

Psycho-Social Impact of Family Separation and Academic Achievement of Primary School Pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria

¹Rosemary Unwaunyin Agba, Ph.D., ²Agba Linus Agba

¹Department of Early Childhood Care and Education, School of Early Childhood Care and Primary Education, Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa-Nigeria

²Department of English Language, School of Languages, Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa-Nigeria

Authors E-mail: [1rosemaryunyin@gmail.com](mailto:rosemaryunyin@gmail.com), [2agbalynnagba60@gmail.com](mailto:agbalynnagba60@gmail.com)

Abstract - The study focused on the Psycho-Social Impact of Family Separation on the Academic Achievement of Primary School Pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and two (2) hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, and relevant literatures were reviewed. A survey research design which made use of a sample size of one thousand three hundred and fifty (1,350) primary six pupils in all Public Schools in Cross River State was adopted. Two (2) research instruments, namely; a 20-item modified 4-likert scale questionnaire and an oral interview were used for the data collection which was analysis using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Coefficient and independent t-test statistics. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, and the result revealed that all variables have significant influence on the academic achievement of pupils. The study recommended that governments at all levels, Church/Mosque leaders should carryout enlightenment campaigns concerning negative consequences of family separation/divorce especially on the children.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Family Separation, Psycho-Social, and Pupils.

1. Introduction

The foundation of what the child becomes in the society is laid in the home at the initial stage of life. However, there are certain events in the families which require that the parenting role be left in the hands of single parents. These events occurs where there is divorce/separation, denied paternity, rape, separation of various kinds (including incidents such as: disasters, catastrophic or violence and terrorist activities) and death of one's spouse, [5].

Recent estimates record that there are approximately one hundred and forty-five (145) million children worldwide who have lost at least one parent as a result of various causes,[27].

The number in Sub-Saharan Africa according to [6], has risen by 50% since 1990. In Nigeria, the situation has become so worrisome because of the activities of Boko-Haram in the North-East, where children lose their parents by death or have fled without any trace. These children according to the researchers get less attention and are sometimes left in the streets or maltreated by relatives or other people who are supposed to care for them.

According to [19], the psycho-social problems associated with these children include:

- Stress and depression
- Loneliness and hopelessness
- Poor social interaction and lack of sleep
- Poor concentration and lack of confidence in any school task
- Poor cognitive ability/achievement motivation, etc.

The term psycho-social refers to the close relationship between the individual and the collective aspect of any social entity. When children lose one or both parents due to any cause, they experience many psycho-social problems like grief, hopelessness, anxiety, physical and mental violence, labour, abuse, lack of community support, lack of parental love, withdrawal from society as a whole, feeling of guilt, aggression as well as eating, sleeping and learning disturbances [11]. The traumatic effect of parental loss or separation can also have further effect on children's behaviours, emotions and thought process.

[8], observed that among the Yorubas in Nigeria, the parental roles are culturally determined and distributed. The maternal roles are that of child-rearing, home training and playing complimentary roles. The paternal roles according to the researcher involve that of economic responsibilities and discipline of children; the child therefore becomes morally, and mentally balanced when the caring responsibilities are carried out by both parents.

In the same vein, [9] pointed out that both parents have their own roles to play in a child's education anywhere; the father is to provide every necessary tool for the educational advancement, while the mother is expected to supplement the efforts of the father.

In the case where the father for example is not there (absence resulting from separation) and the mother is not privileged enough to care for all the necessary and basic needs as well as supervising the academic performance of the child, or counseling the child as at when needed, the effect on the child's educational outcomes and societal integration will be very negative.

Structurally, the family is either separated or intact. A separated family in this context is one that is not structurally intact, as a result of divorce; separation, death of one of the parents and illegitimacy. Life in a single parent family or separated family can be stressful to both the child and the parent. Such families are faced with challenges of inadequate financial resources [24], and poor cognitive ability development of the children [17]. Parents are expected to act as models by showing competences in what they do and be interactively conducting themselves in a respectful manner.

[22], examined factors that affected the psychological adjustment of children within 12 months of marital separation. The researcher examined 51 children in 30 families, and found that the greater the amount of time lost with the father since the marital separation, the greater the maladjustment of the child in areas such as aggression and learning disability.

Also, [21] and [26] analyzed data from National Surveys of children in the United States, gathering information about 2,301 children. These authors concluded that children were least depressed and withdrawn when they lived with both parents rather than only with the biological mother. The depressed/withdrawn score for children living with a single mother was especially high, especially for boys, and anti-social behavior was higher among those living with only mothers than those in intact families.

However, girls living with single mothers were no worse-off than those living with intact, low conflict families. A child living with a parent of the opposite sex was especially prone to problem behavior, according to [21].

[14], carried out a longitudinal study on the effects of divorce on children. The study was based on interviews with 130 children and their both parents. After 25 years, the individuals who were children in these situations spoke sadly on their lost childhood, their sadness and anger and their yearning for someone to take care of them. This diminished nurturing and protection during their growing-up years when

the legacy divorce left them. Half the young people in the sample were involved as adolescents in serious drug and alcohol abuse. Over half ended up with lower educational degrees than their parents had obtained. At adulthood, they feared that their own adult relationships would fail as their parents relationship did.

The few studies cited above indicate that children of divorce families suffer most in adulthood. Also, the impact of divorce hits them most cruelly as they go in search of love, sexual intimacy and commitment.

Their lack of inner images of a man and woman in a stable relationship and their memories of their parents' failure to sustain the marriage badly hobbles their search, leading them to heartbreak and even despair. It is based on these that the researchers became inspired towards this research project.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Concern has been expressed by governments/parents and the general public over the alarming increase in marital infidelity resulting in family separation. In Nigeria and especially in the study area, most families are not intact as a result of issues of incompatibility of the couples, death of a parent, divorce, marital infidelity, etc.; this has resulted in separation of couples and children.

Government, parents and the general public feel concerned or seriously worried over the increasing impact of family separation because of the effects on the separated children, when children lose a parent due to family separation, they experience many psycho-social problems such as grief, hopelessness, anxiety, physical and mental abuse, lack of parental love, behaviour disorders and most importantly poor social interaction and cognitive development.

Again, parents and the general public are worried because, lack of attention and care/love and these children may become involved in criminality in the community.

In response to the situation, some studies have been carried out and the need to address factors such as home background, socio-economic factors of parents, culture of the people stressed. Besides, governments have assigned professional guidance counsellors to most schools and churches have marriage counsellors aimed at improving the marriage institution.

In spite of all these, the problem of incessant family separation still remains. The above reasons inspired the researchers to carry out this study.

1.2 Objectives/purpose of the study

The purpose of the research project is to determine the psycho-social impact of family separation on academic achievement of primary school pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study will also;

- Determine the extent to which family separation can influence the academic achievement of pupils.
- Investigate the psycho-social effects experienced by single parent children.
- Investigate the effects of single parenthood on pupils' academic achievement.
- Investigate the causes/consequences/effects of family separation on the parents and children.

1.3 Justification of the study (with particular reference to Nigeria)

Many empirical research studies have been carried out on home background and cognitive ability of pupils generally. Also, extensive research work has been done on causes and consequences of family separation by several researchers notably; [18], [4], and [1]. What is perhaps new is the in-depth knowledge of the consequences of family separation on the cognitive development of pupils especially at the primary school level. Thus, this research project sought to examine the impact of family separation on the academic achievement of pupils in Cross River State of Nigeria.

Based on this, the research project is important for the following reasons.

- It is hoped that the result of this study and its recommendation will help to encourage couples to build supportive relationships, live in peace and harmony so as to cater for the welfare of their children, especially their educational needs.
- Parents will see the need to tolerate, accommodate, appreciate and understand each other in marriage for the sake of good upbringing of their children.
- Guidance counselors in schools will also become aware and thus see the need to provide necessary assistance and psychological support for pupils from single parentage so as to overcome emotional problems.
- The churches will also see the need to develop various strategies on how to improve marriage bond/relationship during pre-marital courses.
- Classroom teachers will also see the need to develop effective strategies on how to get the attention and desired interest of children of single parentage, as well as

improving their cognitive development and the desire to learn.

1.4 Research questions/hypotheses

Two (2) research questions/hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

- 1) To what extent does family separation influence primary school pupils' academic achievement?
- 2) To what extent does family separation affect the emotional stability and psychological well-being of primary school learners?

1.5 Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant relationship between family separation and pupils' academic achievement.
- 2) Family separation does not significantly affect the emotional stability and psychological well-being of primary school learners.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study is limited in scope to primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Therefore, any generalization of the results should be done in context of Cross River State or any geopolitical area having similar characteristics.

Also, the study is limited in scope to two (2) variables namely; psycho-social impact of family separation and pupils academic achievement.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Family Separation and Pupils Academic Achievement

Family separation/divorce is a state when the marriage union lacks unity, there is disjunction or disassociation in the marriage. Family separation and divorce have both positive and negative effects. [2] and [24] maintained that the impact of family separation/divorce upon the family members is devastating. The process entails psychological risks as well as opportunity for the development of stakeholders. The researchers also concluded that family separation is associated with heart rendering emotions, unspeakable sadness, depression, anxiety and disruptive academic development on the part of the children.

[24], observed that parents who have happy and supportive relationship with one another are more likely to respond positively to the child's educational and social needs. Conversely, according to the researcher, parents in a dysfunctional marriage relationship are likely to be depressed and distracted by conflict with their spouse and they cannot

afford to invest their time, energy and other resources in their children.

[20] in a review of more than 200 British research studies on the impact of separation and divorce on children, concluded that long-term disadvantages for children of divorce parents include growing up in households with lower income, leaving school with fewer educational qualifications, withdrawn behaviour, aggression and delinquency, health problems, leaving home when young, early sexual activity, depression and substance abuse. They also emphasized that these poor outcomes are far from inevitable, and that there is no direct link between parental separation and the way children adjust.

[23], compared senior secondary school children from intact and single-parent families in Lagos State, Nigeria to test whether family structure made a difference in children's self-concept (i.e. the child's own attitude or feeling about himself or herself)/cognitive development and whether children who perceived greater conflict in their families would have a poor self-concept and cognitive development. The author found support for his proposition that while children are not adversely affected by family structure, such as living in a single parent family, family conflict can be detrimental to their self-concept and cognitive development. It was not possible to determine whether the conflict perceived by the children was verbal, physical or both, although both kinds of conflict were probably damaging to them.

[25], in a study of 42 separated mothers of low economic status and their school age children, concluded that the level of parental acrimony was related to children's behavioural problems including retardation in cognitive development. The level of acrimony was measured by an "acrimony scale" consisting of 25 areas of potential conflict between separated or divorced parents, including visitation, custody, and general level of animosity. Parental acrimony was found to be significantly related to children's perceived cognitive competence. Also, [12], examined two hypotheses.

When there is high conflict in a marriage, do children whose parents divorce exhibit a decrease in behavioural problems and cognitive ability, while children whose parents have low levels of marital conflict during marriage exhibit an increase in behavioural problems after divorce? Do children whose high-conflict families remain together show greater increase in behavioural problems than those whose parents' divorce? The author used a sample of 300 children in Akwa-Ibom state. The author also used responses about the frequency that a spouse argued about nine topics, such as the children, money, chores, and responsibilities. He found that prior reports of high level of marital conflict had a large and

statistically significantly adverse effect on children's behavioural problems including poor school attendance and academic ability. Indeed, the adverse effect of frequent marital quarrels was greater than deleterious effect of separation and divorce. The author also concluded that, there was no benefit to the children who left the high conflict family.

2.2 Family Separation and Emotional Stability/Psychological Wellbeing of Pupils

Every child is born into a family. This is so, whether the home is one's natural family or institutionalized environment; like an orphanage.

[13], emphasized that adults should not just want to have children without first articulating their values for parenting, and what roles await them as parents. Having a child is as natural as breathing; it is as simple as a man and woman coming together in sexual union. What is important, is the ability to properly play the role of parents.

However, [10], stated that situations arise in some families resulting in divorce or separation because of certain internal or external challenges; he mentioned internal factors to include emotional immaturity, lack of flexibility in accommodating each other's aspirations behaviours and shortcomings and inability to both give and take as well as breakdown in communication.

External factors according to the author include; parental interference on the marital affairs of their children, stress and differences in values.

[26], pointed out that divorce or family is an extremely difficult period for children with serious immediate, short-term and long-term effects. Thus, [7] analyzed data from National surveys of children in United States gathering information about 2,301 children. The author found that the greater the amount of time lost with the father since the marital separation, the greater the maladjustment of the child in areas such as aggression and learning. He also concluded that children were least depressed and withdrawn when they lived with both parents rather than only with the biological mother. The depressed/withdrawn score for children living with a single mother was especially high especially for boys, and anti-social behavior was higher among those living with mothers than those in intact families. A child living with a parent of the opposite sex was especially prone to problem behaviour.

[23], similarly carried out a longitudinal study on the effects of divorce on children. The research was based on interviews with 130 children and both parents. After 25 years, the individuals who were children in these situations spoke

sadly of their lost childhood, their sadness and anger, and their yearning for someone to take care of them.

This diminished nurturing and protection during their growing up years was the legacy divorce left them. Half the young people in the sample were involved as adolescents in serious drug and alcoholic abuse. Overhalf ended up with lower educational degrees than their parents had obtained. The impact of divorce hits them most cruelly as they go in search of love, sexual intimacy and commitment. Their lack of inner images of a man and a woman in a stable relationship and their memories of their parents’ failure to sustain the marriage badly hobbles their search, leading them to heartbreak and even despair.

Also, [2], examined 92 studies that compared children living in divorced single-parent families with children living in continuously intact families, according to measures of well-being. The findings was that children of divorced families experienced lower levels of well-being regardless of scholastic achievement, conduct, psychological development, self-esteem, social competence, and relationships with other children.

In another meta-analysis on parental divorce and adult well-being, [2], concluded, based on data from 37 studies, that outcomes associated with parental divorce include effects on psychological wellbeing (depression, low life satisfaction), family well-being (lower marital quality, divorce), socio economic well-being (low educational attainment, low income, and low occupational attainment, low income, and low occupation prestige) and physical health. The author also stated that children of divorced families exhibit more behavioural difficulties, more symptoms of psychological maladjustment, lower academic achievement, more social difficulties, and poorer self-concepts than children in intact families.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The survey research design was adopted for the study. This involves determining the nature of a situation as it exist at the time of investigation. It involves also the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. [16], describes the survey research design as that which selects and studies samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence distribution, interrelations of sociological and psychological variables (e.g. impact of family separation and pupils’ academic achievement), and depend basically on questionnaires and interviews as means of data collection.

3.2 Area of the study

The study area is Cross River State of Nigeria. Cross Rive State has its capital in Calabar. The State has a total land mass of 21, 156 km² and a population of over four (4) million people, with five (5) major ethnic groups namely; Efik, Yakurr, Ejagham, Bette, Bekwara.

Educationally, the state has five (5) Tertiary institutions, with many private and public primary and post-primary schools spread across the three (3) senatorial zones (south, central and North). Cross River state is also reach in cultural heritage, forest reserve areas (National parks) within Boki and Akamkpa.

Cross Riverians are engaged in diverse occupations for survival such as farming, business, and fishing among others. Many are also engaged in white collar jobs. Cross Riverians are highly pluralistic in spoken/written languages ranging from Efik, Ejagham, Bekwara, Bette, Quas, etc. The State enjoys several sites of interest such as Obudu Ranch Resort, Tinapa etc.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises of all primary six (vi) pupils in all public primary schools in Cross River State. The total population in all public and private primary schools in Cross River State is made up of 438,810 pupils (source: field data collation) distributed in 1402 primary schools across the three senatorial zones. Out of this population, about 51,650 constitute the primary six(vi) class.

This information is shown in more detail in table 1.

Table 1: Total number of primary schools/population across the local government areas/senatorial zones

| Senatorial zone | L.G.A | No. of school | | Total No. of schools | Total population in primary class | Total No. of sampled zones |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | | Public | Private | | | |
| CR-South | Calabar municipal | 52 | 103 | 155 | 3500 | 450 |
| | Calabar South | 51 | 52 | 103 | 1920 | |
| | Bakassi | 49 | - | 49 | 760 | |
| | Alkpabuyo | 71 | 49 | 120 | 2950 | |
| | Akamkpa | 84 | 33 | 117 | 2600 | |
| | Biase | 81 | 37 | 118 | 3250 | |
| | Odukpani | 93 | 32 | 125 | 2800 | |
| CR-Central | Yakurr | 78 | 41 | 119 | 2550 | 450 |
| | Obubra | 102 | 29 | 131 | 3215 | |
| | Abi | 73 | 34 | 107 | 1900 | |
| | Ikom | 89 | 58 | 147 | 3550 | |
| | Etung | 84 | 34 | 118 | 1425 | |
| | Boki | 119 | 32 | 151 | 4020 | |
| CR-North | Ogoja | 71 | 35 | 106 | 1630 | 450 |
| | Yala | 150 | 39 | 189 | 5200 | |
| | Obudu | 95 | 28 | 123 | 3225 | |
| | Obanikwu | 107 | 30 | 137 | 3405 | |
| | Bekwara | 87 | 30 | 117 | 2300 | |
| | Total | | | | 51,650 | |

Source: Field data collation, 2023.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Stratified sampling method was employed in selecting schools and simple random sampling procedure was finally adopted to select subjects.

Stratified sampling method was adopted because it identifies and addresses heterogeneity in the population and thus reduces sampling error and also allows for a representative sample.

The schools in the state were first of all stratified according to senatorial zones, followed by local government areas.

By simple random sampling, three local government areas from each senatorial zone (Calabar, Ikom, Ogoja) were selected giving a total of fifteen (15) schools per zone. Thirty (30) pupils were randomly selected to form the sample in each school. Thus, the study made use of 450 pupils per zone and 1,350 primary six (6) pupils for the three zones.

3.5 Sample

The sample for the study consisted of 1,350 primary school pupils from a total population of 51,650 primary six (6) pupils in 1,402 primary schools across the state. The age range was 11-14 years.

Table 2: School sample characteristics

| S/N | Educational zone | No. of L.G.A | No. of schools sampled | No. of Pupils Sampled | Total |
|-----|------------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 1 | Calabar | 3 | 15 | 450 | 450 |
| 2 | Ikom | 3 | 15 | 450 | 450 |
| 3 | Ogoja | 3 | 15 | 450 | 450 |
| | Total | 9 | 45 | 1,350 | 1,350 |

Source: PPMB, Calabar 2023

3.6 Instrument for Data Collection

The following research instruments were used.

1) A 20-item modified 4-point likert scale questionnaire titled, Family Separation and Pupils Academic Achievement (FSAPAA). This instrument basically measured the following variables: family separation, intact family, single family parenting styles and pupils academic achievement, as well as emotional and economic well-being of the children. The data obtained concerned a self-report or opinion of subjects about impact of family separation and their academic achievement.

2) An oral interview; this was to enable the researchers arrive at reliable information concerning the problem of the study.

3.6.1 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The instruments were first subjected to expert judgement for face and content validity. This was certified correct with minor corrections. The instrument (questionnaire) was trial tested using 80 pupils selected from schools that were not part of the main study. The data generated were analyzed to establish the internal consistency of the sub-scales using the Cronbach coefficient alpha method [13]. The result was good enough to justify the use of the instrument.

3.7 Statistical Analysis Technique

Pearson product moment correlation(r) and independent t-test statistic were used to analyze the field data obtained. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 General Description of Research Variables/Data

The study focused on psycho-social impact of family separation on academic achievement of primary school pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable of the study was family separation while the dependent variable is pupils' academic achievement. The following sub-variables of the independent variable were identified and used during data gathering;

- Intact family
- Gender
- Socio-economic well being
- Parenting styles

The only dependent variable of the study was academic achievement of pupils. The means and standard deviations of major variables in the study are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Means and standard deviation of major variables in the study

| Variable | N | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| Family separation | 1350 | 24.32 | 2.19 |
| Intact family | 1350 | 18.86 | 3.07 |
| Single family | 1350 | 21.28 | 2.87 |
| Gender | 1350 | 23.68 | 2.39 |
| Socio-economic status | 1350 | 21.44 | 4.10 |
| Parenting style | 1350 | 20.09 | 3.60 |
| Academic achievement | 1350 | 22.18 | 2.17 |
| Total | 1350 | 115.34 | 9.61 |

4.2 Presentation of Results

Hypothesis I: There is no significant relationship between family separation and pupils' academic achievement.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is family separation while the dependent variable is pupils' academic achievement. Each of the subjects had a pair of scores. To test

the hypothesis therefore, the pairs of scores were correlated using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation test statistics. The result is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Pearson’s correlation analysis of relationship between impact of family separation and pupils academic achievement (n=1350)

| Variables | Σx Σy | Σx^2 Σy^2 | Σxy | r |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Impact of family separation (x) | 20090 | 45481 | | |
| Pupils academic achievement (y) | 20320 | 46135 | 83887 | -0.89* |

*p<.05, df=1348, critical r value 0.062

The results in table 4 indicate that the absolute value (-0.89) of the calculated r is higher than the critical value (0.062) at 0.05 level of significance with 1348 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant relationship between impact of family separation and pupils’ academic achievement.

The result analyzed also implies that the higher the impact of family separation, the more the negative impact becomes concerning general academic achievement of pupils.

Hypothesis two (2): Family separation does not significantly affect the emotional stability and psychological well-being of primary school learners.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is family separation while the dependent variable is emotional stability and psychological well-being.

The scores obtained were subjected to analysis using the independent t-test analysis.

Results from the analysis are presented in table 5.

Table 5: Results of impact of family separation on emotional stability and psychological well-being of pupils

| Variables | N | \bar{x} | SD | T |
|--|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------|
| Impact of family separation | 675 | 20.49 | 3.53 | |
| Emotional stability/psychological well-being | 675 | 20.35 | 3.62 | 2.90* |
| Total | 1350 | 24.32 | 3.79 | |

*p<0.05, df= 1348, critical t-value = 1.96

Results in table 5 indicate that the calculated t-value of 2.90 is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) with 1348 degrees of freedom at 0.05 significant level. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected on the basis of the results.

This means that there is a significant impact of family separation on emotional stability and psychological well-being of pupils.

4.3 Discussion of findings

4.3.1 Impact of Family Separation and Pupils Academic Achievement

The result showed a significant relationship between impact of family separation and pupils’ academic achievement. The result implies that any marital hostility and other related marital turmoil will always result in negative consequences on the part of children after separation.

Empirical research studies of [26], [2], and [24] are all in support of the research findings above. Specifically, [24] observed that parents who have happy and supportive relationship with one another are more likely to respond positively to the child’s educational and social needs, where as parents in a dysfunctional marriage relationship are likely to be depressed and distracted by conflict with their spouse and they cannot afford to invest their time, energy and finance on their children.

[26], also emphasized that any marriage having episodes of marital violence and frequent hostility leading to separation/divorce will always result in a variety of negative outcomes for the children. These according to the author include psychological disorders (depression and anxiety), feeling of sadness, under-achievement at school and social problems including delinquent and deviant behavior.

Stressing the importance of pupils cognitive development and general wholesome behavior to school work and other life situations, [13] and [12] in support of the findings above explained that a child develops a positive perception about himself or herself and achiever exceedingly in academics in a home where parents are lively, and comforting, showing attention, physical affection, devoid of family turmoil/violence.

The findings also agrees with the research findings of [23] who stated that children from non-intact families seldom attend school regularly, and thus prone to poor academic achievement in school work, lack interest any school task that is challenging and generally exhibit deviant behaviour.

4.3.2 Family Separation and Emotional Stability/Psychological well-being of Pupils

The result of analysis of family separation and emotional stability/psychological well-being of pupils as presented in table 4 implies that there is significant impact of family separation on the emotional stability/psychological wellbeing of pupils.

This research finding agrees with various empirical research results in this area especially those of [24], [10] and

[26]. [3], also emphasized that outcomes associated with parental separation/divorce include effects on psychological wellbeing (depression, low life satisfaction), family well-being (low marital quality, divorce) and physical health. The findings equally indicate that children of divorced families exhibit more behavioural difficulties, more symptoms of psychological maladjustment, more social difficulties and poorer self-concepts than children in intact families.

Children learn better when they are given opportunity to interact actively within the environment so as to gain experience. [2], is of the view that children should be allowed to associate so as to achieve socially acceptable patterns rather than repressing their emotions or emotional feelings and expression in life. He further avers that family separation may exert a negative influence on the socialization process of the child who is a victim of the separated family.

Equally, [20], had noted that children whose parents have separated or divorced (where there is a high level of conflict between the parents) display greater behavioural problems than children from low or medium conflict divorced families. The author also stated the negative consequences on the children of separated families to include; greater maladjustment of the child in areas such as aggression and learning disability, anti-social behaviours, low level of psychological well-being, depressive tendencies and withdrawn behavior.

Also, the results agree with empirical research findings of [21] who stated that children were least depressed and withdrawn when they lived with both parents rather than only with the biological mother. According to the researcher, the depressed/withdrawn score for children living with a single mother was especially high, especially for boys, and anti-social behaviours was higher among those living with mothers than those in intact families. A child living with a parent of the opposite sex was especially prone to problem behavior, according to [21].

5. Summary and conclusion

The study was carried out to determine the impact of family separation on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria.

A survey research design was adopted that made use of 1350 primary six (6) pupils as sample size.

Also, three instruments were adopted to test two (2) hypotheses that were formulated. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and independent t-test statistic were employed to analyze the field data obtained.

On the basis of the findings, it was concluded as follows:

- That the impact of family separation has significant negative consequences on the children of separated families than those of intact families.
- That outcomes associated with parental separation include effects on psychological well-being (depression, and low life satisfaction), and poor physical health.
- That children of divorced/separated families exhibit more behavioural difficulties, more symptoms of psychological maladjustment, social difficulties, poor self-concepts, and psychological disorders (depression and anxiety).
- That children of dysfunctional marriage relationship suffer from feeling of sadness, under-achievement at school, involved in anti-social vices (such as substance abuse, delinquent and deviant behaviours), and criminality.

However, the researchers recommended that governments at all levels and the church/mosques should carry out enlightenment campaign on dangers of family separation/divorce especially as it affects the children.

Also, couples should be encouraged to attend marriage counselling before going into marriage relationship.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdulaganiyu, D. (2011). Psychology of the child. Ibadan. Remember press Nigeria (limited).
- [2] Amato, P. R. (2001). Consequences of divorce for children and adults. *Journal of marriage and the family*. 62, 1269-1287.
- [3] Amato, P.R. and Keith, B. (1994). Parental Divorce and well-being of children, *family law*, 30, 484-488.
- [4] Apron, N. (2017). Marital Disruption; Consequences, *journal of marriage and the family*. 48, 295-307.
- [5] Ayodele, S. O. (2018). Educational opportunities for Nigeria learners, how do we fare this far? A paper presentation by network for gender for sensitive educational management in Africa at the British consult in Nigeria.
- [6] Ayuba, E. A. (2017). The wider society and Education. New York Edition. Bridge, C. (2000). Diversity, divorce and information meetings. *Family law*, sept. 645-648.
- [7] Bridge .C. (2000). Diversity, divorce and information meetings: *family law*, sept; 645-648.
- [8] Effiong, D. N. (2011) Childhood living and Adult – Children Relationship with Parents *Demography* 32, 261-280.
- [9] Fadeye, J. D. (2015). Social studies for NCE and undergraduates. Ibadan: Efori.

- [10] Frazer, W. J. (2004). Family structure and parental practices. *American Sociology Review*. 56, 309-320.
- [11] Gilbourn, L. (2001). An exploratory stud on psycho social wellbeing and psycho-social support. Washington D.C population council.
- [12] Inyang, D. (2019). Family structure and prevalence of behavioural problems among adolescents. *The counselor* 17(1) 154-161.
- [13] Isangedighi, A. J. (2007) child psychology, Development and Education. Calabar. Eti-Nwa Associates.
- [14] Judith, D. (2004). Tracking the effects of Divorce – High-conflict Separation and Divorce; Options for consideration. FCY-IE.
- [15] Kelly, R. and Wallenstein. E. (2004). <https://www.justice.gc.caleng/rp-divorce>, 2004.
- [16] Kerlinger A. (1986). *Fundamental statistics for Education and Behavioural sciences*. Ibadan: Kraft Books.
- [17] Lewin, J. (2001). Regression analysis of family influence and scholastic achievement. *Empirical economics*. 26(1), 221-246.
- [18] Mba, R. (2018). *The family and Education*, Calabar. Eti-Nwa and Associates.
- [19] Oduah, M. O. (2015). *Towards a successful marriage and family life*, Enugu.
- [20] Parkinson, L. (2000). Mediating with high-conflict couples. *Review*. 38(1) 69-76.
- [21] Peterson, J. and Zill, N. (1996). Parent-Child Relationships, and behavior problems in children. *Journal of marriage and the family*. 55; 43-58.
- [22] Richards, M, and C. Stark (2000). “Children, parenting and information meetings”. *Family laws*, 30: 484-488.
- [23] Salami, B. O. (2003) *Axiology, treatment and prevention of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria*. *Journal of research in Education*.
- [24] Schultz. G. (2006). Broken family structure. *Journal of Education psychology* 27: 70-80.
- [25] Shaw, H. and Emery, R. (2007). Family conflict and children’s self-concept.
- [26] Stewart, R. (2000). Causes of high-conflict separation and Divorce, *Review*, Ottawa, FCY-7E/7F.
- [27] WHO/UNAID (2008). *Children and AIDS*. NY UNICEF. www.ifrc.org.whatodo.

Citation of this Article:

Rosemary Unwaunyin Agba, Ph.D., Agba Linus Agba, “Psycho-Social Impact of Family Separation and Academic Achievement of Primary School Pupils in Cross River State, Nigeria” Published in *International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology - IRJIET*, Volume 7, Issue 11, pp 469-477, November 2023. Article DOI <https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2023.711063>
