

The Effect of Divorce on Education of Pre-Primary School Pupils

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Abstract: This study assessed the effects of divorce on education of pre-primary school pupils. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised of six hundred and four (604) teachers in ECCE section of the 84 public primary schools in the Area Council. Sample size of the study was 75 teachers was used in the study. The instrument of the study was a questionnaire which was constructed in 4-point modified Likert scale format. Descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, and percentage were used for data analysis. Results of the study revealed that divorce has negative impact on educational, cognitive and socio-emotional developments of pre-primary school children in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja. It was recommended that parents should be concerned about educational development of their children, and avoid divorce; and that teachers should discharge their professional responsibilities towards assisting children from broken families.

Keywords: Pre-primary Education, Divorce, Educational Development

I. Introduction

Globally, primary education is an essential component of the society, and the foundation of which other levels of education depend. Primary education is designed to provide children with elementary literacy and numeracy skills including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and computational skills. Other skills and understandings that prepare them for lower secondary education, and the ability to function maximally in the society. These other skills and understandings include skills in science, social sciences, community studies, agriculture, art, music, and physical education (Malasa, 2010; Oni, 2013).

In addition, primary education is the basic and foremost right of every child. It creates awareness among the young children, opens opportunities for self-development and improvement, and reduces chronic and inter-generational poverty (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron & Osher, 2020). As a first step in the creation of awareness and a just society, primary education offers opportunities to all children regardless of age, gender or country of origin. It enables children to achieve a balanced cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development (Graham, 2016).

In Nigeria, like other nations of the world, primary education occupies a very important position in the education ladder (Oni, 2013). Objectives of the primary education, according to the Federal Government of Nigeria cited in Adesina (2011) include inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively, laying of a sound foundation for scientific and reflective thinking, citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in, and contribution to the life of the society. Others include character and moral training, development of sound attitudes, developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment, giving the child the opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limit of his capacity, and providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality. Within the primary system, pre-primary education was recently developed (Ikejiau, Ezeasor & Nnajiolor, 2015).

The pre-primary education globally is referred to as early childhood care and education (ECCE). It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. ECCE has the possibility of nurturing, caring, and capable of preparing responsible future citizens of a country. In addition, pre-primary education plays an important role in compensating for the disadvantages in the family and combating educational inequalities (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). The pre-primary education, ECCE, looks at children below the official school age (usually 6 years) mainly to prepare them for the rigors of primary education and beyond (Obiweluzor, 2018). To achieve these objectives, it is expected that parents be proactive in discharging their responsibilities.

The parents (mother and father) are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. This is because the family background in the context of a child affects his/her reaction to life situations, perhaps, parents are the child's first and primary teacher (Kasoma, 2012). Based on parents relationship, home could be classified into two namely ideal (unbroken) and non-ideal (broken). An ideal home is characterized by families including the parents and their offspring living harmoniously together and where the parents provide

the necessary psychological, educational, socio-economic, moral and spiritual needs of the children and other members of the household (Tenibiaje & Tenibiaje, 2011).

Conversely, broken home is the opposite of the ideal one. A broken home could come as a result of many factors such as divorce, separation, death of one's spouse and poverty, among others (Igbinsosa, 2014). Divorce is generally associated with mal-development in children which affects their physical wellbeing, socializing with other children, educational performance, stress and emotional difficulties (Yara & Tunde-Yara, 2010). Undoubtedly, divorce could hinder educational development of children at the pre-primary school level.

Educational development at the pre-primary school encompasses cognitive changes in children towards schooling which involves children readiness for school, attention in class, transition from one activity to the next, and cooperating with other children during teaching and learning exercise (Little, 2014). Against this background, this study assessed the negative effect of divorce in educational development of children in pre-primary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

Hence, the role of the parents in children's educational development cannot be overemphasized. This is because the education for life in a given family commences with early days of the child's life, and parents play the role of the direct teachers as well as supporters of the educational development of their children. Vividly, when parents involve themselves in the education process of their children, the outcome can be qualified as a positive and encouraging one. However, if parents failed in this regards it results in negative consequences on children educational development. Hence, parents are the prime educators until the child attends nursery or starts school and remain a major influence on their children's learning through school and beyond (Ardita & Rabije, 2016). However, parental involvement in children educational development is hindered mainly by divorce, separation or death of a spouse.

Divorce, for example has been a prevailing factor in Nigeria in recent time. It was reported that "the total number of official marriage dissolutions in Nigeria cannot be compared to those in the United States and European countries" (Akinbobola, 2021).

Recently, in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja including Gwagwalada Area Council, about 20 to 30 cases of divorce are being entertained daily in High Courts while the figure is higher at the Customary and Sharia Courts (Akinbobola, 2021). Undoubtedly, this phenomenon poses threats to educational development of pre-primary school children including their cognitive and social-emotional developments.

Purpose of the Study

The specific objectives include the following:

- i. To assess the extent to which divorce impact on pre-primary school children educational development.
- ii. To ascertain the extent to which divorce impact on pre-primary school children cognitive development.
- iii. To evaluate the extent to which divorce impact on pre-primary school children socio-emotional development.

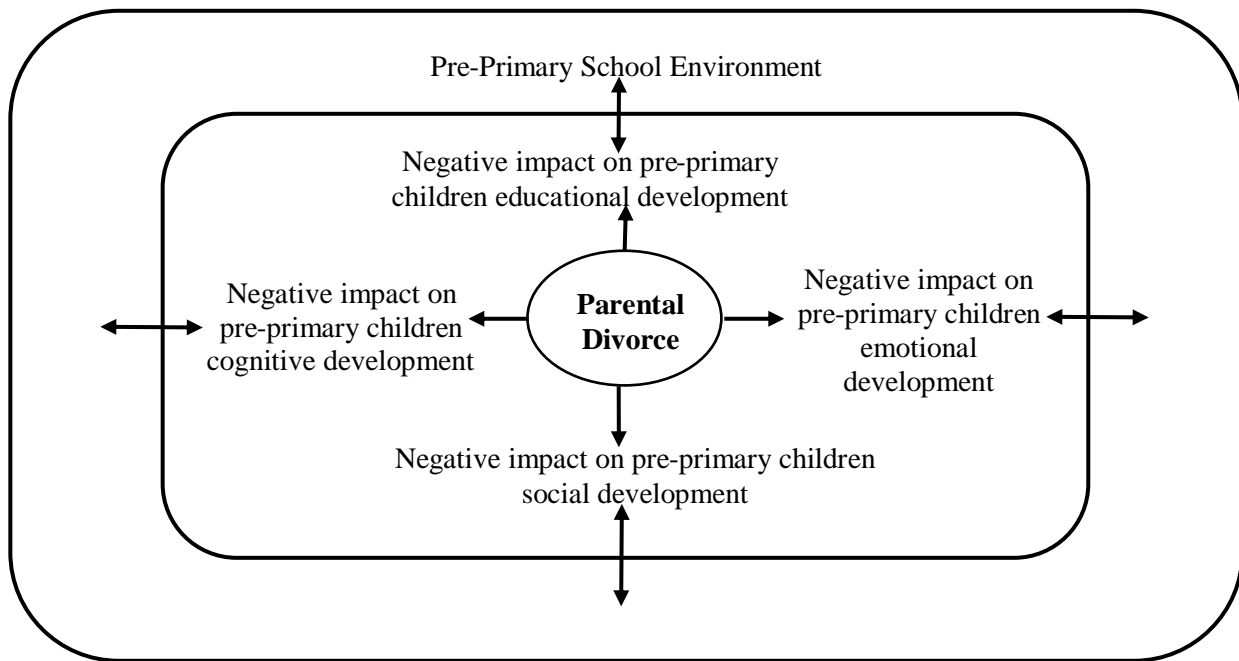
Research Questions

To achieve the objectives stated above, the following research questions were raised:

- i. To what extent does divorce impact on pre-primary school children educational development?
- ii. To what extent does divorce impact on pre-primary school children cognitive development?
- iii. To what extent does divorce impact on pre-primary school children socio-emotional development?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is diagrammatically presented as follows:



According to the figure, parental divorce is at the focal point which pose negative impact on pre-primary school children’s educational, cognitive, social, and emotional developments of children. Also, these impacts could hinder effectiveness of pre-primary school education as well as realization of its objectives.

II. Empirical Review

Yara and Tunde-Yara (2010) conducted study on the effects of divorce on academic performance of adolescents in secondary schools in Ibadan. Descriptive survey research design was adopted with research sample which consisted of 200 students that were drawn from four randomly selected secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. An instrument titled “Effect of Broken Homes on Academic Performance of Secondary School Adolescents’ Questionnaire” was used for data collection and the data collected were analyzed using the Spearman Correlation Coefficient. The results showed that family type/family structure has significant effects academic performances of students in junior and senior students.

Tenibiaje and Tenibiaje (2011) assessed the influence of family pattern on the academic performance and truant behaviour of secondary school students in Ekiti State. Survey research design was adopted for the study. A total number of two hundred and fifty (250) subjects were randomly sampled for the study. Secondary Schools in Ado-Ekiti Local Government were purposely selected to cater for mixed schools, boys and girls schools. A questionnaire was designed by the researchers to elicit the respondents’ bio-data, while the classroom registers and the students’ last examination result was used for checking truancy and their academic performance. The descriptive statistics was used for data analysis. Results showed insignificant difference between the academic performance of adolescent students from single parent homes and those from intact parent homes; but there is significant difference between truancy behaviour of adolescent students from single parent homes and those from intact homes.

Oladimeji (2012) examined the effects of broken home on students’ performance in social studies in Ibadan Metropolis of Oyo State. Descriptive survey design was employed in the study. Self-designed questionnaire was used to obtained data from 120 respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed using t-test and ANOVA statistics. The results revealed insignificant difference between the perception of male and female teachers on the causes and effects of broken home on the academic performance of secondary school students in social studies. It also confirms that broken homes have effects on the academic performance of students.

Kasoma (2012) investigated the influence of divorce on pupils’ academic performance in primary schools in Mbala District of Zambia. The descriptive survey design was employed in the study. The population of the study comprised teachers, pupils and school administrators as well as education standards officers, provincial education officers and civil society organizations. Purposive sampling procedures were used for selection of 91 respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-

structured interviews, in-depth interviews and analysis of documents. Qualitative data were analysed thematically through identification of themes and sub-themes that emerged. Basic descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and tables were used in the analysis of quantitative data. The study found that broken homes contributed to poor pupil performance in most cases as pupils from intact families out performed pupils from broken families. Also, it was found pupils from broken families experienced a lot of emotional difficulties.

Boye-Laryea (2012) assessed the effects of broken homes on academic performance of pupils of Lower Manya Krobo district, Ghana. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Population of the study comprised 4,485 pupils, and 253 teachers in 27 schools in five communities in the Lower Manya Krobo district. Sample size of 150 pupils and 15 teachers randomly selected from five junior high schools. Questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. The data of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. It was established that there was a positive relationship between the performance of a child in school and the state of the family. Most children who excelled lived with both parents and well taken care of by their parents whereas children from broken homes performed badly.

Ahiaoma (2013) examined the psycho-social effect of divorce on adolescents in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State. Descriptive research survey was adopted for the study. Stratified random sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample from the Local Government Area. The sample population used was 120 adolescent students randomly drawn from twelve secondary schools from the Local Government Area. A structured questionnaire was used to generate data from the population sample. Data obtained were analyzed using simple percentage and chi-square statistics. The results of study disclosed that parental separation has negative effect on academic performance, negative social development, poor interpersonal relations, and pitiable emotional stability manifestations on children.

Ogbemudia and Aiasa (2013) investigated the influence of home environment on the academic performance of primary pupils' in English Language in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State. The study considered four variables which included parental academic background, parental economic status, parental marital status and parental home location. A sample size of 50 primary five pupils obtained from five public primary schools in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State was used. Ex-post Facto research design was used for the study. Two instruments were used for data collection: the Home Environmental Factor Questionnaire (HEFQ) and Pupils' Achievement Test (PAT) in English Language. The dependent t-test and the analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data. Results obtained from the study at 0.05 level of significance showed that parental academic background, parental economic status, parental marital status and parental home location all have significant influence on primary five pupils' academic performance in English Language.

Mutodi and Ngirande (2014) investigated how parental involvement in South African schools affects the academic performance of students in mathematics. The study used a quantitative research approach. The population for the study comprised of 150 parents of grade 12 students from a selected high school in South Africa. Using the Rao Soft sample size calculator, a minimum recommended sample size of 109 respondents was obtained. A self-generated questionnaire, structured in five-point likert scale format was used to solicit data for the study. The techniques used during data analysis included descriptive statistics, t-tests, correlation analysis, ANOVA and regression analysis. The main findings of the study are that all the parents who responded are highly involved with their children's education. They have high expectations towards their children's education and performance. Results further indicate that home and family support is the most significant factor that determines a learner's performance.

Bubelwa (2014) investigated the effects of broken marriage on academic performance of primary school pupils in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The sample of the study includes 100 pupils and 50 teachers from the selected primary schools in Ilala Municipality. The research instruments used to collect information were interviews, observations, and documentary reviews. The descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentage, and mean were used for data analysis. The study findings showed that broken marriages contribute a lot to student's poor academic performance, psychological problems and delinquent behavior among students.

Gul and Nadeemullah (2017) examined the effects of broken homes on the psycho, social and academic performances of students in Karachi, Pakistan. The descriptive survey design was employed. The researchers adopted snowball sampling technique to select 170 children under the age group 10 to 18 years. Data of the study were collected using questionnaire and interview schedule. The data were subjected to descriptive statistics. The study found the situation that the ratio attendance and grades of girls is higher than boys due to financial burdens as girls engage themselves in different income resources to overcome the financial crises. Study also found that due to aggressive nature, the boy often tend towards disobedience and suffers from anxiety after a series of hopeless thoughts towards tackling the different challenges.

Nwamadi (2018) compared academic performance of students from broken and intact homes in Biology in Omuma Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of

all SS 2 students in public schools in the area. The sample of the study consisted of 200 senior secondary school students drawn through stratified sampling technique. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean score was used in answering the research questions while t-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study observed that there is significant difference in the mean performance of male students from intact and broken homes in biology, there is significant difference in the mean performance of female students from intact and broken homes in biology, and there is significant difference in the mean performance of students from educated parents in intact and broken homes in the area. It was concluded that broken homes have significant effect on students' performance.

John, Assafuah-Drokow, Boe-Doe and Fosuaa (2018) assessed the causes and effects of broken homes on the academic performance of basic school pupils in the Assin-South District of Ghana. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. 60 respondents (45 pupils and 15 parents) were used as sample size for the study selected using the purposive sampling procedure to select the sample. Questionnaire and interview were used for data collection. Data from the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics mainly frequency and simple percentages, whereas data from the interview were analysed qualitatively using the thematic analysis. The study revealed that there were several factors that cause broken homes including divorce, forced or early marriage, death and sexual incompatibility. Also, it was discovered that that pupils from broken homes faced a lot of problems including academic and financial problems. In addition, it was found out that the specific problems faced by pupils from broken homes include early engagement in sexual activities; poor academic performance; school drop-out, low self-esteem and insecurity.

Abrantes and Casinillo (2020) examined the impact of divorce on academic performance among senior high students in Philippines. This study adopted a descriptive-correlational design. The study was conducted in Leyte, Philippines with focus on a popular secondary school were sample of 336 students - 168 students broken homes and 168 from intact homes. The purposive sampling techniques was adopted for the selection. Questionnaire and academic performance scales were used for data collection. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the different variables and Spearman correlation was undertaken to identify the significant relationship between variables. Results revealed that there is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from single-parent homes and two-parent homes. It was also found out that problems encountered by students from single parent homes do not affect their studies and learning attitudes. With the aid of Spearman *rho* Correlation Coefficient, it denotes a highly significant relationship between problems encountered by the students and their academic performance.

Ihedioha (2020) investigated the influence of broken home on the academic performance of students' in secondary schools in Aba North LGA. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. A total of 200 secondary school students were randomly selected out of 2,223 secondary school students from 8 public schools in Aba North LGA. A structured four-point questionnaire titled "perceived influence of broken home on the academic performance of secondary school students" was used for collection of data. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the null hypotheses were tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 alpha levels. The study discovered that apart from family structure which has significant influence on the academic performance of secondary school students, other variables including home environments, parental involvement in the school based activities and parental attitudes towards students.

Okafor and Egenti(2021) examined the influence of broken homes on academic achievement in English language of secondary students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The study adopted the ex-post facto design. The population of the study was seven thousand, six hundred and seven junior secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. Sample size of the study was 450 JSS students. Two instruments, Broken Home Questionnaire (BHQ) and student's academic achievement checklist, were used for data collection. Data of the study were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using t-test. The findings revealed that secondary school students from broken homes faced education challenges like lack of sufficient text books, inability to meet education related financial obligations, poor academic achievement and lack of concentration while in school. Also, result showed that secondary school students from broken homes faced emotional challenges like emotional stress, despair, inferiority complex, feeling insecure and unhappiness.

III. Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. It is the systematic method of collecting data from a defined area through sampled population among the general population in which the opinions and observations of the sampled population are generalized to represent the entire population (Ekpo, 2019). The design is adopted because it is cost effective and provides a high level of general capability in representing a large population.

The population of this study comprised of teachers in the ECCE section in 84 public primary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council. Population of teachers in the section is estimated as six hundred and four (604) (FCT Education Management Information System, 2022). Ten public primary schools in the ECCE section were randomly selected from the research population. In each of the sampled schools, all teachers in the section were selected, which made-up of seventy-five (75) teachers.

A questionnaire entitled “Divorce and Educational Development of Pre-Primary School Children Assessment Scale (DEDPCAS) was used for data collection. DEDPCAS was a close-ended questionnaire constructed in a Likert scale format with four points: Very High Extent (VHE) – 4 points, High Extent (HE) – 3 points, Low Extent (LE) – 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) – 1 point. The data of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage and mean.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study are presented based on the outcomes from the analysis of data, in accordance with each of the research questions raised for the study. For the research question one that assessed the impact of divorce on pre-primary school children educational development, the study discovered that divorce is a hindrance to pre-primary school children’s awareness and curiosity for schooling as well as school readiness, it prevents children early enrolment in school, causes truancy and absent of among pre-primary school children from school, and affects pre-primary school children’s focus and attention in classroom. Generally, divorce impacted on pre-primary school children educational development in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Tenibiaje and Tenibiaje (2011) who revealed the influence of family status on truant behavior, an aspect of educational development, of secondary school students in Ekiti State. Likewise, Boye-Laryea (2012) revealed the effects of broken homes on academic performance of pupils of Lower Manya Krobo district, Ghana as a result of deficiencies in educational development of pupils from divorced homes. Furthermore, Ogbemudia and Aiasa (2013) disclosed that parental marital status significant influence on primary five pupils’ academic performance in English Language as academic performance of pupils from broken homes is poor than those for intact homes. In the same vein, Bubelwa (2014) showed that broken marriages contribute to pupils’ poor academic performance in primary schools in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

For research question two which assessed divorce and cognitive development of pre-primary school children, this study revealed that divorce has impact on pre-primary school children’s construction of thought processes, affects changes in mental activities of pre-primary school children, affects pre-primary school children’s assimilation, hinders pre-primary school children’s phonemic awareness, awareness of the component sounds within words, and poses threat to pre-primary school children’s academic performance. The implication of this is that divorce negatively affects pre-primary children cognitive development in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

This finding supports the findings of Yara and Tunde-Yara (2010) who disclosed significant effects of divorce on academic performance (as a result of impact on cognitive development) of adolescents in secondary schools in Ibadan. Also, Tenibiaje and Tenibiaje (2011) revealed the negative influence of family status on academic performance of secondary school students in Ekiti State. Likewise, Oladimeji (2012) disclosed significant effects of broken home on students’ performance in social studies in Ibadan Metropolis of Oyo State.

Regarding research question three which concerned with the impact of divorce on pre-primary school children social-emotional development in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja; this study realized that aggression is common among pre-primary school children from broken homes, interaction of pre-primary school children from broken homes with peers and behaviour regulation of is poor, and social and emotional competencies of pre-primary school children from broken homes are also poor. Likewise, divorce affects pre-primary school children’s cooperate with other children in school, and hinders children’s abilities to interact constructively with teachers and work effectively with peers in classroom. Hence, divorce impacts on pre-primary school children social-emotional development.

This finding corroborates the findings of Kasoma (2012) who discovered the influence of divorce on pupils’ academic performance and emotional development in primary schools in Mbala District of Zambia. Corroboratively, Ahiaoma (2013) disclosed that parental separation has negative effect on social development, interpersonal relations, and emotional stability of children in Surulere Local Government Area of Lagos State. Likewise, Bubelwa (2014) revealed that broken marriages creates psychological problems and delinquent behavior among primary school pupils in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Also, Gul and Nadeemullah (2017) disclosed that the effects of broken homes on the psycho-social development of students in Karachi, Pakistan. Moreover, John, Assafuah-Drokow, Boe-Doe and Fosuaa (2018) revealed that broken homes caused school drop-out, low self-esteem and insecurity basic school pupils in the Assin-South District of Ghana.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the results from the analyzed data of the study, it could be concluded that divorce had negative impacts on pre-primary school children educational development in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja is high. Therefore, the the following are recommended:

- i. Parents should avoid divorce and be concerned about educational development of their children.

- ii. Teachers should discharge their professional responsibilities promptly, and give counselling to parents on the negative impacts of divorce on children's educational development.
- iii. Educational planners should be more proactive in providing schools and teachers with necessary resources that could make them more productive towards discharging their professional responsibilities including assistance towards educational development of children especially those from divorced or divided homes.

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