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## **Family Instability As Correlate Of Academic Performance Among Secondary School Students In English Language In Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State.**

**UGOH ALOYSIUS CHINEDU**  
08037426607, [aloysiusugoh@gmail.com](mailto:aloysiusugoh@gmail.com)

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**PROF. IBIENE T. LONGJOHN**  
[ibiene.longjohn@iaue.edu.ng](mailto:ibiene.longjohn@iaue.edu.ng)  
+2348033395406

Department of Educational Psychology (Guidance and Counselling),  
Faculty of Education,  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

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### **Abstract**

The study examined family instability as correlate of academic performance among secondary school students in English Language in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses were guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. Population of the study consisted of 2,650 senior secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District. A sample of 400 students were drawn via simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection is a researcher's developed questionnaires, titled "family instability Scale (DBS) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). Test re-test reliability method was employed which yielded a reliability coefficient of  $r=0.85$  family instability Scale and  $r=0.83$  for ELAT. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used for data analysis. The findings revealed that there is a significant negative relationship between divorce and academic performance in English Language. Also it was found that family economic instability is not significantly related to academic performance in English. Among others, it was recommended that parent should adequately explore better ways of resolving marital conflict instead of divorce as such actions would have a negative effect on their academic performance.

**Key Words:** Academic Performance, Students, Family Instability, Senatorial District.

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### **Introduction**

Academic performance remains the primary indicator of how good or bad an education system of any society is. It serves as the index with which the quality of education of any society is measured. Education has a pivotal role in national as well as individual character building. It is a life line for any society and nation. This is because there is an amplified and inextricable link between quality education and national development

(Asuru, 2017), and the performance of students is a direct reflection of the quality of education obtainable in a society. Similarly, in our society academic performance is considered as a key principle to judge one's total capacities and potentialities. Hence academic achievement possesses a very imperative place in education as well as in the learning process (Bhat, 2013). Bolarinwa et al. (2019) explained that the term 'academic performance' is the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. It refers to how an individual is able to demonstrate his or her intellectual abilities. It is the outcome of education, that is, the extent to which an institution achieved its educational goals.

The academic performance of students at all levels of education particularly at the secondary schools level in Nigeria and specifically in Rivers State has been one of the major concerns for all in the educational system. Needless to say that students' academic performance occupied a very important place in the educational well-being of a student. It is considered as a key criterion to judge one's total potentialities and capacities. Opurum (2017) noted that academic performance is the success or failure of an individual. Nwankwo (2010) noted that academic performance is the expression of learners' learning ability in a specific subject area or in a given task, performance in school could be measured in a particular test group of school subjects or a single school subject. Obioma, and Cyril (2013) explained that high academic performance validates the efficacy of instruction given at any given programme. Academic performance is the extent to which the students have attained their short or long term educational goals. It is expressed in form of high or low scores obtained by students in class tests, assignments and examination. It could also be described as the performance of students in their school subjects at a given time which could be assessed or measured through test, assignments and examination. It is the measure of students' academic standing at any given academic programme. It helps in effective and proper evaluation of learners and identification of their academic strength and weaknesses.

Regrettably, students' academic performance is one of the current educational problems of public interest based on poor level of students' academic performance especially in public examinations and at schools. In fact, Chukwuemeka et al. (2019) decried that currently the academic performance of students in secondary schools has dropped drastically across the Country. More so, Muktar and Kabiru (2021) noted that students' results from various examination bodies usually show massive failure with only few students able to get the required grades. Consequently, the root cause of this menace needs to be explored and carefully addressed in order to shape the future of the educational system, students and the country at large.

Chukwuemeka et al. (2019) noted that academic success depends on a variety of factors and these factors can have both positive and negative influence on a child's ability to stay motivated and succeed in school. Considerable research evidence abound (Alabi et al., 2021; Oluwagbohunmi & Olowosile, 2019; Filade et al., 2019) showed that, poor academic performance at the secondary level of education is a product of the family, deviant behavior, peer group influence and so on.

Fehintola (2014) opined that for many years, educators, administrators or managers, researchers have debated over which variables influence students' academic performance, and concludes that if learners are to maximize their potential from schooling, they will need the full support of their families (Gobena, 2018). Frank in Effiong & Igiri, (2015) added that the family exerts a powerful influence in the site changes of the young. Khan et al. (2015) underpin that the family plays an important role in formal and informal education of the student. The impact of family on the success of a child cannot be over emphasized, because the family plays cogent role in

the life of a child generally. The child needs support from the family in order to achieve his aim and get successful in life. In the education of a child he or she needs the support of the family in terms of getting adequate and necessary working materials in the school, the child needs peace to be emotionally stable so as to concentrate on learning and thereby achieve success academically, an enabling domestic environment to operate and plan his /her life adequately and so on is paramount. But the type of family that will provide this support in all areas will be a stable family. A child brought up in an emotionally tense home that is characterized by constant marital or family conflict will not be able to concentrate on learning which will affect drastically his/her the academic performance. (Alabi et al., 2021).

Family instability refers to the disruption or breakdown of traditional family structures and dynamics, leading to changes that can impact the overall well-being of family members (Alabi et al., 2021). This concept encompasses various factors such as divorce, separation, financial instability, domestic violence, drug abuse, remarriage, cohabitation, and changes in parental figures. Family structure instability is associated with a host of negative outcomes for children. Research on family instability explores the consequences of these changes for individuals, children, and society as a whole.

An unstable family is one where members do not accept each other's shortcomings, do not understand, and do not appreciate the contribution of each member, is not ready to assist, unforgivable and do not think on how to see the progress of each member or the entire family. It is the complete state of disunity, chaos, anarchy and confusion, capable of changing at any time. It is important to note that family instability can have adverse effects on children's well-being, including their emotional, social, and educational development. A very unstable family has little or no time for playing parental roles, thus leading to the reductions in the amount of time parents spend monitoring school work, supervising their children and reductions in parent-child communication. This is often accompanied by increase in truancy and more negative attitudes towards school as exhibited by the adolescent. Family instability can manifest in different ways, including marital instability (divorce, separation), economic instability and domestic violence among others.

One prominent aspect of family instability is divorce, which can have profound effects on family members. For instance, Amato and Keith (2021) found that divorce can lead to emotional distress in both parents and children, resulting in issues such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral problems among children. Divorce is a prominent contributor to family instability. Divorce changes a considerable number of things in the child's life including possible changes in residence, relationship with parents, change in socio-economic standing and exposure to marital conflict (Amato & Anthony, 2014). With all these change in child's life, it is not surprising that substantial impact on the development and academic performance of the students. Academics are one of the most important aspects of a student's life. With good grades, students are able to get into colleges and universities, and allow them to earn degrees in order to obtain jobs that they want. Berlin in Nigusse (2021) examined that Children who grow up in an intact, two-parent family with both biological parents participated in school, discussed about children education, the children's subject issues and about their friends more than children who grow up in a single-parent family. However, researchers such as Bartholomew and Kwadwo (2015) reported that there was no statistically significant difference in academic performance between children in divorced and non-divorced parents.

Another major aspect of family instability is; Family economic instability, the concept of family instability emerged against a backdrop of significant economic and cultural

shifts (Shannon & Paula, 2019). Indeed, the economic downturn in Nigeria has impacted families significantly. Family economic instability may refer to fluctuations in families' resources. Hill et al. (2017) defined economic instability as "the repeated changes in employment, income, or financial well-being over time" as driven by changes in employment and earnings, family composition, and the receipt of public assistance benefits. Morrissey et al. (2020) explained that family economic instability can be characterized as episodic or chronic. Episodic instability refers to discrete, acute "shocks" such as a job loss, whereas chronic instability refers to a sustained pattern of acute events, such as variable earnings due to seasonal or shifting work schedules.

The term instability may be used to describe any changes, positive or negative, in an individual's life or within a household. However, with the growing research on economic instability comes growing variation in how instability is conceptualized and measured. Studies use different terms, definitions, and measures, making it difficult to compare findings or identify trends across time or subpopulations. Wolf and Morrissey (2017) defined economic instability as both income instability and employment instability, and operationalized these measures using percent and direction of change from month to month. One thing that is common is the fact that domestic violence has negative effects on the parties involved as well as the academic performance of students. Thus, the need for the present study.

### **Statement of Problem**

Academic performance of students in examinations remains the main indices for measuring the quality of education in any society. However, it appears that there is a persistent decline in the academic performance of secondary school students in spite of government huge expenditure on education. This, holds nothing but doom for education which in turn puts the future of the country in danger. There is a general outcry that standard of education is falling and morals are flagging. Some blame students for this apparent decline in the quality of education and moral values. Other blame teachers for the woes in the school system stating that teacher are not as devoted and dedicated to the cause of education as their predecessor in the 20th century. However, teachers blame parents and children for the decline in academic performance. Family instability among other factors could all contribute significantly towards the poor academic performance of students. When the family is unstable and un-peaceful, children in such families are unlikely to learn effectively. Children in such situation are unlikely to create enough time to read and may not be stable in school to attend classes. It is against this background that the present study seeks to examine family instability as correlate of academic performance among secondary school students in English Language in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between family instability and academic performance among secondary school students in English language in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State. The study specifically examined:

1. The relationship between divorce and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State.
2. The relationship between family economic instability and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does divorce relate to academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State?
2. To what extent does family economic instability relate to academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State?

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were also tested to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between divorce and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between family economic instability and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State.

### Methodology

The study was essentially correlational research design. Population of the study consisted of 2,650 senior secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 400, while simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size. The instruments for data collection will be a researcher's developed questionnaires, titled: "Family Instability (FI) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). The instruments was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The reliability coefficients of the instruments was determined using test re-test measure of stability. The obtained correlation coefficient indices were  $r=0.85$  for Family Instability Scale, and  $r=0.83$  for and  $r=0.80$  English Language Achievement Test. Which were deemed high enough to guarantee the reliability of the instrument for the study. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

### Results:

**Research Question One:** To what extent does divorce relate to academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State?

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between divorce and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State.

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation of Divorce and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District of Rivers State**

	Divorce	Academic performance in English Language
Divorce	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1 -0.77** 0.04

	N	400	400
Academic performance in English Language	Pearson Correlation	-0.77**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.04	
	N	400	400

\*\* Correlation in significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 1 revealed that the relationship between divorce and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers West senatorial district of Rivers State is -0.77. This result shows that there is a strong negative relationship a  $r=-0.77$ ,  $p 0.05$  between divorce and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers West senatorial district of Rivers State.

In testing the null hypothesis, the result indicate that the relationship between divorce and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers West senatorial district of Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance. This reviewed a significant negative relationship between divorce and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers West senatorial district of Rivers State at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent does family economic instability relate to academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State?

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant relationship between family economic instability and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation on Family Economic Instability and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in English Language in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State**

		Family economic instability	Academic performance in English Language
Family economic instability	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.72**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.01
	N	400	400
Academic performance in English Language	Pearson Correlation	-0.72**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.01	
	N	400	400

\*\* Correlation in significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

Table 2 reveal the relationship between family economic instability and academic performance of secondary school students in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State. This result show a strong negative relationship  $r=0.72$ ,  $p 0.05$  between family economic instability and academic performance in English of secondary school students in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State. In testing the null hypothesis, the result also revealed a significant negative relationship between family economic stability and academic performance in English Language of secondary School Students in Rivers State.

## Findings

The result of the study based on research question one and hypothesis one found that there was a strong negative relationship between divorce and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers West senatorial

district of Rivers State. This result is in tandem with the findings of Nigusse (2021), Thomas et al. (2014) and Chauke and Obadire (2019) who found that, children brought up under separated homes can hardly be psychologically balanced. Excellent academic performance requires the contribution of both parents.

The result based on research question two and the corresponding hypothesis also revealed that there was a strong negative relationship between family economic instability and academic performance in English of secondary school students in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State. This result is similar to that of Alabi et al. (2021), Machebe et al. (2017) and Abeshi (2018)) who found that economic instability could affect the students' academic performance.

The present result could be due to the fact that students from such homes most often find it difficult to pay their fees on time and buy textbooks.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that there is negative relationship between divorce and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers West senatorial district of Rivers State, there is a strong negative relationship between family economic instability and academic performance in English of secondary school students in Rivers West Senatorial District, Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should adequately explore better ways of resolving marital conflict instead of divorce as such actions can precipitate much problems for the child such as academic downturn.
2. Parents should strengthen the financial status to stabilize the economy of the family in order to enhance the academic performance of the child.

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