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**Broken Homes and Students' Psychological Adjustment in Public
Secondary Schools in Ika Northeast Local Government Area of Delta
State, Nigeria**

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ABSTRACT

A study of broken home and psychological adjustment of students in public secondary schools in Ika Northeast Local Government Area of Delta state. The research questions alongside the null hypotheses employed in this study were two. The study sampled three hundred (300) senior secondary school students out of the entire 25,688 students. Data collection was done using questionnaire titled Broken-home (BH) and Psychological Adjustment (PA). Analysis of data was likewise done with mean and standard deviation (SD) and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r). The outputs showed that psychological adjustment among secondary school students was associated with broken homes. It was likewise found to have a strong relationship (based on students' age). In addition, the findings established the fact that there exists (a mean difference) in intact homes and separate home students. It is found that younger students are more sensitive to the dynamics in broken homes and the older students are more adaptable with these troubling issues. According to the outputs, it was concluded that broken homes caused negative psychological impact and problems with adjustment among students at secondary schools. It was, therefore, recommended among others that (counseling services) be based in schools as the students in broken homes need psychological support to overcome their distress.

Keywords: Broken-homes, Psychological Adjustment, Age, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Developmental progress of personality along with early learning of social skills during adulthood leads to effective social interaction with environments, which is referred to as psychological adjustment. It can be perceived that the due psychological adjustment of the students can be manifested by their good physical state combined with the right emotional and psychological and social health.

In his theory, Erikson argued that individuals experience psychosocial crises at any point in life to bring about either positive or negative outcomes in the development of their personalities. It follows that an individual adapts their personality traits and abilities in eight unique developmental stages that begin at birth up to death contingent on their response to each of the stages of the crisis. This is an outcome of positive response of an individual in kind to the environment and leads to the formation of new moral conduct. Psychological adjustment is an ego development that leads to patterned change in self-understanding and identity formation and social relations and the world view in life (Heitingha & Barnes, 2019). Each adolescent student possesses internal psychological factors that define his or her social relations with other individuals. Most of the students are involved in the adolescent stage that is characterized by emotional behaviour because of socialization and societal pressures. Students are required to exhibit positive traits to become successful in acclimatizing themselves to schoolmates. The unfavourable personality traits of students tend to frustrate them in school and at the same time, they lose their academic goals (Odojin & Okoh 2023). Psychological adjustment involves development of non-hostile behaviour (cooperation) and aggressive behaviour (aggression). The psychological adaptation of a child turns into two aspects: the actions of the behavior and the ability to understand the social environment (Proctor, 2017). Their ability to view what another person can see and understand that actions of other people are a result of what they know, and desire is likewise a part of their development.

The process of psychological adjustment is not easy, but it is constant throughout the developmental stages to ensure that educators with the help of parents can offer support to students in the hard moments to experience positive emotional wellbeing. Family is crucial in influencing the psychological adjustment of students in secondary schools as it provides emotional support along with instructions and lessons. Children who are born depend on the family as their first interaction with everything in the world. Their initial education takes place between children and family members and between children and the significant people who influence the beliefs and attitudes as the interaction between the children and their parents and siblings. The socialization development of (Immigrant girls) within their family emotional environments is a part of their adolescent life. How the attitudes are formed in the process of forming their beliefs and internalized values is included in this socialization process. The family space facilitates all the requisite emotional development and cognitive development along with social development of the members of the family. Both family struggles and lack of communication skills make students experience poor psychological development and negative adjustments in family relationships (Odojin & Enoja, 2024).

Several researchers state that the psychological adaptation of students in secondary school is largely determined by their age, students between the age of 11 and 13 demonstrate more anxiety and depression symptoms since in that age group they must undergo the challenges of psychological adjustment between primary and secondary school (Wagner, 2016). This can be blamed on the fact the cognitive and emotional maturity is developed and will help students to overcome the challenges with ease and confidence.

Homes have major effects on the psychological, emotional, social and economic well-being of students. As parents are the earliest socializers in the life of a person, Ajila and Okutola (2017) argue that the state of the home can affect the child. This can be attributed to the fact that the performance of a child and reaction to the situations around them is determined by the family lineage and context. Paradoxically, the role that a dysfunctional family could have played (or might have been playing) in the psychological growth of the student has not been adequately addressed. A growing child has the only world he has, which is their home; anything beyond this is non-existent. At home, the child is given care and love, and it is thought that whatever they experience during the time they spend together at home will greatly influence the academic performance of the child and psychological adjustments.

Feeling secure and belonging and the opposite will likewise lead to feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem as, according to Agulana (2014), the family provides the mental, ethical, and mystical lineage to the inclusive development of a child. According to (Colcord, 2016), a broken home refers to a home that has reached a long length of time without the presence of one or both parents as a result of annulment, death, desertion, separation, and/or any other causes. A broken home is a family setup in which the married parents are annulment or separated or have never been married. A broken home is a household in which the parents are either separated, annulment, or abandoned. Polemen (2014) suggests that the term means that the family structure is broken or broken and disrupted, and the parents can no longer provide their children with a safe and nurturing atmosphere.

A home can still be broken even with both parents present (Polamen, 2014). According to her, if the couples don't interact, communicate, or show concern for each other's lives, the house is broken and becomes a house with roommates. Annulment is thought to be the main cause of broken homes, though there are other factors as well, like death or misunderstandings among family members. Children respond to annulments in different ways. Some will experience extreme sadness, exhibit depressive symptoms, and experience increased anxiety because they believe they will be rejected or abandoned by one or both parents, leaving them emotionally and mentally damaged. Annulment is detrimental to the family; financial issues, sexual miscommunications, and other issues are frequent points of contention between husband and wife (Colcord, 2016). A child from a broken home may go through a life crisis and have their moral, psychological, and academic lives ruined. Long-term effects on how students view relationships, such as feelings of mistrust, narrow-mindedness, loneliness, difficulty forming a healthy attachment, and an increased risk of mental health issues, can result from emotional instability brought on by their parents' natural struggle (Agulana, 2014). Promiscuity, violence, homosexuality, psycho-social maladjustments, and other juvenile behavior and delinquencies are among the maladaptive

and antisocial behaviors that students from broken-homes may exhibit. As a result, these students have undoubtedly become mentally and socially abnormal in their behavior and interactions with others. Compared to children from stable homes, children from broken homes might not get the same amount of financial, emotional, and psychological support. Thus, the goal of this study is to investigate broken-homes and psychological adjustment in public secondary school students in the Northeast Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The goal of the study is to ascertain how public secondary school students in Delta State's Ika Northeast Local Government Area are affected psychologically by broken homes. It explicitly seeks to.

- i. determine the connection between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students.
- ii. examine the connection between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students based on age.

Research Questions

In line with the research topic, the subsequent research questions were raised for the study.

- i. What is the connection between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students?
- ii. What is the connection between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students based on age?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

- i. There is no significant connection between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students.
- ii. There is no significant connection between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students based on age.

METHODS

This research adopted a correlation approach to examine how broken homes impact the psychological adjustment of public secondary school learners. The study population embraces all the 25,688 students in the government senior secondary schools in level two (2) across the Ika Northeast Local Government of Delta State. The entire population of SSS Two students in the twenty-one (21) government secondary schools of Ika Northeast Local Government Area in the state of Delta is comprised of a population of 25,688 people (Delta State Ministry of Education, 2024). The government secondary schools were arbitrarily selected out of 21 schools in Ika Northeast Local Government Area of Delta State, making up

a total of six government secondary schools. This research involved a sample of 400 students, with 50 students per school chosen to compose 300 students in this study, which was done through a simple random sampling method as the sampling technique.

The research instrument used to gather the data was in form of a questionnaire, which was named as broken-home and psychological adjustment among public secondary school students. Part A of the questionnaire collected socio-demographic information among the participants, whereas part B involved research question items which were administered to the entire study members. The scale that was used was a four-point likert scale with Strongly Agree (SA) on 4 points and Agree (A) and Strongly Disagree (SD) on 3 and 2 respectively and Disagree (D) on 1.

The tests were tested on both face and content level. The researchers sent draft copies of questionnaires to the measurement experts in the department of measurement and evaluation to ensure they were of the right content, relevance and clarity. Before designing the final research instrument, the researchers put all corrections with all the suggested feedback and responses in it. Test-retest procedure was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire by involving a sample of 50 students. The researchers conducted two sessions of distribution of questionnaires at a time of two weeks interval. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics were applied by research analysts to determine the data generated. It was found that the Broken-home scale scores and the psychological adjustment scale scores had a correlation of ($r = 0.75$ and $r = 0.71$). The high reliability coefficients indicated that the instruments were reliable and consistent in terms of collecting data.

The researcher along with one research assistant administered the instrument the questionnaire to the students. The purpose that was introduced to the students by researchers prior to questionnaire goals was to assist students in correct answers. There were 300 questionnaires that were given to the students of secondary schools). The research questions were answered with the use of Mean, Standard Deviation Statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation and (regression statistics) were used to test the null (hypotheses).

Results

Table 1: Pearson Correlation on Relationship between Broken Homes and Psychological Adjustment of Secondary School Students

Variables	N	M	SD	df	r
(Intact)	300	2.48	.51	83	.293
Broken		2.18	.33		

The analysis in Table 1 shows that there is a correlation between broken homes and the psychological adjustment of secondary school students. 293). The outputs show a link between broken homes and the psychological adjustment of secondary school students. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the psychological adjustment of secondary school students and broken homes in Ika North L. Gr. Delta State, A.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation among Broken Homes and Psychological Adjustment of Secondary School Students based on Age

Variables	N	M	SD	df	R
12-15 years	235	2.93	.47	83	.291
15 years and above		1.82	.16		

The correlation coefficient between the psychological adjustment of secondary school students by age and broken homes is .291, according to the previously mentioned analysis in Table 2. The outputs show a relationship between broken homes in Ika North L. and secondary school students' psychological adjustment by age. Gr. Delta State, A.

Table 3: Pearson (r) Analysis of broken homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students

		Broken homes	Psychological adjustment
Broken homes	Pearson Correlation	1	.275*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	290	290
Psychological adjustment	Pearson Correlation	.275*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	290	290

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Testing at an alpha level of 0.05, Table 3 shows a p-value of .002 and a Pearson's r-value of .275. Because the p-value is less than the alpha level, the null hypothesis—that there is no significant correlation between broken-homes and secondary school students' psychological adjustment—is rejected. Therefore, there is a strong link between broken homes and the psychological adjustment of secondary school students.

Table 4: Pearson (r) Analysis of broken homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students based on age

		12-15 years	15 years and above
12-15 years	Pearson	1	.291*
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	290	290
15 years and above	Pearson	.291*	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	290	290

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

A p-value of .004 and a Pearson's r-value of .291 are shown in Table 4. Because the p-value, .004, is less than the alpha threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis, which claims that "there is no significant relationship between broken-homes and psychological adjustment of secondary school students based on age," is rejected. Thus, "there is a significant relationship between psychological adjustment of secondary school students based on age and broken homes" in Delta State's Ika North Local Government Area.

DISCUSSION

The research finding of 1 indicates (the fact that there is a significant relationship between broken-homes and psychological adjustment in students at secondary schools in Ika North Local Government Area of Delta State). The children will have less parental attachment than before since their homes will be in a state of disruption and they will be subjected to dysfunctional learning in all aspects of life including interpersonal functioning. Children who consider their parents' marriage to be happy will be more secure whereas those whose parents' marriage is unhappy will have feelings of instability and lack of security. According to the study conducted by Albans and Mosker (2019), there is a positive relationship between broken homes and poor levels of psychological and mental development among children. Fagan and Rector (2018) demonstrated the social and psychological looming effects of family separation on children. The researchers recorded the negative effects of broken homes on the five fundamental institutions of society which include family, religion, education and marketplace and government. The annulment between the parents causes numerous adverse effects on the quality of life of children. Bogale (2018) reported that one year after separation, custodial parents had a rise in anxiety, plus the presence of depression and anger in combination with self-doubt. Single parent children exhibited less parental affection and less communication and more parenting abuse along with unstable discipline practices. These findings are supported by the research conducted by Hargreavers (2018) that showed that split families cause children to exhibit mood swings and anger and frustration in school, students with parents who have separate homes exhibit more problems in the classroom and likewise negative academic habits and increased school absences. The previous scholarly studies prove that the children whose parents have separated have worse academic achievements compared to those who do not

leave the school and statistics indicate that children in this case likewise tend to abandon their studies (Hall, 2015). Research study by Hamilton (2017) examined the effect of family influences on academic achievement and psychological acclimatization among a sample of adolescents, of average age of 15 years old, who had three categories of family formation intact families, and blended families. The study revealed that children in separate families had less parental support and close supervision and academic achievement highly relied on the mentioned variables. The interdependence of lack of family support leads to low academic performance in separate and intact family setups among adolescent school children. According to Fields and Casper (2018), the division of the family homes poses significant financial issues in single parent households which increases the risks of children in terms of school performance and mental health development. Research indicated that financial hardships experienced by the families that are separated push the children to educational inadequacies.

The findings of the research proved that statistical analysis of broken houses reveals direct kin to the psychological adaptation of the students of the secondary school according to the age. The research findings are in agreement with a prior study (Compas et al., (2017)) who revealed that older students (12yrs and above) are more prone to stressors associated with broken homes due to their greater exposure to the related psychological adaptations. Steinberg (2020) explains that teenagers who are 12 years old feel the significance of staying connected with peers plus a high desire to be socially accepted. The children with disrupted homes generally receive significant losses in their social interactions and they have low self-image. Emotional recovery is more problematic among younger adolescents (12-14 years) than with older adolescents (15-18 years) who are forced to face academic failures and poor development of relationships.

CONCLUSION

Through this study, the researcher confirmed that students in secondary school face psychological difficulties because of broken homes. Students who experience parental separation experience emotional distress plus feelings of instability and insecurity. These experiences likewise present challenges for these students' academic performance. The relationship between psychological adjustment and broken homes is influenced by the age of the student. Home separation usually causes more problems for students who start school before adolescence than for older middle schoolers who are more able to adjust to these circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion led to the recommendations.

- i. Schools need to establish counseling facilities to assist the students of broken families to overcome their psychological challenges.
- ii. The implementation of the development of parenting programs should be done since they will impart the guardians with vital skills of managing a relationship and stabilizing methodologies of maintaining a healthy family environment.

- iii. Community must be sensitized about the impacts of broken homes on psychological adjustment of students by creating awareness programs that must culminate to community involvement in finding solutions.

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