

# Broken Home and its Effects on the Moral Behavior and Education of Secondary School Students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria

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**Abstract - This study examines the impact of broken homes on the moral behavior and educational outcomes of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. Using a two-stage sampling technique, 13 out of 41 secondary schools were selected, and 780 students from SS1, SS2, and SS3 were surveyed. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation. The research focused on seven key questions regarding the relationship between broken homes and behaviors such as stealing, fighting, lying, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and academic performance. Chi-square analyses revealed significant associations, indicating that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in negative behaviors and face adverse educational outcomes compared to their peers from intact families. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support systems to help children from broken homes navigate the challenges of family instability. Additionally, it calls for parents, educators, and policymakers to prioritize family unity and develop support mechanisms for these children. By addressing existing gaps in the literature regarding the unique challenges these youth face in Nigeria, the study aims to inform effective interventions that promote resilience and enhance moral behavior and academic performance among affected students.**

**Keywords:** Broken Homes, Moral Behavior, Educational Outcomes, Secondary School Students, Ikom Local Government Area.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Marriage is a legally recognized union between two persons, typically a man and woman, who have resolved to share their lives together. It involves a mutual promise to love,

respect, and care for each other, through all the ups and downs of life, for the rest of their lives.

Marriage is considered by bible scholars to be a religious institution because it is of divine origin since it was God who brought the first man and woman together and directed them to start a life of togetherness, to be fruitful, and to multiply (i.e. procreation) (Genesis 1:28). Because marriage is a religious institution, its practice falls under divine regulations.

It is the will of God for married couples to spend the rest of their life together until death separates them (cf. Genesis 2:24). Jesus taught that marriage is a lifelong commitment and that divorce is not acceptable (Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12). This is because marriage is considered to be a covenant between two people, with God as the witness, and breaking this covenant is considered a serious offense. Divorce is therefore an anomaly in Christian marriage.

Apostle Paul also expressed the same view when he condemned divorce in these words:

To those, now married, however, I give this command (though it is not mine, it is the Lord's), a wife must not separate from her husband. If she does separate, she must either remain single or become reconciled to him again. Similarly, a husband must not divorce his wife. (1 Cor. 7: 10-11).

One of the reasons why people get married is for procreation. This is supported by the Catechism of the Catholic Church which says that people get married to become emotionally united and for procreation (Catholic Church 1601). This means that once marriage takes place, many couples often begin to make babies. By accepting to live together and procreate, married couples implicitly agree to share the responsibility of feeding, clothing, sheltering, educating, etc. their children. Divorce therefore renders useless the ability of both couples to jointly display their responsibility in catering for the welfare of their children.

Divorce, which is the termination of marriage or marital union is therefore an aberration. Divorce comes with its attendant problems which to a large extent has ruined many homes. Divorce by implication means or connotes that, both parents ceased to stay together and cannot be called husband and wife again. In Africa when this is done, the traditional bride price that was paid by the groom's family to the bride's family is usually refunded by the bride's family, so as to reclaim ownership of their daughter. Among the many evils that follow divorce is that it causes emotional and physical problems in the children's behavior and education. The child's behavior is affected because, without proper parental guidance, children will make decisions that will result in moral catastrophe. Divorce is therefore one of the variables that can influence moral behavior and the academic achievement of a child from a broken home.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although marriage is meant to be a life-long commitment between married couples, there are many cases of divorce or broken homes in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, which is the area of study for this research. One of the reasons for divorce is that some couples are unaware that marriage is a life-long commitment and this ignorance usually leads to divorce (Amato, 2001). The reason for this ignorance itself is that these couples rush into marriage with the wrong mindset. Some people think that once they attain the age of sexual activeness, then they are ripe for marriage. Some couples were compelled to go into marriage because the man got the woman pregnant unintentionally. What they had for themselves was sexual love and not marital love. They never even checked if their personality was compatible. Such forceful union usually hits the rock once a little misunderstanding crops up and this leads to divorce.

Infidelity is another cankerworm that poses a serious threat to marriage and many a time has destroyed the trust that couples have for themselves, and this too leads to divorce, leaving the children to suffer the consequences (Cherlin, 1999).

Children from broken homes are often seen shuttling between parents' homes; some live with extended family members and this leads to lapses in moral upbringing and academic performance (Wallerstein, 2000). This view is supported by Kelly and Linzer who opined that, the absence of one or both parents can lead to a lack of guidance, support, and supervision, resulting in delinquent behavior and poor academic performance (Kelly, 2007; Linzer, 2008).

When both parents are no longer in the life of the child at the same time, the child begins to shuttle from one parent's home to the other. Sometimes, only one parent is in the child's

life. Sometimes too, both parents are disconnected from the child's upbringing, and the child is left in the hands of an extended family member for his or her upbringing. This point is supported by Henslim (1989) who said,

Some children of the divorced, perhaps the majority, will grow up in a single-parent home; still others will grow up as step-children in homes that however loving, they no longer dare to trust fully. Many, far too many, will grow up in a single parents' homes. Still others will be rootless as rolling stones from foster family to foster family until at last they begin a rootless life of their own.

The possible consequences of the above are that there would be lapses in the moral upbringing of the child and this would also affect the child's education. Research has also shown that children from broken homes are more likely to experience emotional distress, anxiety, and depression (Braver, 2004; Ellis, 2005). When a child becomes morally bankrupt and uneducated, emotionally unstable, anxious, and depressed, the society at large would pay dearly for it. This is why it is very important to conduct this study, to investigate the effects of broken homes on children's moral behavior and their education as it pertains specifically to Ikom Local Government Area, in order to proffer possible solutions to curb this trend. Also, despite the significance of this issue, there is a scarcity of research focusing on the specific challenges faced by children from broken homes in Ikom. This study also aims to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the effects of broken homes on the moral behavior and education of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State.

### 1.3 Objectives/purpose of the study

The main objective of this study is to determine the effects of broken homes on the moral behavior and education of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State. However, the specific objectives of this study include the following:

- i. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and stealing.
- ii. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and fighting.
- iii. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and lying.
- iv. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and cultism.
- v. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and early sex.
- vi. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and dropping out of school.

- vii. To find out if there is a significant relationship between children from broken homes and poor academic performance.

#### 1.4 Research questions and research hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses were formulated and generated to guide the study.

##### Research question 1:

What is the relationship between children from broken homes and stealing behavior?

##### Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference in stealing behavior between children from broken homes and those from intact homes.

##### Research question 2:

Is there a significant association between children from broken homes and fighting behavior?

##### Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant correlation between children from broken homes and fighting behavior.

##### Research Questions 3:

Do children from broken homes exhibit lying behavior more frequently than their peers from intact homes?

##### Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant difference in lying behavior between children from broken homes and those from intact homes.

##### Research Questions 4:

Is there a link between children from broken homes and cultism involvement?

##### Hypothesis 4:

Coming from a broken home does not increase the likelihood of cultism involvement.

##### Research Questions 5:

Does coming from a broken home increase the likelihood of engaging in early sexual activity?

##### Hypothesis 5:

There is no significant difference in early sexual activity between children from broken homes and those from intact homes.

##### Research Questions 6:

Is there a relationship between children from broken homes and school dropout rates?

##### Hypothesis 6:

There is no significant relationship between children from broken homes and school dropout rates.

##### Research Question 7:

Do children from broken homes perform poorly academically compared to their peers from stable family backgrounds?

##### Hypothesis 7:

There is no significant difference in academic performance between children from broken homes and those from stable family backgrounds.

#### 1.5 Justification of the study

This study investigates the effects of broken homes on the moral behavior and education of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria. The justification for this study is threefold:

- i. Firstly, the alarming rate of marital breakdown and family fragmentation in contemporary society has led to a growing concern about the potential consequences for children's well-being and development. As a result, it is essential to examine the impact of broken homes on secondary school students' moral behavior and educational outcomes.
- ii. Secondly, moral behavior and education are critical components of an individual's development, and any adverse effects on these areas could have long-term consequences for the individual and society. Therefore, understanding the relationship between broken homes and these outcomes is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems.
- iii. Thirdly, despite the growing body of research on the effects of broken homes on children, there is a scarcity of studies focused on secondary school students in Nigeria. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap and provide insights into the experiences of this specific population,

which can inform policy and practice in the Nigerian context.

- iv. By investigating the effects of broken homes on moral behavior and education, this study contributes to the existing literature and provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and practitioners working with secondary school students from diverse family backgrounds.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

This study focuses on the impact of broken homes on the moral behavior and educational outcomes of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State. The research specifically targets students in Senior Secondary School levels (SS1, SS2, and SS3) across selected public and private secondary schools within the area.

The scope is limited to examining how broken homes affect various behavioral aspects, including stealing, fighting, lying, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and academic performance. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, including questionnaires and interviews, to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences of students from broken homes compared to those from intact homes.

## **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The family structure significantly influences children's development, particularly regarding moral behavior and educational outcomes. This literature review examines the impact of broken homes - defined as family situations characterized by divorce, separation, or single-parent households - on children's behavior and academic performance. It synthesizes existing research findings related to behavioral issues, academic challenges, emotional well-being, and resilience among children from broken homes.

### **2.2 Effects of Broken Homes on Moral Behavior**

Research has consistently demonstrated that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in negative behaviors compared to their peers from intact families. Wallerstein (2000) notes that parental separation can lead to emotional distress in children, resulting in increased incidences of delinquency, including stealing and fighting. Kelly (2007) and Linzer (2008) emphasize that the absence of one or both parents often results in a lack of guidance and supervision, which can contribute to poor moral development and delinquent behavior.

Cherlin (1999) explores the implications of family instability on trust and moral values among children. The disruption caused by divorce can hinder children's ability to form stable relationships and develop a strong moral compass. Additionally, Braver (2004) and Ellis (2005) highlight the emotional turmoil faced by children in broken homes, which can manifest as behavioral issues such as aggression and dishonesty.

### **2.3 Academic Outcomes for Children from Broken Homes**

Scholarly research has focused on the academic performance of children from broken homes. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that children raised in single-parent households tend to exhibit lower academic achievement than their peers from two-parent families. Amoateng and Heaton (2017) support this trend, highlighting that family dynamics negatively impact students' academic performance in Ghana. Children from broken homes in Nigeria may face similar challenges, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to support their academic success.

Parsons (2007) notes that family structure significantly influences educational outcomes in adolescents, and that children experiencing familial instability may struggle with emotional distress and lack parental support, leading to decreased motivation and higher dropout rates (Amato, 2000). The absence of a stable home environment often correlates with lower educational attainment and increased challenges in academic performance.

### **2.4 Emotional Distress Associated with Broken Homes**

Children from broken homes frequently experience emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. Henslim (1989) asserts that many children of divorced parents feel insecure and rootless, leading to long-term psychological issues. This emotional instability can exacerbate behavioral problems, creating a cycle where negative behaviors further hinder academic success (Patterson, 1991).

Grych and Fincham (1990) highlight the connection between parental conflict and children's emotional well-being, noting that exposure to high conflict levels can lead to difficulties with trust and honesty, complicating moral development. This emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems addressing both emotional health and behavioral issues among affected children.

### **2.5 Gaps in Existing Literature**

While substantial research exists regarding the effects of broken homes on children's development, several gaps remain. Much of the existing literature primarily focuses on Western

contexts, leaving a need for studies examining these dynamics within specific cultural settings such as Ikom Local Government Area. Additionally, there is limited research exploring effective intervention strategies tailored to the unique needs of children from broken homes in diverse socio-economic contexts.

## 2.6 Summary of Literature Review

This literature review highlights the profound impact of broken homes on children's moral behavior and educational outcomes. It reveals that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in negative behaviors such as stealing, fighting, lying, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and poor academic performance. Emotional distress stemming from family instability further exacerbates these issues. However, some children demonstrate resilience through protective factors such as social support networks and individual coping skills. The review underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to support affected children while identifying gaps in existing research regarding cultural contexts like Ikom Local Government Area.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

This study will utilize a Mixed Method Research Design, indicating that it will incorporate multiple research methodologies. Specifically, it will employ both Correlational Research Design and Field Exploratory Survey Research Design.

The use of a correlational research design is essential as the study aims to investigate the relationships between children from broken homes and various behavioral and academic outcomes. This design will facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships among variables, allowing the researcher to assess the strength and direction of these relationships. Ultimately, it will help in identifying any significant correlations or trends in the data.

On the other hand, the field exploratory research design offers several advantages, including the ability to gather data from a large sample size, the use of standardized measures and questionnaires, and support for analyzing relationships between variables.

### 3.2 Area of the study

The area of study for this research is Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State. Ikom is a Local Government Area in the Central Senatorial district of Cross River State. The headquarters of the Local Government Area is located in 4-Corners. Other towns in Ikom Local

Government Area are Abayum, Yala-Nkum, Olulumo, Ofutop I, Ofutop II, Nta/Nselle, Nde, Adijinkpor, Ikom Urban, Akparabong, and Nnam.

Ikom has an area of 1,861.926 square kilometers (Wikipedia, 2023), and has a population of 163,691 as of the 2006 census. It is bordered in the north by Ogoja Local Government Area; in the northeast by Boki Local Government Area; in the east by Etung Local Government Area and in the south by Obubra Local Government Area (Cross River State Government, 2023).

The major languages of the people include Ofutop, Bakor, Yala, Mbembe and Ejagham. Ikom people are said to have originated from Bantu stock and their major occupations include farming, trading, and lumbering.

Ikom is endowed with good soil that not only accommodates the growth of cocoa but generously produces fine succulent plantain and banana. Yam, maize, and cocoyam are also grown there in large quantities. These products are often taken from Ikom to other parts of the State as well as other parts of the country.

Ikom has many secondary schools; both private and government-owned. The students in these secondary schools have sometimes performed poorly in their internal and external examinations hence, the need for this research into the effect of divorce on the academic performance of secondary school children to decode the reason behind some of this poor performance.

Again, despite the seemingly serene atmosphere of Ikom Local Government Area, the Ikom society is facing a significant challenge with cultism infiltrating its secondary schools. Students are increasingly drawn into secret societies, and lured by promises of power and protection (Abayomi & Nnabugwu, 2012). The initiation rituals often involve oaths of loyalty and secrecy, binding new members to the cult's dangerous practices (Jamiu, 2008).

Once involved, these students can become part of a violent subculture, engaging in conflicts with rival groups and participating in criminal activities (Kuna, 2008). This environment not only distracts them from their education but also poses severe risks to their safety and well-being (Abdul, 2003).

Despite local efforts to combat this issue, including community vigilante groups and curfews to limit cult activities, the problem persists (Daily Post, 2019). The community must unite to provide students with positive alternatives and support systems to break the cycle of violence and ensure a brighter future for the youth of Ikom.

### 3.3 Population of the study

The population of this study consists of secondary schools and students in Ikom Local Government Area. Specifically, the research focuses on the 41 secondary schools in the area, which include 25 public schools and 16 private schools.

From these schools, the study examines students in Senior Secondary School levels (SS1, SS2, and SS3), with particular attention on those from broken homes and those living with both parents (intact homes).

### 3.4 Sample and sampling technique

The sampling process for this research was conducted in two distinct stages. The first stage involved selecting a sample of secondary schools that would be used for the study, while the second stage focused on selecting the student participants for the study.

In the first stage, the forty-one (41) secondary schools in Ikom Local Government Area were categorized into two groups: public secondary schools (25), and private secondary schools (16). To achieve a high level of accuracy from the results of the research, the researcher decided to select thirty percent (30%) of the schools from each group. Calculations revealed that 7.5 schools and 4.8 schools constitute 30% of the public secondary schools and private secondary schools, respectively. After rounding these figures to the nearest whole number, they became 8 public secondary schools and 5 private secondary schools. Then using a stratified sampling technique, 8 and 5 schools were selected from the two groups mentioned above, resulting in a total of thirteen (13) secondary schools as the sample size of schools for the study.

In the second stage, each of the 13 selected schools was visited, and the researcher conducted interviews to categorize students in SS1, SS2, and SS3 based on their family backgrounds. Students were grouped into two categories: those from broken homes and those living with both parents (from intact homes). From each category, 10 students were randomly selected from each class, using a random sampling technique. For example, 10 students who identified as coming from broken homes were selected, and an equal number of students still living with both parents were also selected. Consequently, each class (SS1, SS2, and SS3) comprised 20 selected students, resulting in a total of 60 students per school. This process brought the overall student sample size to 780 students across the 13 selected secondary schools.

A concise summary of the above is shown below:

a) Total secondary schools in Ikom: 41

➤ Public/Government-owned schools: 25

➤ Private schools: 16

(b) Secondary schools sample selection:

➤ 30% of 25 public schools =  $0.3 \times 25 = 7.5 \approx 8$  (rounded to nearest whole number)

➤ 30% of 16 private schools =  $0.3 \times 16 = 4.8 \approx 5$  (rounded to nearest whole number)

➤ Total sample schools: 5 (private) + 8 (public) = 13 schools

(c) Student sample selection:

➤ In each school, the study focused on students in SS1, SS2, and SS3 classes

➤ In each class, students were arranged into two sub-groups:

- Those from broken homes
- Those living with both parents (Intact homes)

➤ From each sub-group, 10 students were selected, making 20 students per class

➤ Since there are 3 classes (SS1, SS2, SS3), the total students per school is 60

(d) Total students selected:

➤ 13 schools x 60 students per school = 780 students

### 3.5 Instruments for data collection

The study employed a mixed-methods approach for data collection, utilizing the following instruments: Questionnaires, Interviews, and Observation.

**Questionnaires:** Structured questionnaires were developed to gather quantitative data from students regarding their behaviors, family backgrounds, and academic performance. These questionnaires included closed-ended questions to facilitate statistical analysis.

**Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to gain qualitative insights into their experiences and perceptions related to their family situations. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to identify students from broken homes and those still living with both parents. This approach provided a deeper understanding of how family structure affects their moral behavior and educational outcomes.

**Observation:** Observational techniques were used to assess student behaviors in their natural school environments, providing contextual information about interactions and dynamics among students.

**Rationale for Instrument Selection:**

This combination of instruments was chosen to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The questionnaires provided quantitative data, while interviews and observations offered qualitative insights, allowing for triangulation of data and enhancing the validity of the findings.

**3.5.1 Validity and reliability of the instruments**

To ensure the effectiveness of the instruments, careful attention was given to their design. The questionnaires were pilot-tested to assess clarity and relevance, and adjustments were made based on feedback. Additionally, the interview questions were developed to align with the research objectives, ensuring that they effectively addressed the key areas of interest.

**3.6 Statistical analysis technique**

The data collected through questionnaires was analyzed using the chi-square test of independence. This statistical technique was employed to determine the relationship between family structure (broken homes vs. intact homes) and various behavioral and educational outcomes, including stealing behavior, fighting behavior, lying behavior, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and academic performance.

For each variable, the chi-square test was used to assess whether the observed frequencies differed significantly from the expected frequencies under the null hypothesis of independence. A p-value less than the chosen significance level (e.g., 0.05) indicated a statistically significant association between family structure and the outcome variable, and where this is the case, the null hypothesis is rejected.

The chi-square test statistic, degrees of freedom, and p-values were reported for each analysis, providing a quantitative measure of the strength and significance of the relationships observed in the data.

**IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1 General description of the research variables**

This section presents the study's findings on the effect of broken homes on the moral behavior and education of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of

Cross River State, Nigeria. The results are based on the analysis of data collected from seven hundred and eighty (780) secondary school students, using the research gathering tools of a Structured Questionnaire and the Interview method.

The study investigated the relationship between the independent variable, "broken homes", and the dependent variables, "moral behavior" and "education". Further analysis was conducted on the specific variables derived from the dependent variables, namely: stealing behavior, fighting behavior, lying behavior, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and academic performance.

The results are presented in tables, figures, and text, and are organized according to the research questions and hypotheses. The findings are compared with the theoretical framework and previous studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of broken homes on the moral behavior and education of secondary school students.

**4.2 Presentation of results**

This section presents the results of the chi-square analyses conducted to investigate the relationships between children from broken homes and various behavioral outcomes. The analysis aims to determine whether significant associations exist between the family structure of the participants and their engagement in behaviors such as stealing, fighting, lying, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and academic performance.

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between children from broken homes and stealing behavior?

**Hypothesis 1:** Children from broken homes are more likely to engage in stealing behavior compared to their peers from intact homes

**Table 1: Relationship between Broken Homes and Stealing Behavior**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	150	240	390
Intact Home	70	320	390
<b>Total</b>	220	560	780

Chi-Square value = 40.52

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** The chi-square test indicates a significant association between coming from a broken home and engaging in stealing behavior ( $\chi^2(1) = 40.52, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in stealing compared to their peers from intact homes.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 2:** Is there a significant association between children from broken homes and fighting behavior?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant correlation between children from broken homes and fighting behavior.

**Table 2: Association Between Broken Homes and Fighting Behavior**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	120	270	390
Intact Home	50	340	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>780</b>

Chi-Square value = 36.84

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** A significant positive correlation was found between children from broken homes and fighting behavior ( $\chi^2(1) = 36.84, p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that children from broken homes are more prone to engage in fighting compared to those from intact homes. The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 3:** Do children from broken homes exhibit lying behavior more frequently than their peers from intact homes?

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in lying behavior between children from broken homes and those from intact homes.

**Table 3: Frequency of Lying Behavior among Children from Broken Homes**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	180	210	390
Intact Home	90	300	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>780</b>

Chi-Square value = 45.88

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** The results indicate that children from broken homes exhibit lying behavior more frequently than their peers from intact homes ( $\chi^2(1) = 45.88, p < 0.001$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 4:** Is there a link between children from broken homes and cultism involvement?

**Hypothesis 4:** Coming from a broken home does not increase the likelihood of cultism involvement.

**Table 4: Link between Broken Homes and Cultism Involvement**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	100	290	390
Intact Home	20	370	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>780</b>

Chi-Square value = 63.04

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** There is a significant association between coming from a broken home and involvement in cultism ( $\chi^2(1) = 63.04, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in cultism compared to their peers from intact homes. The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 5:** Does coming from a broken home increase the likelihood of engaging in early sexual activity?

**Hypothesis 5:** There is no significant difference in early sexual activity between children from broken homes and those from intact homes.

**Table 5: Impact of Broken Homes on Early Sexual Activity**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	130	260	390
Intact Home	40	350	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>780</b>

Chi-Square value = 60.92

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** Children from broken homes are significantly more likely to engage in early sexual activity compared to their peers from intact homes ( $\chi^2(1) = 60.92, p < 0.001$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 6:** Is there a relationship between children from broken homes and school dropout rates?

**Hypothesis 6:** There is no significant relationship between children from broken homes and school dropout rates.

**Table 6: Relationship between Broken Homes and School Dropout Rates**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	110	280	390
Intact Home	30	360	390
<b>Total</b>	140	640	780

Chi-Square value = 55.72

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** The analysis shows a significant relationship between children from broken homes and school dropout rates ( $\chi^2(1) = 55.72, p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that children from broken homes are more likely to drop out of school compared to their peers from intact homes. The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

**Research Question 7:** Do children from broken homes perform poorly academically compared to their peers from stable family backgrounds?

**Hypothesis 7:** There is no significant difference in academic performance between children from broken homes and those from stable family backgrounds.

**Table 7: Academic Performance of Children from Broken Homes vs. Intact Homes**

Category	Yes	No	Total
Broken Home	200	190	390
Intact Home	80	310	390
<b>Total</b>	280	500	780

Chi-Square value = 80.22

Degree of Freedom = 1

p-value = < 0.001

**Interpretation:** The chi-square test indicates that children from broken homes perform poorly academically compared to their peers from stable family backgrounds ( $\chi^2(1) = 80.22, p < 0.001$ ). The null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

#### 4.2.1 Summary of Chi-Square Results

**Table 8**

Behavior	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	p-value (approx.)
Stealing Behavior	40.52	1	< 0.001
Fighting Behavior	36.84	1	< 0.001
Lying Behavior	45.88	1	< 0.001
Cultism Involvement	63.04	1	< 0.001

Early Activity	Sexual	60.92	1	< 0.001
School Rates	Dropout	55.72	1	< 0.001
Academic Performance		80.22	1	< 0.001

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

#### 4.3.1 Stealing Behavior

The analysis revealed a significant association between broken homes and stealing behavior, with 150 out of 390 students from broken homes reporting such behavior compared to only 70 from intact homes. This finding supports the hypothesis that children from broken homes are more likely to engage in stealing. Research suggests that children from unstable family backgrounds may lack the emotional and social support necessary to develop healthy coping mechanisms, leading to delinquent behaviors (Patterson, 1991).

#### 4.3.2 Fighting Behavior

The results also showed a significant positive correlation between broken homes and fighting behavior, with 120 students from broken homes engaging in fights compared to 50 from intact homes. This finding is consistent with previous studies that indicate children from broken homes often exhibit higher levels of aggression and conflict due to exposure to familial instability and conflict (Amato, 2001). The lack of a stable parental figure may contribute to these aggressive behaviors, as children may not learn appropriate conflict-resolution skills.

#### 4.3.3 Lying Behavior

The significant prevalence of lying behavior among children from broken homes (180 out of 390) compared to their peers (90 out of 390) further emphasizes the impact of family structure on moral development. Research indicates that children from broken homes may engage in deceitful behaviors as a coping strategy to navigate their challenging environments (Grych and Fincham, 1990). This aligns with the notion that children in unstable households may struggle with trust and honesty, impacting their moral development.

#### 4.3.4 Cultism Involvement

The study found a significant link between broken homes and cultism involvement, with 100 students from broken homes participating compared to 20 from intact homes. This finding highlights a concerning trend, as children from broken homes may seek a sense of belonging and identity within cultic groups, which can provide a sense of community that they lack at home (Adejumo, 2017). The allure of cultism

can be powerful for adolescents seeking acceptance and validation during a tumultuous period in their lives.

#### 4.3.5 Early Sexual Activity

The results indicated that children from broken homes are significantly more likely to engage in early sexual activity, with 130 reporting such behavior compared to 40 from intact homes. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that children from unstable family backgrounds may engage in risky behaviors, including early sexual activity, as a means of seeking affection and validation (Donahue & Lannutti, 2017). Early sexual involvement can have long-term implications for emotional and physical health, underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

#### 4.3.6 School Dropout Rates

The significant relationship between broken homes and school dropout rates (110 out of 390 from broken homes compared to 30 from intact homes) highlights the educational challenges faced by these children. Previous studies have shown that children from broken homes are more likely to experience academic difficulties and lower educational attainment (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). The instability associated with broken homes can lead to decreased motivation and engagement in school, contributing to higher dropout rates.

#### 4.3.7 Academic Performance

Finally, the study found that children from broken homes perform poorly academically compared to their peers from stable family backgrounds, with 200 out of 390 from broken homes reporting poor performance. This finding aligns with research indicating that family structure significantly impacts academic outcomes (Amato, 2000). Children from broken homes may lack the support and resources necessary for academic success, leading to lower performance and achievement.

#### 4.4 Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals. Interventions aimed at supporting children from broken homes are essential to mitigate the risks associated with these adverse outcomes. Programs that provide emotional support, counseling, and academic assistance can help address the unique challenges faced by these children (Durlak et al., 2011). Additionally, community-based initiatives that promote family stability and offer resources to at-risk families can be beneficial (Cowan et al., 2005).

#### 4.5 Resilience and Protective Factors

Despite the significant challenges faced by children from broken homes, it is important to note that not all children

from these backgrounds experience negative outcomes. Some children demonstrate resilience and can overcome the adversity associated with family instability. Masten (2001) identifies protective factors—such as strong social support networks and positive adult relationships—that can mitigate the adverse effects of family instability. Werner and Smith (1992) affirm that certain children thrive despite adverse conditions due to these protective factors. Rutter (1987) suggests that creating supportive environments where youths that are at-risk can develop healthy coping strategies will help them build up resilience against the negative outcomes of broken homes. In the same vein, Masten & Coatsworth (1988) believe that individual characteristics like self-regulation and problem-solving skills can help buffer the impact of broken homes on children's development.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the significant impact of broken homes on the moral behavior and education of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area. The results highlight the need for targeted interventions and support systems to assist children from broken homes in overcoming the challenges they face. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these behaviors and the effectiveness of various intervention strategies.

### V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Summary

This research examined the impact of broken homes on the moral behavior and educational outcomes of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area of Cross River State. Employing a two-stage sampling technique, the study selected 13 secondary schools from a total of 41, resulting in a sample size of 780 students from SS1, SS2, and SS3. The research aimed to answer seven key questions regarding the relationship between broken homes and various behaviors, including stealing, fighting, lying, cultism involvement, early sexual activity, school dropout rates, and academic performance.

The findings revealed significant associations between broken homes and negative behaviors. Specifically, children from broken homes were found to be more likely to engage in stealing ( $\chi^2(1) = 40.52, p < 0.001$ ), fighting ( $\chi^2(1) = 36.84, p < 0.001$ ), and lying ( $\chi^2(1) = 45.88, p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, there was a significant link between cultism involvement ( $\chi^2(1) = 63.04, p < 0.001$ ) and early sexual activity ( $\chi^2(1) = 60.92, p < 0.001$ ). The study also highlighted a concerning trend of higher school dropout rates ( $\chi^2(1) = 55.72, p < 0.001$ ) and poorer academic performance ( $\chi^2(1) = 80.22, p < 0.001$ ) among children from broken homes.

These findings underscore the critical challenges faced by children from unstable family environments and highlight the need for targeted interventions. Support systems that address emotional, behavioral, and academic needs are essential to help these children navigate the adversities associated with broken homes. The research contributes to the understanding of how family structure impacts youth development and calls for further studies to explore effective strategies for supporting at-risk children.

## 5.2 General Conclusion

This study has provided critical insights into the impact of broken homes on the moral behavior and educational outcomes of secondary school students in Ikom Local Government Area. The findings reveal that children from broken homes in Ikom Local Government Area in Cross River State are significantly more likely to engage in negative behaviors such as stealing, fighting, involvement in cultism, becoming sexually active at an early age, and lying. They also face greater challenges in their educational journeys, including higher dropout rates and poorer academic performance. These results underscore the urgent need to address the unique challenges faced by these children.

The significant associations identified in this research highlight the detrimental effects of family instability on youth development. Children from broken homes often experience emotional distress, lack of adequate supervision, and diminished parental involvement, all of which contribute to their engagement in maladaptive behaviors. Furthermore, the academic struggles faced by these children, including lower performance and higher dropout rates, can have long-term consequences on their future opportunities and overall well-being.

## 5.3 Recommendations

To effectively support children from broken homes, a multifaceted approach is required:

- i. **Counseling and Psychological Support:** Schools should implement counseling programs that provide emotional support to students from broken homes. Trained counselors can help these children process their feelings, develop coping strategies, and improve their self-esteem. Group therapy sessions could also facilitate peer support, allowing students to share their experiences and learn from one another.
- ii. **Academic Support Programs:** After-school tutoring and mentoring programs can be established to assist students struggling academically. These programs can provide individualized attention and resources to help bridge learning gaps. Additionally, schools can implement study skills workshops to equip students with effective learning strategies.

- iii. **Parental Engagement Initiatives:** Schools and community organizations should work to engage parents, particularly those from broken homes, in their children's education. Workshops that educate parents on the importance of involvement and strategies to support their children's learning can foster a more supportive home environment. This may include parenting classes, communication skills training, and resources for conflict resolution.
- iv. **Community Support Services:** Local governments and non-profit organizations should collaborate to provide comprehensive support services for families in crisis. This may include access to family counseling, financial assistance, and housing support. Creating safe spaces for children to engage in recreational activities can also help build resilience and provide positive role models.
- v. **Awareness Campaigns:** Raising awareness about the challenges faced by children from broken homes can foster empathy and understanding within the community. Schools can organize workshops and seminars to educate teachers, parents, and students about the effects of family instability and the importance of creating a supportive environment for all children.
- vi. **Policy Advocacy:** Policymakers should prioritize initiatives that address the needs of children from broken homes. This may include funding for mental health services, educational resources, and community programs aimed at supporting at-risk families. Advocating for policies that promote family stability and provide resources for mental health support can create a more equitable environment for all children.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the necessity of understanding the complexities of family dynamics and their influence on child development. By addressing the emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of these children and promoting family stability, we can help ensure that they have the best possible chance of success in life. Again, by implementing targeted interventions and fostering community support, we can help mitigate the adverse effects of broken homes and enhance the prospects for a successful future for these children. Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of broken homes on children and the efficacy of various intervention strategies to support them. This is because longitudinal studies would track the same individuals from broken homes over some time to observe how their experiences and outcomes have changed. In the same vein, by assessing the various intervention programs designed to support them, researchers can identify which approaches are most beneficial in promoting resilience and improving overall well-being among affected children.

#### 5.4 Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of broken homes on children's development, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias or underreporting. Future research should consider using multiple informants (e.g., parents, teachers, community members) and longitudinal designs to better understand the long-term effects of broken homes on children's outcomes (Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999). Additionally, research should explore the specific mechanisms through which broken homes influence children's development and identify effective intervention strategies tailored to the unique needs of these children and their families.

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