

Family Structure and Academic Achievement of Female Students in the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between family composition and academic achievement among female students enrolled at the University of Calabar in Nigeria. Three null hypotheses were formulated to guide the investigation. The study focused only on female undergraduate students from all departments within the University of Calabar. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 240 study respondents from six faculties. The study used a survey research approach, gathering data using questionnaire titled the "Family Structure and Academic Achievement Questionnaire" (FSAA). In order to evaluate the hypotheses, a statistical analysis called an independent t-test was performed. The significance threshold was set at 0.05. The results indicated that the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar is greatly impacted by the sort of family structure they come from, including whether they have two parents, a single parent, or a step-parent. These results suggest that governments, business organisations, and people engaged in education should take proactive measures to overcome the obstacles that impede students' academic achievement. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge and attend to the distinct requirements of children from diverse household configurations. Counsellors should provide essential aid and psychological support to pupils hailing from single-parent families in order to assist them in managing emotional difficulties. Furthermore, it is essential to provide continuous education to parents on the significance of the domestic setting in influencing the development of female children.

Keywords: family structure, academic achievement, education, emotional problems

Introduction

The family is the most basic and fundamental element of any civilisation, serving as the primary educational institution for a kid. Specifically, the family serves as the primary environment in which a kid acquires their language, values, and habits. Education starts inside the household, when parents assume the role of primary educators who engage with their children. According to Latu (2018), children often emulate their parents as they grow up and continue to do so throughout their education. In recent times, there has been much study focused on the family. Discussions over the importance of the family in contemporary communities have been widespread and publicised in several countries. The structure of families has undergone worldwide changes since the 1960s, with a consistent fall in overall family sizes. This decline may be attributed to a widespread decrease in total fertility rate in almost every country. Kapella and Christiane (2010) noted that the traditional concept of the nuclear family is giving way to diverse family structures and living arrangements. This shift from the conventional family setup of parents and children to various alternative systems can impact the academic performance of undergraduate students, who often rely on their families for intellectual, emotional, and material support. The effect of these changes may vary depending on factors such as the students' age, needs, and access to financial resources. Oba-Adenuga (2019) further highlights a positive correlation between a child's age and their need for increased economic support. In his study, Peter (2016) discovered that two-parent households are capable of providing more amounts of time, love, and supervision to their children compared to single parents.

Ella, Odok, and Ella (2015) categorised the nuclear family, with two parents and children, as the societal ideal for child-rearing. According to their viewpoint, these children benefit from the

presence of both parents, which provides them with strength and stability. Additionally, having two parents often leads to greater chances for these children, as they benefit from the financial advantages that come with having two parents. Furthermore, these children tend to do better in terms of their cognitive, emotional, and behavioural demands. It is essential to determine the factors that contribute to variations in academic performance. Lecturers are often blamed when academic standards decline, meanwhile other factors, such as family structure, parental involvement, and the child's academic motivation, are often overlooked. Therefore, it is crucial to assess whether family structure affects the academic achievement of female students at the University of Calabar.

Research questions

- i. What is the influence of two parent family on academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar?
- ii. What is the influence of single family on academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar?
- iii. What is the influence of step family on academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar?

Research hypotheses

- i. There is no significant influence of two parent family on the academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar.
- ii. There is no significant influence of single parent family on academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar.
- iii. There is no significant influence of step parent family on academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar.

Methodology

Research design

The study was conducted at the University of Calabar, employing a survey research methodology to explore the relationship between family structure and academic performance among female students. The population for this research comprised all undergraduate students across the various faculties at the University of Calabar, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the student body. A purposive sampling approach was utilised to deliberately select a total of 240 respondents. This method involved choosing 40 respondents from each of the six faculties, ensuring a balanced and diverse sample. The purposive sampling technique was chosen to specifically target female students whose family structures were relevant to the research questions.

To collect data, the researchers developed a self-structured questionnaire titled the Family Structure and Academic Achievement Questionnaire (FSAAQ). This instrument was designed to capture the necessary information regarding the students' family backgrounds and academic achievements. The questionnaire underwent a rigorous face validation process conducted by experts in the field. The validation process confirmed the questionnaire's adequacy in covering the research objectives and its appropriateness for the target population.

The reliability of the FSAAQ was assessed using the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient, which yielded a high reliability value of 0.96. This indicates that the questionnaire had excellent internal consistency and was a dependable tool for data collection. Data analysis was carried out using an independent t-test to evaluate the hypotheses. This statistical method was selected to compare the academic performance of students from different family structures and determine if

there were significant differences based on the family environment. The significance threshold for the t-test was set at 0.05, ensuring that the findings were statistically robust and reliable.

Presentation of results

Hypothesis one

There is no significant influence of two parent family on academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar

Table 1: Independent t-test of the influence of two parent family on academic achievement of female students (N=240)

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal
Two parent family	240	22.3	2.37	6.65*
Academic achievement	240	20.9	2.24	

$P < 0.05$, critical $t = 1.96$, $df = 238$

Table 1 indicates that the computed t-value of 6.65 exceeds the threshold t-value of 1.96 with 238 degrees of freedom. Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the presence of a two-parent household has a substantial impact on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of single parent family in the University of Calabar

Table 2: Independent t-test of the influence of single parent family on academic achievement of female students (N=240)

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal
Single parent family	240	23.1	2.46	10.25*
Achievement	240	20.9	2.24	

$P < 0.05$, critical $t = 1.96$, $df = 238$

(Authors' Field work, 2022)

According to Table 2, the computed t-value of 10.25 is higher than the crucial t-value of 1.96. Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, the presence of a single-parent home has a notable impact on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar.

Hypothesis three

There is no significant influence of step parent family on the academic achievement of female students in the University of Calabar.

The data shown in Table 3 indicates that the computed t-value of 9.13 exceeds the crucial t-value of 1.96. Based on this outcome, the null hypothesis is disproven in support of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, the presence of a step parent household has a notable impact on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar.

Table 3: Independent t-test of the influence of step parent family on academic achievement of female students (N=240)

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal
Step parent family	240	22.8	2.32	9.13*
Academic achievement	240	20.9	2.24	

P<0.05, critical t = 1.96, df = 238

Discussing of findings

The findings of hypothesis one indicates a substantial impact of having two parents on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar. This discovery aligns with the research conducted by Owaifo (2012), which revealed a notable disparity in academic achievement between pupils from two-parent households and those from alternative family configurations. This suggests that both parents are actively engaged in the education and nurturing of their child/children. Children in nuclear families get comprehensive parental care, including financial assistance, social guidance, and physical assistance from their parents. Furthermore, the atmosphere is effectively stimulated and discipline is immediately enforced. However, the results contradicted the findings of Adeyemi (2018) who said that there is no statistically significant difference in the academic performance of female students from various family arrangements.

The findings of hypothesis two indicate a substantial impact of single-parent households on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar. This conclusion aligns with the research conducted by Akida et al (2018), which shown that single parenting had a detrimental impact on kids' academic achievement in schools. This is due to the fact that a solitary parent would encounter difficulties in meeting both the fundamental necessities of the family and the educational requirements. While attempting to get these necessities, there will be insufficient time to cultivate discipline in their female offspring, resulting in a negative impact on their academic performance and thus leading to poor scholastic attainment.

Hypothesis three demonstrated a substantial impact of step parent household on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar. This finding aligns with the research conducted by MacDonald (2014) and Refu et al (2017), which indicates that children from step-parent family structures are less likely to receive adequate monitoring and control. These studies highlight that parental divorce and the absence of a spouse at home often disrupt the daily routines and work schedules of the parent, placing additional demands on the children. Furthermore, adolescents who come from step-parents' household structures have subpar academic adjustment and a diminished degree of parental motivation.

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the results are directly related to the study questions. The study's findings demonstrated that having two parents in the household has a beneficial impact on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar. In contrast, the presence of a single parent or step-parent in a household has a detrimental impact on the academic performance of female students at the University of Calabar. The findings substantiated that homes headed by single parents and step-parents were deficient in both financial assistance and parental oversight, which had a direct impact on the academic performance of pupils.

Recommendations

The study's results have led to the following recommendations:

- i. Governments, commercial organisations, and people involved in the field of education should make an effort to tackle the barriers that impede students' academic success. Developing accomplishment motivation in kids may be accomplished via the use of achievement motivation training.
- ii. It is necessary to acknowledge the existence of individual variations among pupils and address them appropriately. Counsellors should provide essential aid and psychological support to pupils from single-parent households in order to help them overcome their emotional difficulties.
- iii. It is also necessary to continue educating parents about the significance of the home environment on the well-being of children. It is essential for parents to comprehend the implications and effects of parental separation in order to effectively address the challenges that arise from this scenario.
- iv. Ultimately, educational institutions should hire school counsellors and establish appropriate oversight to guarantee the provision of essential services.

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