

Influence of Single Parenting on the Education of Junior High School Students of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality

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Abstract: This study was conducted to investigate the influence of single parenting on the education of junior high school students of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The stratified random sampling technique was used to sample one hundred and eighty students from three junior high schools for the study. A close-ended questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents sampled for the study. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the causes of single parenting at Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality include death of parent, and separation. Also, the study concluded that the challenges students from single parenting families encounter include students do not easily socialize in the classroom and they exhibit signs of low self-esteem. In addition, the study concluded that the effect of single parenting on the education of junior high school students include students were frequently absent from school and hence, they scored low marks in class exercises. The study recommends that stakeholders of education including teachers, parents, and opinion leaders at Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality need to put in place appropriate mechanisms to reduce separation, desertion, and unplanned pregnancy which are rampant in the Effiduase Community. Also, teachers and parents should solicit the assistance of philanthropists in the Effiduase Community to come to the aid of brilliant but needy students from single parent families.

Keywords: Single parenting family, Intact family, Students

I. INTRODUCTION

Until quite recently, single parenting was considered foreign to African family culture and even where it existed, it was ignored as exceptional phenomenon (Azuka-Obieke, 2013). However, the aggressive influence of western culture has impacted so much on African traditional family values. Consequently, single parenting which hitherto was considered a deviation is now gaining societal acceptance but not without its negative tendencies. Modern culture has changed and outgrown the values and beliefs that were thought to be the core beliefs and values of the African society. Moralists and conservatives are experiencing disgust over the currently evolving belief and cultural systems because what has been unacceptable in the olden days, is now fast becoming a rapidly rising trend. The phenomenon of

single parenting is already becoming a fast and rapidly growing trend in the society (Tenibiaje & Tenibiaje, 2011).

Children from homes where both the father and the mother are present will be well taken care of and socialized in the best way possible. This is due to the fact that the process of socialization depends on both parents playing complementary roles in bringing up the child. The home is no doubt the first and fundamental agent of socialization in Africa. A child that is brought up well is likely to achieve self-actualization later in life, while the child from single parent home is likely to suffer deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities (Battle, 1998). Salami (1998) believes that children from broken homes are usually associated with anti-social behaviour and poor academic records.

Single parents have less time to help their children with their academics and they are likely to be less stern in disciplining their children. This could lead to less parental control and low academic achievement (Battle, 1998). Children from a single parenting home are often tagged as more hostile, aggressive, anxious, fearful, hyperactive, and distractible than children from intact (two-parents) families (Nwachukwu, 1998). On the contrary, children in a single parent family are believed to contribute and participate more in family activities. Therefore, they grow up with a sense of respect and become responsible adults. The two contrasting situations described above creates a gap which needs to be filled through research. Therefore, there is the need to investigate into the influence of single parenting on the education of basic school students of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

Parents have important roles to play in ensuring that their children acquire appropriate and balanced social, psychological, moral and academic development. Each one of the parents has indispensable and unique responsibility for the psychological, educational and career development of their children. Many of the problems that single parents have are similar to those of two-parent family, but the problems seem more difficult to manage when the home is managed by only one of the parents. For example, all children feel hostile

towards their parents as they grow up and try to be independent. However, in a situation where the anger and rebellion are all directed towards one person, it may seem worse. Children are increasingly socialized by influencers outside the immediate family. As a result of poor parental care and guidance caused by divorce, separation or death of a partner, children are exposed to potentially damaging situations (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010). Hence, this study is an attempt to investigate the influence of single parenting on the academic performance of basic school students of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. investigate the causes of single parenting at Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality.
2. examine the challenges faced by basic school students from single parent families of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality.
3. determine the effect of single parenting on the education of basic school students of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. What are the causes of single parenting in Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality?
2. What challenges do basic school students from single parent families at Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality encounter?
3. What is the effect of single parenting on the education of basic school students of Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality?

The Concept of Single Parenting

Single parenting can be defined as a situation where one out of the two people who are responsible for the nurturing and upbringing is not available, and the work meant for two people is now being carried out by only one person. Single parenting is a situation where either the father or the mother involved in the conception of the child becomes solely responsible for the upbringing of the child. Also, single parenthood arises when either the male or female parent, due to certain circumstances produces and raises a child or children outside of marriage. This situation could arise as a result of divorce, separation of various kinds, or death of any one of the spouses (Amato & Keith, 2000) and thus, leaving the responsibility of raising the child/children to just one parent (Azuka-Obieke, 2013).

Single parenting can be defined as a situation whereby only one of the two individuals involved in the conception of the child is being responsible for the upbringing of the child. Single parenting may arise when either the male or the female parent decides to produce and rear a child or children outside wedlock (Ortesse, 1998).

Single parenting is a very important social issue that can have significant effect on a child's academic success. The family structure, ideally, provides a sense of security and stability that is necessary for children. When there is breakdown in the family structure, it may have a tremendous impact on a child and his/her ability to function ordinarily or achieve academically. Omolayo (2003) opined that parental separation usually brings a big blow on adolescents. Parental separation also leads to fall in standard of living and in some cases of adoption, there are some surrogate families that are unnecessarily hostile, uncaring, and insensitive to the adolescent's needs.

Causes of Single Parenting

There are a number of causes responsible for determining the status of single parenthood. The causes include divorce of couples with a child or children, desertion, death of a partner, giving birth by unmarried woman or unintended pregnancy and single parent adoption.

Divorce is one of the main events that lead to single parenting in advanced countries (Amato & Keith, 2000). Divorce was generally rare historically (although this depended on culture and the era) and it especially became very difficult to obtain (divorce) after the fall of the Roman Empire, in Medieval Europe. This was due to strong involvement of ecclesiastical courts in family life, although annulment and other forms of separation were more common (Kent's commentaries on American law, as cited by Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016).

Child custody in reference to divorce refers to a situation where a parent is allowed to make important decisions about the children involved. Physical custody refers to who the child lives with. After a certain "crisis period" most children resume normal development. However, their future relationships are often affected as they lack a model upon which to base a healthy long term relationship. The remarriage of a divorced custodial parent result in a third family configuration that is experienced by an increased number of children (Cherlin, 2010).

The crucial event of a marital break down is the act of separation (Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016). This usually occurs when the relationship between both parents has gone cold. Divorce is a legal consequence that follows the emotional fact of separation, though not all separations lead to divorce. Although separation generally precedes divorce, some couples are able to sort out their misunderstandings and misgivings and are able to put the separation period behind them and move on with their lives together (Olaleye & Oladeji, 2010).

Desertion is one of the causes of single parenthood in our society (Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016). It is a situation whereby either the father or mother walks away from the marriage, leaving the other party without help or support. Desertion is also known as the poor man's divorce. It is called the poor man's divorce because one party leaves the marriage without going through legal process of divorce (Kendall,

2003). Children of deserted parents find it more difficult to understand the reason why they have to do without the other parent. Santrock (2004) asserted that these children see themselves as unloved and unwanted by the deserted parents.

Single parent families may emerge as a result of parental death. Amato and Keith (2000) believe that death of a parent is a major cause of single parenting. Death is the termination of the biological functions that sustain a living organism. The death of a marriage partner results in single parenting, and this is very painful experience for the other partner and the child. Death causes a lot of serious cries in the family. In most cases, when the father dies, the mother will be left with the great responsibilities of nurturing the child, and the immensity of this task may weigh her down, making her almost helpless. The death of a parent makes the child emotionally imbalance, unnecessarily wicked and bitter, and sometimes feel inferior to his/her peers.

Giving birth out of wedlock sometimes are intended, but many are unintentional. Where out of wedlock births are accepted by society, they may result in single parenting. A partner may also leave as he or she may want to shirk responsibilities of bringing up the child. Where they are not accepted, they sometimes result in forced marriage. However, such marriages fail more often than others (Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016).

Single parent adoption has existed since the last 19th century. Men were rarely considered as adoptive parents and were considered far less desired. Often, children adopted by a single parent were raised in pairs rather than alone and adoptions by lesbians and gay men were arranged as single parent adoptions (Ekpenyong & Udisi, 2016). During the mid-nineteenth century, many states welfare officials made it difficult if not impossible for single persons to adopt, as agencies searched for “normal” families with married men and women.

Challenges of Single Parenting

The challenges of single parenting include; psychological effect, educational effect, behavioural effect, and economic effect.

Psychological Effect

Empirical evidence has shown that children from intact-homes were taken care of and better socialized. Adolescence is a transitory period (twelve years to eighteen years) between childhood and adulthood and it involves biological, cognitive and socio-emotional changes (Santrock, 2004). During this period an individual is seen neither as a child nor as an adult. Salami and Alawode (2000) claimed that adolescents are characterized by emotional instabilities and hyper-activities which cause them to experience storms and stress. Diane (2007) is of the opinion that identity formation creates tension in adolescents to the extent that some of them become confused about their personality.

According to Sigmund Freud who is the pioneering architect of psychoanalytic theory, early experiences with parents and family relationships extensively shape development of children (Santrock, 2004). Parents, therefore, need to help their children (adolescents) to acquire the appropriate academic, social, psychological and moral development (Azuka-Obieke, 2013). Although growing up in a single parent family is frequently viewed as a risk for children, single parent families have reported positive psychological adjustment and educational outcome (Amato & Keith, 2000).

Educational Effect

Parents are primarily responsible for the educational and career development of their children (Salami & Alawode, 2000). Literature on academic performance among children suggest that children’s academic performance improve when both parents are actively involved in their education. According to Nyarko (2011), married parents are more likely to be involved in their children’s education than single parents. As parents engage in the academic activities of their children, it is most likely to have a positive influence on their academic performance. However, this does not necessarily suggest that once parents engage in a child’s academic activities, the child would be academically successful as the child’s own abilities and the school environment also play critical roles in that respect (Chowa, Ansong, & Osei-Akoto, 2012).

Given the positive influence of parental involvement on children’s educational outcome, children under single parent family structure might not receive the necessary attention they require because the single parent might be overwhelmed by many responsibilities. Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2008) believe that children in single parent families are three times more likely to drop out of high school than children from two-parent families. This is because single parents are the primary and frequently the sole source of financial support for the family. They have less time to help children with homework, are less likely to use consistent discipline, and have less parental control leading to lower academic achievement.

Behavioural Effect

Interest in parenting and behavioural problem in children is widely acknowledged. Anti-social behaviour is a major problem in childhood and beyond. Research has shown that children who have experienced any kind of family change have poorer behavioural outcomes than children in stable two-biological parent families (Cherlin, 2005). Children from single parent families tend to have poorer cognitive and behavioural outcomes than those from intact families (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). Some western studies have noted greater behaviours challenges in children from families with unmarried mothers. In most cases boys tend to experience or have more behavioural challenges than girls (Ackerman et al., 2001). Karst (as cited by Ekpenyong &

Udisi, 2016) attributed this greater prevalence to limited supervision, strained financial resources, and social isolation compared with children in traditional two-parent families. Also, youths from single parent families appear to be influenced by their peers and are more likely to make decisions without consulting a parent (Griffin et al., 2000).

Economic Effect

Being a single parent, and struggling for money, often coincides. Economic hardship has been found to cause emotional distress in parents. It can in turn hamper parent's ability to be supportive, sensitive and consistent with their children (Dearing, McCartney, & Taylor, 2006). Also, Azuka-Obieke (2013) noted that single parents' homes are more likely to be low-economic homes and children from such homes would be subjected to problems associated with their socio-economic group. When there is only one parent, the family is often less financially stable. According to Azuka-Obieke (2013), the effect of coming from a low-income family can include lower educational level, lower economic achievement, and can result in leaving the child feeling isolated and lonely.

Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2004) concluded that children raised by one biological parent did worse on a host of social and economic measures than children raised by both biological parents. Single parent families tend to be poorer than two-parent families. The absence of one parent has serious effect on the adolescent as homes led by single mothers experience lower household income which eventually influence the educational opportunities and success in school (Benokraitis, 2012).

Influence of Single Parenting on Children's Academic Performance

It is generally believed that children with single parents lack enough parental support in their academics. It may be due to inadequacy of funds for qualitative education. It may be due to the single parent's involvement in many activities that serve as means of livelihood. In the case whereby the partner that is literate is absent, then the illiterate partner becomes handicapped and cannot contribute to the academic success of the child. According to Osiboye (2005), the demands of academics become very difficult to cope within the circumstances of broken homes. This is so because children from single parents are not well catered for. They have little or no access to textbooks and are not well motivated. Thus, problems concerning their academics are not solved promptly. When parents become involved, children do better in academics because they go to better schools. This is obviously true in most Ghanaian communities.

A single parent faces double responsibilities requiring time, attention, and money. Hence, less attention is paid to the academics of the child. Many single parents are just too busy that they do not even bother to check their children's terminal report sheet, not to talk of assignments and class exercises. They run around to raise their children's

school fees. Some don't even bother to buy quality textbooks for their children. Some children, due to peer influence and parent's nonchalant attitude towards their academics, begin to play truancy. These have adverse effect on the children's performances (Olugbenga, 2014).

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey. According to Amedahe and Asamoah-Gyimah (2016), obtaining information from a large group of people by setting carefully worded questions and carefully administered questionnaires lies in the heart of descriptive survey. Descriptive survey involves the collection of data in order to answer research questions concerning current state of affairs of the subject under investigation. The descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate because the researchers were interested in examining the influence of single parenting on the education of students from selected junior high schools in Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality. The researchers used the stratified random sampling procedure to sample one hundred and eighty (180) respondents from three junior high schools in Effiduase for the study. According to Amedahe and Asamoah-Gyimah (2016), stratified sampling involves dividing the population into a number of homogeneous groups or strata. Each group contains subjects with similar characteristics. A sample is then drawn from each group or stratum. The sub samples make up the final sample for the study. The division of the population into homogeneous groups is based on one or more criteria, for example sex, age, or professional status. In order to obtain a sample that was representative of the whole population, a random selection of subjects from each stratum that is the three different schools were taken. The sample size was proportionally taken from each group that is 60 respondents from each of the three schools. A closed-ended questionnaire was developed and administered to gather data for the study. Two senior lecturers from the Research Unit of the SDA College of Education Centre for Academic Success (SDACoE-CAS) validated the instrument. The research objectives guided the data processing and analysis. Data code sheets were created from the questionnaire and keyed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 software. The data gathered were analysed using descriptive (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation) statistics.

Demographic Data of Respondents

Table 1 and Table 2 presented data gathered on sex and age of respondents sampled for the study.

Table 1: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	92	51
Female	88	49
Total	180	100

Source: Field Data (2022)

From Table 1, ninety-two representing 51% of the respondents were male students and the remaining eighty-eight representing 49% of the respondents were female students. This means the numbers were almost at parity levels. Thus, from Table 1, the researchers considered the views of both male and female students in arriving at the conclusions for this study.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Above 19 years old	84	47
17-19 years old	48	27
14-16 years old	28	16
11-13 years old	20	10
Total	180	100

Source: Field Data (2022)

From Table 2, twenty, representing 10% of the students were between eleven and thirteen years old; twenty-eight, representing 16% of the students were between fourteen and sixteen years old; forty-eight, representing 27% of the students were between seventeen and nineteen years old; and the remaining eighty-four, representing 47% of the students were above nineteen years old. Thus, from Table 2, the majority of the students are above nineteen years old and were considered matured enough to respond appropriately to the items on the questionnaire.

Research Question One

What are the causes of single parenting in Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality? This research question sought to gather data on the causes of single parenting in the Effiduase Community. Table 3 presented the data gathered from the respondents.

Table 3: Causes of Single Parenting in Effiduase

Causes	N	Mean	Std. D
Divorce	180	1.533	0.500
Separation	180	2.356	0.737
Desertion	180	1.667	0.701
Death of a parent	180	2.378	0.904
Unintended pregnancy	180	1.578	0.495

Source: Field data (2022)

N = Frequency Std. D = Standard Deviation

From Table 3, *death of parent* as a causes of single parenting in Effiduase had the highest mean score ($M = 2.378$, $Std. D = 0.904$). This finding supports the belief of Amato and Keith (2000) that death of a parent is a major cause of single parenting. This was closely followed by *separation* as a causes of single parenting in Effiduase with the second highest mean score ($M = 2.356$, $Std. D = 0.737$). The finding is in line with the view of Ekpenyong and Udisi (2016) that the crucial event of a marital break down is the act of

separation. Also, the finding confirms the conclusion of Olaleye and Oladeji (2010) that divorce is a legal consequence that follows the emotional fact of separation, though not all separations lead to divorce. On the other hand, the data gathered revealed that *divorce* had the lowest mean score ($M = 1.533$, $Std. D = 0.500$). This was followed by *unintended pregnancy* as a cause of single parenting in Effiduase with the second lowest mean score ($M = 1.578$, $Std. D = 0.495$). Again, the finding supports the view of Ekpenyong and Udisi (2016) that many out-of-wedlock births are unintentional. Where out-of-wedlock births are accepted by society, they may result in single parenting.

Research Question Two

What challenges do basic school students from single parent families in Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality encounter? This research question gathered data on the challenges students from single parent families encounter in their schooling in the Effiduase Community. Table 4 presented the data gathered from the respondents.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Students from Single Parent Families in Effiduase

Students	N	Mean	Std. D
Students exhibit signs of low self-esteem	180	2.156	0.790
Students are not able to manage their own learning to succeed academically	180	1.400	0.491
Students put up unacceptable social behaviour	180	1.689	0.591
Students demonstrate negative attitude towards schooling	180	1.689	0.727
Students do not easily socialize in the classroom	180	2.267	0.714
Students feel stressed up and depressed	180	1.822	0.771

Source: Field data (2022)

N = Frequency Std. D = Standard Deviation

From Table 4, the statement *students do not easily socialize in the classroom* had the highest mean score ($M = 2.267$, $Std. D = 0.771$). That is students from single parenting families most often are not friendly in the classroom. The finding is in line with the view of Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2004) that children from single parent families tend to have poorer cognitive and behavioural outcomes than those from intact families.

Also, from Table 4, the statement *students exhibit signs of low self-esteem* had the second highest mean score ($M = 2.156$, $Std. D = 0.790$). The finding supports the conclusion by Cherlin (2005) that children who have experienced any kind of family change have poorer behavioural outcomes than children in stable two-biological parent families.

On the other hand, from Table 4, the statement *students are not able to manage their own learning to succeed academically* had the lowest mean score ($M = 1.400$, $Std. D = 0.491$). This finding confirms the believe of Amato and Keith (2000) that although growing up in a single parent family is frequently viewed as a risk for children, single parent families

have reported positive psychological adjustment and educational outcome.

In addition, from Table 4, the statement *students feel stressed up and depressed* had the second lowest mean score ($M = 1.822$, $Std. D = 0.771$). That is adolescents are characterized by emotional instabilities and hyper-activities which cause them to experience storms and stress. Hence, the need for both parents (intact family) to guide children to acquire the appropriate academic, social, psychological and moral development. The finding supports the opinion of Diane (2007) that identity formation creates tension in adolescents to the extent that some of them become confused about their personality.

Research Question Three

What is the effect of single parenting on the education of basic school students in Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality? This research question sought to gather data on the effect of single parenting on the education of basic school students in the Effiduase Community. Table 5 presented data gathered from the respondents.

Table 5: Effect of Single Parenting on the Education of Students

Effect	N	Mean	Std. D
Students do not concentrate fully during lessons	180	1.533	0.500
Students do not concentrate fully when studying at home or in the library	180	1.578	0.495
Students score low marks in class exercises	180	2.222	0.759
Students are frequently absent from school	180	1.733	0.648
Students drop out from school	180	1.489	0.501

Source: Field data (2022)

N = Frequency Std. D = Standard Deviation

From Table 5, the statement *students score high marks in class exercises* had the highest mean score ($M = 2.222$, $Std. D = 0.759$). The finding confirms the view of Osiboye (2005) that the demands of academics become very difficult to cope within the circumstances of broken homes because children from single parents have little or no access to textbooks and are not well motivated. Also, from Table 5, the statement *students are frequently absent from school* had the second highest mean score ($M = 1.733$, $Std. D = 0.648$). The finding is in line with the opinion of Olugbenga (2014) that some children, due to peer influence and parent's nonchalant attitude towards their academics, begin to play truancy. This could have adverse effect on the children's schooling.

However, from Table 5, the statement *students drop out from school* had the lowest mean score ($M = 1.489$, $Std. D = 0.501$). The finding contradicts the believe of Adelani and Ogunbanwo (2008) that children in single parent families are three times more likely to drop out of school than children from intact-parent families. This could mean that single parent families in Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality devote quality time to help children with their homework and

have full parental control leading to children encountering lower educational challenges.

Again, from Table 5, the statement *students do not concentrate fully during lessons* had the second lowest mean score ($M = 1.533$, $Std. D = 0.500$). This implies that students do concentrate fully during lessons. The finding supports the believe of Mabuza, Thwala, and Okeke (2014) that sacrifice on the part of the parent is essential, whereby the parent will spare time to take interest in their children's studies. However, the finding contradicts the view of Osiboye (2005) that children from single parent families are not well catered for, they have little or no access to textbooks and are not well motivated to excel in their academics.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the causes of single parenting at Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality include death of parent, and separation. However, unintended pregnancy and divorce to a less extent caused single parenting families among the population. Also, the study concluded that the challenges students from single parenting families encounter included students do not easily socialize in the classroom and they exhibited signs of low self-esteem. In addition, the study reported that the effect of single parenting on the education of students included the fact that students were frequently absent from school and hence, they scored low marks in class exercises. The study recommends that stakeholders of education including teachers, parents, and opinion leaders at Effiduase in the New Juaben North Municipality need to put in place appropriate mechanisms to reduce separation, desertion, and unplanned pregnancy which are rampant in the Effiduase Community. Also, teachers and parents should solicit the assistance of philanthropists in the Effiduase Community to come to the aid of brilliant but needy students from single parent families.

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