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## **Parental Separation And Academic Performance Of Adolescent Students In Degema Local Government Area, Rivers State**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined the cause and effect of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population comprises of all the students and parents in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. A random sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents, 180 students and 120 parents in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. A questionnaire tagged Parental Separation and Academic Performance of Adolescent Questionnaire (PSAPAQ) instrument was used for the study. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. Based on the analysis of the data, the following findings were made; that lack of intimacy, insufficient communication, no commitment to the relation, negative effect of drug addition, are the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State. The study also found that students' educational attainment could suffer if their tuition fees are not paid promptly, inappropriate social, psychological moral and academic performance development from separated home, parental separation presents a real danger to the emotionally personality and mental adjustment of young adolescent, children from separated homes perform poorly in schools, parental separation do not engendered intellectual stimulations, peer groups pressure is prevalence in separated homes, parental separation are the effects of parental separation on adolescent students' academic performance in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. Based on the finding of the study, it was concluded that lack of intimacy, insufficient communication, no commitment to the relationship are the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study therefore recommended that Counselors, psychologists, social workers and teachers should identify students from divorced families and counsel them and the separated parents should also be counseled on social needs of their children to reduce divorce or separation rates, couples should have enough time for each other. Love and understanding should be the corner stone of their marriage.

**Keywords:** Parental Separation, Academic Performance, Adolescent

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## **Introduction**

Marriage is a basic institution in every society designed by God as a social agreement between two individuals to become husband and wife. It is an institution that gives legitimacy to sexual relationship and reproduction for legitimate children. Marriage involves joining in matrimony two individuals of different gender to become one flesh as husband and wife, given the need for companionship, procreation, continuing and sustaining family ties. Nevertheless, marital separation in the present day society is of great concern as it is associated with divorce and widowhood (Omoniyi-Oyafunke et al., 2014). Adebowale (2016) revealed that the type of home in which the adolescent belong to, determines considerably, the type of attitude, which he or she will exhibit, and his academic performance. A parental separation cases in Degema Local Government Area has become natural phenomena due to the practices of matriarchy family system.

It is no longer news that over seventy percent of marriages in Degema Local Government Area are separated due to this matriarchy practices. Women having control over their marriage, prosperities and product of the marriage thereby giving women the opportunity to have children to different men with the men not having control over the them. The alarming statistics underscore the seriousness of the problem of separation due to matriarchy family system practices have led to adultery, incompatibility, poor communication, financial problem, abusive behaviour, lack of commitment to marriage, alcohol and drug abuse and mental illness. Adler (2006) in the Marxist tradition refers to matriarchy as a pre-class society where women and men share equally in production and power. A number of feminists noted that few definitions of the word matriarchy, despite its literal meaning, include any concept of power, and they suggest that centuries of oppression have made it impossible for women to conceive of themselves with such power.

Matriarchy is a family, group or state governed by a matriarch, a woman who is head of a family or tribe (Garrison, 2017). Anthropologists and feminists have since created more specific classifications for female societies, including the matrilineal system. Matrilineality refers not only to tracing one's lineage through maternal ancestry; it can also refer to a civil system in which one inherits property through the female line. While the legendary Amazons (probably the most widely known matriarchy) are relegated to mythology, there are a handful of female-led societies that thrive in the real world today. Other different forms of matriarchal societies exist such as the matrilineal residential system (husband lives at the residence of wife after marriage) and matrifocal (inheritance of property by females).

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 that allow them to own degrees in order to obtain jobs of their choice. If the relationship between the student's parents is unstable and filled with conflict it can affect their academic performance (Afifi, 2013; Brown, 2012; Overland, 2012). Udansky and Wolf (2008) identified single parenting as a major problem that is on the rise. Parent separations is a common phenomenon in the community today, but still represent a major life stressor for the individuals involved, with potentially strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of all members of the family. The effect of separation on the child's academic performance has been the subject of research attention for several decades, and has long been viewed as the cause of a range of serious and enduring

behavioural and emotional problems in children and adolescents (Kelly & Emery, 2003).

Park and Kim (2003) argued that, the mother traditionally' plays substantial role in the care of the family. The mothers' cares for children, listens to their problems and provide solutions. Mothers are very important in ensuring a happy childhood and meaningfully adult life for their children. The parent child relationship studies indicate that a father can contribute uniquely to the development of the child independently, regardless of the mother's contribution. However, when an issue affects the child such as, emotion, intelligence, self-esteem, competence and confidence come up, the father cannot be replaced easily by the mother (Park & Kim 2003). Forman and Davies (2003) maintained that at adolescence, the individual is getting developed psychologically to cope and bear with stress and tensions, which they are faced with.

Ekundayo and Oyeniya (2008) and Adebule (2012) stated that the society is bedeviled with many behaviour problems of the students, which include truancy, disobedience, drug addiction, smoking, flirting, stealing, armed robbery, examination malpractice, cultism, thugery, sexual abuse, sexual activities, and homosexual (gay and lesbianism) as part of behaviour problems prevalent among students (Omosho et al., 2010). Adebowale (2006) in a study on the social behaviour of students as it affects their moral behaviour observed that the type of home which the adolescent comes from, determine to a considerable extent, the type of attitude which he will develop to exhibit and his academic performance. Parental separation has a long and lasting impact on lives of any student. The state of the home or the marital status of adolescents' parents speaks volume about the life of the child. Separated homes have been found as a crucial factor causing anti-social problems and poor academic performances among secondary school adolescence.

Olusola (2008) believed that the highest incidence of adolescents whose parents are living separately might become way-ward, unruly, or take to sexual misconduct as a way of searching for affection, which was lacking in their unhappy parental home. Many researchers have shown that immoral behavior and poor academic performance are prevalent among adolescents who are from unstable or separated family, with less adequate parental training on their moral and social attitudes (William, 2002). This study intends to assess parent separation on the academic performance of adolescent students.

Children who have experienced parental separation frequently have lower academic achievement than children from non-Separated parents Wolchick (2002). Lamden et al., (2002) in a study on family and school factors related to adolescents' academic performance noted that it is two times more likely for a child from a separated parents to drop out of high school than a child from a non-Separated parents. These children from Separated parents may also be less likely to attend college, resulting in the discontinuation of their academic career (Rodgers & Rose, 2001). The school as a system is confronted with large numbers of families coping with transitions created by Separation (Lamden, 2002).

A few studies in Europe have also found the more negative effects of divorce than the death of a parent, especially among single-mother families (Borgers et al., 2006; Bosman & Louwes, 2008). Pong (2006) who carried out a rare study context that

made a distinction between divorced and widowed single mothers, also provides evidence of the relative advantages of children in Malaysia living with a widowed mother over those living with a divorced mother. Stephens (2006) and Salami (2008) stated that adolescents from broken homes are usually associated with antisocial behaviour and poor academic records. Amato (2000); Amato (2001); Amato and Keith (2001); Emery (2009); Hetherington et al., (2008); Kelly (2000) confirmed that children of Separated parents are at an increased risk for the development of psychological, behavioural, social and academic problems.

Yongm and Yuanzhang (2008) made it clear that in some cases children who experience separation or divorce do not always perform well or achieve academically. In their views, Borgers et al., (2006) reported that educational outcomes of children living with a single mother were generally poorer than those of children living with two parents although fairly small in the magnitude. Children of Separated parents are at risk of lower academic performance than their peers from non-divorced families (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003; McLanahan, 2009; Mulholand et al., 2004). Teachers' rate children from separated parents higher on factors such as heightened anxiety surrounding academic failure, the inability to reflect, irrelevant talk, and inattention. Research Evidence-Based Counselling indicated that children from Separated parents attend school less, watch more television, do less homework, and have less parental supervision of their schoolwork (McLanahn, 2009).

The study is anchored on attachment theory conceptualized by John Bowlby and later refined by Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 2002). The theory contends that a strong emotional bond with at least one primary caregiver is crucial for healthy child development. Attention is given in much of the literature to the child's mother as the primary caregiver (Cavanagh & Huston, 2008). Attachment theory offers insights into the depressed academic achievement of students from some subgroups of nontraditional families. Further, it is consistent with Pong's (2008) platform that students from single-parent households in which the mother is present can still experience competitive academic achievement levels.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of parental separation is an increasing social problem that has become a topic for discussion in recent times; it is traumatic for those who experience it. Those affected may experience grief, embarrassment, resentment, disappointment, and intense anger and divided loyalty. The major protective factors that facilitate children's adjustment to divorce are low inter-parental conflict, effective and constructive resolution of conflict between the parents, the quality of the parent-child relationship, nurturing, authoritative parenting from at least one parent, and cooperative co-parenting with good communication.

It is these family processes that contribute to determining children's academic performance, wellbeing and 'outcomes', rather than family structures per se (such as the number, gender, sexuality and co-habitation status of parents). Single parenthood may arise from matriarchy either the male or female decides to produce and rear a child or children outside; Parents can present a reliable and cooperative parenting style when providing their children with discipline and behaviour expectations (Carlson & Hines, 2003).

Parental separation has a long and lasting impact on lives of any student. The state of the home or the marital status of adolescent parents speaks volume about the life of the child. Separated homes have been found as a crucial factor causing anti-social problems poor academic performances among secondary school adolescence. Olusola (2008) believed that the highest incidence of adolescents whose parents are living separately might become way-ward, unruly, or take to sexual misconduct as a way of searching for affection, which was lacking in their unhappy parental home. This study intends to assess parent separation and academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State.

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

The aim of the study was to investigate the causes and effect of parental separation on adolescent students in Degema local government of rivers state. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Determine the effect of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the reasons for parental separation in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State?
2. What are the effects of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State?

### **Methodology**

Descriptive Survey design was adopted for this study. The target population for the study comprised all the 5,600 senior secondary 2 students and 4,700 parents of the adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. A sample of three hundred (300) students and 300 parents was randomly selected with the use of stratified and simple random sampling technique from six classes of senior secondary schools in Degema Local Government Area. A self-designed instrument made up of 30 items, items 1-9 dealt with the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, items 10-16 gathered information on the effect of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, The responses ranged from strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated through constructive suggestions by two experts in questionnaire construction in measurement and evaluation, department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education while to determine the reliability of the instrument; a pilot study was carried out using test retest method. The questionnaire was administered on fifteen students of SS3. The responses of the subjects on the two administrations were obtained and correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical tool for test retest reliability coefficient. The coefficient index of 0.80 was found. This value was adjudged high and therefore, the instrument was considered reliable and appropriate for this study. The instrument was

administered to the participants and collection of the copies of the instrument was done on the same day of administration. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.

## Results and Findings

**Research Question One:** What are the reasons for parental separation among secondary school students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State?

**Table 1: Mean response on the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State**

S/N	What are the causes of parental separation among secondary school students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State?	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Lack of intimacy	3.68	0.73	Agree
2	Insufficient communication	3.66	0.70	Agree
3	No commitment to the relation	3.86	0.47	Agree
4	Negative effect of drug addiction	3.70	0.70	Agree
5	Level of income of the parent is a predication of separation.	3.61	0.77	Agree
6	Stressful condition	3.73	0.49	Agree
7	Deferring personality and interest	3.72	0.70	Agree
8	Family stress can be reduces through separation.	3.69	0.63	Agree
9	Strains from parenthood	3.76	0.55	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<b>Agree</b>

The data in table 1 shows the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. The table shows that lack of intimacy (Mean=3.68, SD=0.73), insufficient communication (Mean=3.66, SD=0.70), no commitment to the relation (Mean=3.86, SD=0.47), negative effect of drug addiction (Mean=3.70, SD=0.70), level of income of the parent is a predication of separation (Mean=3.61, SD=0.77), stressful condition (Mean=3.73, SD=0.49), deferring personality and interest (Mean=3.72, SD=0.70), family stress can be reduces through separation (Mean=3.69, SD=0.63), strains from parenthood (Mean=3.76, SD=0.55) are the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State.

**Research Question Two:** What are the effects of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Mean response on the effects of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State**

S/N	What are the effects of parental separation on academic performance of adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State?	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Students' educational attainment could suffer if their tuition fees are not paid promptly.	3.72	0.51	Agree

2	Inappropriate social, psychological moral and academic performance development from separated home.	3.87	0.40	Agree
3	Parental separation presents a real danger to the emotionally personality and mental adjustment of young adolescent.	3.81	0.49	Agree
4	Children from separated homes perform poorly in schools.	3.73	0.71	Agree
5	Parental separation do not engendered intellectual stimulations.	3.90	0.33	Agree
6	Peer groups pressure is prevalence in separated homes.	3.81	0.42	Agree
7	Parental separation has been identified as one the great factors affecting student academic performance.	3.75	0.54	Agree
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.80</b>	<b>0.49</b>	<b>Agree</b>

The data in table 2 shows the effects of parental separation on academic performance adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State. The table also showed that students' educational attainment could suffer if their tuition fees are not paid promptly (Mean=3.72, SD=0.51), inappropriate social, psychological moral and academic performance development from separated home (Mean=3.87, SD=0.40), parental separation presents a real danger to the emotionally personality and mental adjustment of young adolescent (Mean=3.81, SD=0.49), children from separated homes perform poorly in schools (Mean=3.73, SD=0.71), parental separation do not engendered intellectual stimulations (Mean=3.90, SD=0.33), peer groups pressure is prevalence in separated homes (Mean=3.81, SD=0.42), parental separation has been identified as one the great effect of adolescent students' academic performance (Mean=3.75, SD=0.54) are the effects of parental separation on adolescent students' academic performance in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State.

### Discussion of Findings

The Mean response on the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State in table1 showed that the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State as lack of intimacy (Mean=3.68, SD=0.73), insufficient communication (Mean=3.66, SD=0.70), no commitment to the relationship (Mean=3.86, SD=0.47), negative effect of drug addiction (Mean=3.70, SD=0.70), level of income of the parent (Mean=3.61, SD=0.77), stressful condition (Mean=3.73, SD=0.49), deferring personality and interest (Mean=3.72, SD=0.70), family stress (Mean=3.69, SD=0.63), strains from parenthood (Mean=3.76, SD=0.55). The finding of the result confirms the finding of Baxter (2011) and Van Dolen (2013) who reported in their separate studies that the elevated risk of adjustment problems is apparent for children whose parents have separated are frequently linked to their experiences of significant pre-separation conflict". Van Dolen (2013) also finds that, "Experiencing parental separation during childhood is associated with increased likelihood of being subject to child abuse and/or witnessing violence". When parents go through a divorce, the children can become witness to what it brings about in their parents, and sometimes even unknowingly get in the middle of it.

The Mean response on the effect of parental separation on academic performance adolescent students in Degema Local Government Area in Rivers State in Table 2 showed that students' educational attainment could suffer if their tuition fees are not paid promptly (Mean=3.72, SD=0.51), it showed that inappropriate social, psychological moral development from separated home causes poor academic performance (Mean=3.87, SD=0.40), when parental separation presents a real danger to the emotional personality and mental adjustment of young adolescent also causes reduction in learning outcome of adolescent students (Mean=3.81, SD=0.49). Again, adolescent students from separated homes causes poor performance in school. (Mean=3.73, SD=0.71), parental separation do not engendered intellectual stimulations in adolescent students as seen from table 2 (Mean=3.90, SD=0.33), peer groups pressure is prevalence in separated homes (Mean=3.81, SD=0.42), parental separation has been identified as one the great factors affecting student academic performance (Mean=3.75, SD=0.54). The finding of the study agreed with the finding of Wolchick (2002), Yongm and Yuanzhang, (2008) who reported that children who experience separation or divorce do not always perform well or achieve academically.

### **Conclusion**

The study investigated the causes and effects of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. From the data analysis, it was concluded that lack of intimacy, insufficient communication, no commitment to the relationship, negative effect of drug addition, level of income of the parent, stressful condition, deferring personality and interest are the causes of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State. It was also concluded that students' educational attainment could suffer if their tuition fees are not paid promptly, inappropriate social, psychological moral development from separated home, parental separation presents a real danger to the emotional personality and mental adjustment of young adolescent are the effects of parental separation in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Counselors, psychologists, social workers and teachers should identify students from divorced families and counsel them.
2. The separated parents should also be counseled on social needs of their children so that their academic work will not suffer at school.
3. To reduce divorce or separation rates, couples should have enough time for each other.
4. Love and understanding should be the corner stone of their marriage.
5. There should be effective communication among couples since communication serves as the blood of any relationship.

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