disturbance among their children, thus, they have poor academic performance.

### Recommendations and Conclusion

Parents should endeavour to settle their differences amicably as opposed to separation or divorce, since in future; it affects the children emotionally, behaviourally and academically. The government, through the ministry of education should recognize the effect of broken homes on the education of the children. Therefore, there should be a deliberate policy of attaching sociologists and psychologists to schools with the view of studying and verifying the case history of students from broken homes and schools should give guidance and counseling as necessary.

Media houses (print and electronic) must ensure that they produce and present programmes and information that promote peaceful co-existence at home. Peace at home will likely promote peace in our schools and in the larger society.

Religious leaders will do well by preaching in favour of families living together and imbibing the spirit of forgiveness for one another rather than resorting to divorce or separation due to misunderstandings. Erring couples must realize that divorce is not the best option to their quarrels. "When two elephants fight, the grass suffers". Children are always at the receiving end when parents quarrel, get separated or divorced.

This study is better concluded with this song titled "Let there be Love"

Let there be love shared among us  
 Let there be love in our heart  
 May now your love fill this nation  
 Cause us O Lord to arise  
 Give us a fresh understanding  
 Of brotherly love that is real,  
 Let there be love shared among us  
 Let there be love!!!

Let there be PEACE  
 Let there be peace shared among us  
 Let there be peace in our heart  
 May now your peace fill our nation

Cause us O Lord to arise  
Give us a fresh understanding  
Of brotherly love that is real  
Let there be peace shared among us  
Let there be peace!!!  
(Bilbrough, A.,1979)

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