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**Impact of Family Disintegration on the  
Academic Achievement of Secondary School  
Students in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local  
Government Area of Rivers State**

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**Abstract**

This paper examined the impact of family disintegration on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local Government Area in Rivers State. A total of 50 students and 50 teachers were used as a representative sample for the study. The findings revealed that students from disintegrated families performed poorly in continuous assessment. They also lacked the essential learning materials which invariably force them to drop out of school. It is therefore, expedient to recommend, among other things, that couples should live together with their children.

**Introduction**

Family disintegration has become a regular issue in every community in our society today. The effect on the children and their parents are damaging as it has caused more harm than good. According to Mezieobi and Jude (2007), the family is "a socially approved small group made up of the husband, wife or wives and their offspring or children. Under normal circumstances, they are

supposed to live together for proper planning. Family disintegration therefore is the break –up or disbands of the husband and wife. The children are kept either with the husband or wife or taken away as housemaids or house helps. Under such situation the children will lack the care of both parents.

Family disintegration exerts some high degree of influence on the children being the direct target. This is because they directly carry all the problems which affect them adversely in their academic pursuits. Uche (1980) observes that the family has an important influence on the child's academic achievement. What the child learns at home and how his/her family motivates them towards education contributes to a large extent on their success or failure in school. Similarly, psychologists are of the view that children from disintegrated families have lower academic achievements than those in united homes. Stone (1977) supported this view when he opined that "the children of divorced parents do worse than the children of individual parents. He further concluded that the problems of some children brought up by lone parents include poor health, behavioral difficulties, low achievements at school, psychiatric illness, and more involvement in alcohol abuse and crime.

Family disintegration does not provide a safe environment for all family members; it rather produces "child abuse" with its consequences. It is observed in recent times that "safest environment for a child is one in which the biological parents are married and the family has always been intact" (Stone, 1977). Such enabling environment will impart positively on the child. Similarly, Morrish (1972) declare that "the child living in the shadow of the broken family will feel bewildered by coming and goings and by the mere fact that essential relationships are not promoted or are broken off and disrupted at a very impressionable time."

However, the achievement of a child whether within or outside the school environment can only be enhanced under a conducive atmosphere devoid of problems. Sociological findings have revealed that proper upbringing of the child demands both the efforts of a husband and wife and not just anyone of them alone. This is why Bournrind (1978), Nwagwu (1995), and Agbeyihane (1999) stressed

that a warm and caring method of parenting could enhance a child's academic achievement.

It is rarely possible in the present day Nigeria for one person alone to fend for a child. There is the need for both parents to live together and join hands in bringing up the children. A child could be mal-nourished in the event of divorce. Oladele (1989) states that a child who suffers protein deficiency may be permanently handicapped intellectually. The extent of motivation the child receives from his family especially united family towards education contributes to the child's success or failure in school. Family disintegration in all ramifications causes deprivation on the child mentally, socially and spiritually.

#### Statement of the Problem

Concrete evidence abound that children are 20 to 33 times safer living with their both biological married parents than in order family configurations. In recent times many couples have disengaged from marriage over trivial issues thereby causing disintegration. In the extent of a disintegration, children are often found either staying with their father or mother or taken away as housemaids. Given this condition, division manifest in the lives of the children be it in character training and in learning invariably leading to low academic achievement. The family is expected to bring up the child through adequate disciplinary measures and social control. Presently, it is doubtful whether a child who is a victim of family disintegration can still enjoy these benefits. Consequently the child's academic achievements will be affected. This study, therefore, examines the impact of family disintegration on academic achievements of secondary school students in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State. It also determines whether students from united families perform better than students from disintegrated families.

#### Research Questions

1. What is the proportion of students from disintegrated families and from united families?
2. How do the continuous assessment scores of students from disintegrated families compare with those from united families?

3. Is there any different in the possession of learning materials between students from disintegrated and united families?
4. What are the possible solutions to academic problems arising from family dintegration?

### Methodology

A descriptive survey that is 'expost facto' research design was formulated for the study. The major variables for the study are not in any way manipulated. The population of the study comprises all the students in all the secondary schools in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. Five out of the 13 secondary schools in the Local Government Area were randomly selected. Fifty SSI Students were randomly selected from each of the five schools represented without minding the family type. The choice of the SSI students was based on the premise that the students are virtually too young to take decisions by themselves. It's hoped that the absence of any of the parents might leave an impact on the child's future.

The main instrument used was the family disintegration questionnaire (FDQ) designed by the researcher. This was directed to the students. The questionnaire contained seven items, which were capable of eliciting data from the respondents. This formed the primary source of data collection. In addition, interview, students examination records formed the secondary source of data. For the validation of the instruments the researcher perused available literature on the effect of disintegrated family in Nigeria. Based on the information so gained, he proceeded to personally develop the items of the instrument. Two expert lecturers subjected the initial draft of the instrument to face and content validation. One of the lecturers is a specialist in measurement and evaluation, while the other one is a specialist in psychology. The purpose of the face validation was to structure the instrument well enough so that the items will be clear, suitable and appropriate in terms of eliciting answers that are useful and relevant for answering the research questions and testing the hypotheses of the study. The researcher personally visited the five randomly selected schools one after the

other. Questionnaires were personally administered to all respondents in the classroom. There was a 100% return.

#### Data Analysis and Presentation

The data were analyzed using frequency counts and means. The variables in consideration were types of students and their class achievement test scores of students from disintegrated and united families. For the null hypotheses the t-test of independent mean was used to determine whether the mean rating by the respective groups in each hypotheses is significant. The analysis of data are presented according to the research questions.

#### Research Question I

What is the proportion of students from disintegrated and united families?

**Table 1: Proportion of SDF and SUF in Schools**

S/No	Name of School	SDF	SUF	SDF%	SUF%
1.	C.S.S. Obagi	16	34	32	68
2.	G.G.S.S Omoku-urban	20	30	40	60
3.	C.S.S. Erema	12	38	24	76
4.	E.G.S.S. Okwuzi	18	32	36	64
5.	G.S.S. Ndoni	23	27	46	54
	Total	89	161	35.6	64.4

From the table 1 above, the analysis revealed the following results: C.S.S. Obagi SDF 32% and SUF 68%; G.G.S.S. Omoku-Urban SDF 40% and SUF 60%; C.S.S. Erema SDF 24% and SUF 76%; E.G.S.S. Okwuzi SDF 35% and SUF 64%; and in G.S.S. Ndoni SDF 64% and SUF 54%.

The overall result revealed that the total percentage of SDF was 35.6% while SUF was 64.4%. Consequently, the proportion of students from united family was relatively higher than that from disintegrated families.

#### Research Question II

How do the continuous assessment scores of students from disintegrated families compare with those from united families?

**Table 2: Continuous Assessment Scores of SDF and SUF**

	<b>SDF</b>	<b>SUF</b>
Subject Offered	Average Score (%)	Average Score (%)
English Language	27	59
Mathematics	32	62
Chemistry	20	45
Agric. Science	15	57
Economics	26	48

Table 2 reveals the average scores of students of disintegrated families and students of united families – SDF and SUF. The analysis revealed that in English Language the scores were SDF 27% and SUF 59%. In Mathematics the scores were SDF 32% and SUF 62%. In Chemistry the scores were SDF 20% and SUF 45%. In Agricultural science, the scores were SDF 15% and SUF 57% and in Economics the scores were SDF 26% and SUF 48% respectively.

The overall result reveals that the continuous assessment scores of students from Disintegrated Families were relatively poorer than those from united families.

#### Research Question III

Is there any difference in the possession of learning materials between students from disintegrated and united families?

**Table 3: Possession of learning Materials of SDF and SUF**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>% SCORE SDF (%)</b>	<b>SUF (%)</b>
Text Books	18	20
Exercise Books	16	20
Biro Pens	12	14
School Bags	16	17
School Sandals	12	18
School Uniform	11	17

Table 3 reveals the opinion of students with regard to the possession of learning materials in secondary schools. In all, the SDF has the least percentage in the possession of school uniform 11%, Biro pens 12%, school sandals 12 %, school -bags 16%, exercise books 16% and text books 18%, while the SUF had higher percentage in all cases.

#### Research Question IV

What are the possible solutions to academic problems arising from family disintegration?

**Table 4: Solutions to the problems of family disintegration.**

ITEM	MEAN STUDENTS	MEAN TEACHERS	MEAN ALL	RANK
Government should regularly organize enlightenment programmes on the needs for a united family	1.8	1.7	1.7	3rd
Penalties or fines should be imposed on couples who threaten to separate	1.6	1.4	1.5	4th
Enforcement of legal marriages and discouragement of having cohabiting partners To break the generational cycle of family disintegration and ensure that children have safe and loving permanent environments in which to grow, policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels can join their efforts with those of welfare workers, community and religious leaders to develop specific, achievable goals to identify, treat, and prevent the effect of family disintegration on the child.	1.5	2.1	1.8	2nd
To realize the objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE), government should endeavour to equip all schools and libraries in order to facilitates the equalization of educational opportunities for all citizens.	1.8 2.0	1.8 1.9	1.8 2.0	2nd 1st

Table 4 reveals the opinions of students and teachers. The analysis indicates the following results in a ranking order. In order to realize the objectives of the UBE, government should endeavor to equip all schools and libraries ranked 1<sup>st</sup> with mean set of 2.0. Enforcement of legal marriages and discouragement of having cohabiting partners ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with mean set of 1.8. Item 2 which indicates that policy makers at the federal, state and local levels as well as other leaders should join their efforts to prevent the effect of family disintegration on the child also ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> with mean set of 1.8. Government should regularly organize enlightenment programmes on united family ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with mean set of 1.7. Finally, penalties or fines should be imposed on couples who threaten to separate ranked 4<sup>th</sup> with mean set of 1.5.

#### Summary of Findings

The proportion of students who came from disintegrated families were 35.6% of the total population of students in the school. The continuous assessment scores of students from disintegrated families were poorer than those of united families. The extent to which students of disintegrated families possessed the necessary learning materials were also compared to those of united families, indicating a disadvantage to students from disintegrated families.

#### Recommendations

On the basis of the identified problems of family disintegration, the following recommendations are hereby advanced:

The teachers should give a special attention to the students of the disintegrated families so that they will not constitute any problem to the school or society at large. Government should enact laws that will encourage legal marriages and discourage cohabiting relationship among individuals.

Government should regularly organize enlightenment programmes on the danger of family disintegration on the child and society at large.

Governments at all levels should direct the law makers to promulgate bills that would specify penalties or fines to be imposed on couples who threaten to separate.

Finally, it is my view that couples should live together with their children as this will provide an enabling environment for academic achievement.



### Conclusion

Family disintegration is a social problem in society. Government, individuals and couples have their respective roles to play so that the monster (Family disintegration) can be eradicated completely. Governments at all levels should encourage legal marriages and work towards promulgating bills that would specify penalties or fines to be imposed on couples who threaten to separate or disintegrate. Government should regularly organize enlightenment programmes on the danger of family disintegration on the child and society at large.

Against this background, the above measures become necessary in bridging the gap in academic achievement between students of disintegrated families and those of united families.

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