

Effects of Broken Homes on Students Academic Performance in English language

Ereke, John S. PhD¹

Elendu Florence O.²

Nwafor Joseph M.³

Prof. S. N. Agwu⁴

Department of Arts and Social Science Education

Faculty of Education

Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

Nigeria

Abstract

The research paper is on effects of broken homes on students academic performance in English language learners academic performance is critically determined by home backgrounds, even in all subjects not only in English language. The learners' psychology is the determinant actor in learning process. Learning do no doubt starts from home. When a child is in a peaceful home the performance is expected to be positively but the reverse is the case where the child comes from a broken home. In this research paper, efforts have been made to highlight some of the problems facing learners of the English language who come from broken homes. Some of the important facts discussed in the paper include: Broken homes, causes of broken homes, broken homes and students academic performance in English language among others. Some of the recommendations offered on the paper are that parents should be very mindful of their children behaviour especially their education before thinking divorce because of its effects on academic performance in education, government should provide the necessary framework for curriculum experts to address the needs of students who are from divorced homes during curriculum planning and development. Conclusion was made based on the highlighted points on the paper.

Keywords: Broken homes, Effects, Students, academic and performance.

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I. Introduction

Given the importance of English language as a subject, common sense demands that students should perform well in it. The fact that English Language is the most important subject in the secondary school curriculum is incontestable. To be able to understand his or her teachers in all other subjects effectively, a secondary school student requires at least fair knowledge of the English language. Little wonder, English language is referred to as the key to all other subjects. To be eligible for admission to universities and other higher institutions of learning secondary school student must pass English language at credit or distinction level. English is the sole medium of communication in the university communities.

English language as a subject is important and students are required to perform well in it. Over the years, there had been public outcry concerning the fate of educational system in Nigeria most especially they mass failure of students in English Language both in internal and external examination. Investigations into the factor that influence poor academic performance of students in English Language could be trace to individual family or home. The family or home is an integral part of the society which is a sub-system of the social structure. It is an axiom that good homes breed a productive nation. It is arguable or believed that children from broken homes are more likely prone to poor academic performance in English Language. Broken home is defined as the situation whereby husband and wife separated as a result of one problem or the other. The problems range from inability to understand each other. Since both are from different family backgrounds marriage brought them together. The idea of tolerating each other understanding each others behaviour and adjustment to each other ways may be factors or issue that cause broken homes in the society. The issue of infidelity among husband and wife, playing extra-marital affairs by both sexes, outside the matrimonial home coupled with any of the couples not giving due respect to each other or a feeling of inferiority by either of the couples may lend to instability in homes. The idea of constant guerilla warfare in the home, which eventually

lead to separation through divorce in the law court often lead to total break of the family. When there is separation between husband and wife, it adversely affects the homes especially the children.

A child may become a victim of broken home as a result of divorce or separation of the parents. When this happens, this child is entrusted to other people that are different from his parents. This person is expected to play the role of a surrogate parents despite his/her commitment of his/her own children without any empirical evidence, it is very clear that nobody will treat a child who is entrusted to his care the way he/she will treat his/her own child. By this, the child is always confused and frustrated under the leadership style of step-father or step-mother. The frustration of a child knows no bound. At home under surrogate parents he is discriminated and suffers some psychological deprivations, he carries the same emotional frustration to the school. Instead of listening to the teacher and, taking down notes, he is more often occupied with the intimidation, discrimination and deprivation he/she is facing at him. As such, he has little or no interest in the learning materials, as classes are ought to be attended and comprehensible in the course of subject taught presented at school.

Apart from frustration, dissemination, discourage and deprivation, the child may also be malnourished and segregated by surrogate parent (i.e. mother) who feel that she is wasting the family resources in the child she did not give birth to the child may lack the necessary school materials and in most case, may grudgingly allow the child to be attending school while that child may not be given the necessary things that are vital for acquisition of knowledge since he know that, he will be punished by the teacher for lack of learning materials, he may result to play truancy.

Single parenthood has been found to adversity affect the learning situation of human being particularly the children that is to say, children who are reared in homes where parents are separated or divorced are most likely to be faced with sleep disturbance in class while learning and become irritable, fearful, aggressive and withdrawn (Cole and Cole 1999, Vander Zanden, 2001). Studies further confirm that children in one parents household not only do or perform poorly in school because they tend to lack self control, but also become disruptive in the classrooms, instead of paying attention to what is being taught in class, they are busy disturbing others who are ready to learn. In addition, it is also reported that two years immediately after a mother's marriage break up, the mother exercise less control over her children than she did before (Hetherington, Cox and Cos, 1998).

The problems children from broken homes are facing with the resultant failure in English Language in secondary schools is a serious affair that calls for the attention of all and sundry including the government. It is against this backdrop that the topic tends to investigate the effects of broken homes on students academic achievements in English Language in Secondary Schools.

Broken Home

Many people have different definitions of what a broken home is. Every definition matters. To Colcord (2009), a broken home is a home in which one of or both parents have been removed by death, divorce, desertion, separation or prolonged absence. Polanen (2000) maintains that although a broken home is usually taken to mean a home where one parent has been by certain cause, a home can still be broken with both parents present. She argues that if there is no communication, interaction or investment in each other's lives by the couple, the home is broken and becomes a house with roommates.

From the above, it follows that a home is deemed to be broken when the couple that constitute it (i.e. husband and wife) cease to live together functionally as an integrated unit, whether or not they physically live together. In such a home, the chain of communication and interaction that should exist between the members of the family as a single, integrated unit is relatively non-existent. The parents cannot just get along, and the children live in a world of their own.

This lends credence to the view of Saheed (2008), when he opined that a broken home consists of a family whose members are separated or divorced. It consists of a family sundered by divorce, separation or desertion of a parent(s). Owens (2000), maintains that a broken home may be classified either by the degree of disintegration existent in it or by the duration of the disintegration. Under the first mode of classification, the breakup of a home may be partial or complete. Partial breakup of a home refers to a situation where the members of the family continue to cohabit although the machinery for the function of the home as a single, integrated unit has ceased to exist. Thus the members of the family physically live together while functionally, they no longer live or exist as a family. Conversely, complete breakup of a home refers to a situation where the family ceases to live together both physically and functionally.

Under the second mode of classification, he argues that the breakup of a home may be temporal or permanent. Temporal breakup of a home refers to a situation where the adverse condition of the home is expected to last for a fixed or determinable period of time. This is typical of cases of judicial separation or separation by agreement simplicities. Conversely, permanent breakup of a home refers to a situation where the¹ adverse condition of the home is expected to last in perpetuity or indefinitely. This is generally typical of cases of divorce.

Margaret (1998), argues that before the home is broken, the individual members of such home are first broken or wrecked. This characterization does not necessarily mean a physical or mental wreck (although it may include same), but refers to bankruptcy in health, hopes, prospects etc for the time being. She maintains that they lack the power or will to dominate adverse conditions, allowing same to overcome them. They may not even as individuals be conscious of their own share or contributions towards the difficulties in which the family finds itself, but are aware that something has seriously gone wrong. Once this obtains, the home evolves to the stage of breaking-up.

Causes of Broken Homes

From the definition of a broken home as given by Colcord (2009), it is imperative that a home may be broken in any of the following five ways, viz; death, divorce, desertion, separation or prolonged absence of either or both parents. These indices will be analyzed seriatim:

Death: The death of a parent(s) may lead to a broken home. This is usually the case where the deceased member is the backbone of the home. Bosanquet (2006), contends that the death of the breadwinner of the home usually ushers in a plethora of problems and difficulties which if not promptly and properly addressed may tear the home apart.

Supporting this view Colcord (2009) contends that such a member of the home being the fulcrum on which the functionality and continuity of the family as a homogenous and integrated unit revolves, the family will cease to function continuously and continually on the demise of such a person. The home ceases to function continuously when the balance maintained in its affairs wears out and it can no longer independently sustain its members on individual basis having lost the capacity to provide for their economic, social, psychological, intellectual and moral needs. The home also ceases to function continually when as a result of the aggregation of the unresolved problems of its individual members as highlighted above; it can no longer sustain itself as a single, integrated unit capable of independent co-existence with other families without such problems.

When this situation obtains in any home owing to the death of any of the parent(s), which situation would not have occurred but for the demise of such person, the home is deemed to be broken. It will not be unusual to see members of such families seeking alternative measures to cushion the effect of such occurrence towards the resolution of their problems.

Divorce: Garner (2005), defines divorce as “the legal dissolution of a marriage.” This implies that the concept of divorce comes into play when the mechanism and machinery of the law is set in motion towards the dissolution of the legally recognized union of a man and woman, otherwise called marriage. This lends credence to the fact that most times, it is referred to as marital dissolution or dissolution of marriage. Hornby (2006), sees it as the legal ending of a marriage.

In further explanation of this view, Thomas and Henry (2005), argue that divorce may be classified either by the institution from which it was obtained, or by the extent or degree of dissolution obtained. Under the first mode of classification, divorce may be in form of Legislative Divorce or Judicial Divorce. Legislative divorce refers to the legal termination of a particular marriage brought about by an enactment made by the legislature. Here, the particular marriage is terminated owing to a legislative enactment to that effect. This is also referred to as Parliamentary Divorce and was mostly obtainable in the past, having become obsolete. Conversely, judicial divorce refers to the legal termination of a particular marriage as decreed by a court of competent jurisdiction. This form of divorce is commonly obtained nowadays.

Under the second mode of classification, divorce may be in form of *Divorce a mensa et thoro* or *Divorce a vinculo matrimonii*. The former is a Latin maxim which literally means divorce from board and hearth and refers to a partial or qualified divorce by which the parties were separated and allowed or ordered to live apart, but remained technically married. Supporting this view, Bumpass (1995) contends that it was the forerunner of modern judicial separation.

Conversely, the latter is a Latin maxim which literally translates to divorce from the chains of marriage and refers to a total and complete divorce of husband and wife, dissolving the marriage tie and relieving the parties wholly from their matrimonial obligations. Again supporting this view, Bumpass et al argues that in certain instances, this type of divorce bastardized any children from the marriage especially on reasonable grounds that existed before the marriage.

The implication of divorce on a marriage cum family is that legally, it ceases to exist and since the institution of marriage is the backbone on which the home is built and sustained, there is no gainsaying the fact that on its dissolution, the home breaks apart.

Desertion: The desertion of the home by either parent(s) may lead to its breakup. Implicit in the definition of desertion as given by Hornby (2006) is the fact that it refers to an abandonment of the home without help or support. Credence is lent to this view by the position of Garner (2005), stating that it is the willful and unjustified abandonment of a person's duties or obligations especially to a 'spouse or family.

Nock (1995), maintains that there are three forms of desertion, viz: constructive desertion, criminal desertion and obstinate desertion. Constructive desertion refers to a situation where a spouse is forced by the conduct of the other members of the family to leave or abandon the home. This usually occurs where the action of the offending spouse is so grave and serious that the deserting party finds continuation in the home to be unendurable or even dangerous to his or her safety and well-being, and finds it necessary to seek safety outside the confines of the home. Criminal desertion refers to a situation where a parent(s), without just cause willfully fails to provide towards the care, protection and support of the other members of the family as he or she was wont to do. Obstinate desertion refers to a situation where a spouse persistently refuses to return to the home, or to his or her duties and obligations to the family. If either spouse indulges in the last two forms of desertion, it is enough ground for the other to seek a divorce.

Morgan (1998), maintains that desertion is distinct from divorce in that divorce naturally applies only to married couples whereas; any member of the family is susceptible to desertion. Also, if the deserting member is either spouse, he or she does not usually consider absence from home or abandonment of duties and obligations as final and definite such as in divorce.

Since desertion involves the jettisoning or abandonment of the home and/or duties and obligations to the family by a member of such family, this invariably wears out the bond of confidence, dedication and faithfulness that ordinarily should exist between the members of the family and thus, brings about the breakup of the home.

Separation: This strictly applies to a married couple. According to Hornby (2006), it is a decision that a husband; -and wife make to live apart while remaining married. This view is supported by Garner (2005) stating that it is an arrangement whereby a husband and wife live apart from each other while remaining married by mutual consent.

From the above views, it is safe to infer that there exists a difference between divorce and separation. While divorce usually involves the employment of the instrumentality of the law towards the dissolution of a marriage, separation merely involves a mutual agreement between the particular couple to stay apart. Where such arrangement is made by the court with the consent of the couple, it is referred to as judicial separation. Where the couple so decide to stay apart although they remain legally married, this invariably exposes the family to several vices and problems which may culminate in a broken home.

Prolonged Absence: Colcord (2009), maintains that the prolonged absence of a member of the family invariably leads to a broken home. This is predicated on the fact that such a member, one way or the other ceases to contribute his quota towards the economic, psychological, social, intellectual and moral development of the family due to prolonged absence. The vacuum created by the absence of such a person lays the foundation for the intrusion of several vices and problems into the home which if unchecked, will on the long run disintegrate the home.

Poverty and Money Troubles: Saheed (2008), observes that poverty on the part of the husband has been identified as a prime factor responsible for broken homes,. Gone are the days when employment opportunities were apparent in our society. Today, the reverse is the case as millions of school graduates with certificates remain floating in the already saturated labor market. Moreover, millions of workers are now rendered unemployed due to one problem or the other in the economic system. A good number of families thus live from hand to mouth as a result of quagmire of poverty and penury. This leads to inability of the husband to provide adequately for the family, hence there is breakup.

This view is supported by the position of McLanahan (1999), who highlights that in general, the greater a man's income relative to his spouse's, the higher the marriage rate and the lower the divorce rate. For women, marriage rates are highest in local areas that offer the fewest economic alternatives to marriage. The more women earn, the less attractive marriage appears to be in general. Family breakup rate doubles for young married couples if the husband is unemployed at any time during the first year of marriage, and is 50 percent higher if both spouses are unemployed.

According to the University of Wisconsin Professor, Larry Bumpass in his 1990 presidential address to the Population Association of America, "If marriage assures neither a two-parent family for the child, nor lifetime economic security for the woman, the need of marriage is much less compelling".

Colcord (2009), contends that aside poverty, problems in management of family finance may lead to a broken home. A family may be resourceful in terms of finance but if it cannot adequately allocate such financial resources to appropriately meet competing needs, it is no better than a poor family and in fact, may even fare worse since the poor know that they have not; but such family is like the proverbial ignorant who despite proximity to a water source, makes do with spittle in lieu of water.

Health and infertility: Colcord (2009), reveals that researchers and academicians are agreed that physical health condition plays a part, though usually indirect and secondary in the breakup of a home. Ill health in the man may lower his vitality, cause irregular work, and super induce a condition of despondency and readiness to give in. In the woman, it brings about careless housekeeping, lack of attractiveness, and disinclination to sexual intercourse, all being factors that directly culminate in-a broken home. Continued ill health breeds financial and

other burdens which tend to lower the morale of the family members and induces frustration which can lead to a broken home.

Akin to the ill health factor is the issue of infertility. Saheed (2008), opines that infertility of the home is another major factor leading to a broken home. In a situation where a couple live together for over a decade and there are no children, problems will arise, such that the couple may begin to suspect each other of the misfortunes of the family. Such misunderstanding in no small way has contributed to the collapse of many homes in recent times. Polanen (2000), supports this view, stating that the inability of have children by a couple can lead to a broken home. The joy of every marriage is for the couple to be blessed with children, but where none is forthcoming; it can lead to frustration and eventual breakup of the marriage. In societies where male children are preferred and accorded higher social status and privileges than their female counterparts, the inability of the couple to have male children may lead to serious tension which if left unchecked may disintegrate the home, not minding the fact that the family already has female children.

Sexual Incompatibility: Colcord (2009), contends that this single cause operates disastrously to disrupt many marriages or else render them unstable. Where the sex habits of the couple are incompatible, for instance, the man is a selfish brute, or the Wife suffers from sexual anesthesia, the stage is set for a broken home. Bumpass (1995), maintain that such strange sexual perversions in either couple could lead to separation. Sex maladjustments, both physical, mental or spiritual which inhibits the complete sexual satisfaction of one or both of the couple can disintegrate their union.

Broken homes and students academic performance in English language

According to Gum and Furstanbury (2006), babies born to unmarried teams appears more likely to experience adverse health and education related outcomes than babies born to married couples.

Wallerain and Kelly (2004), states that the absence of father is often viewed as partially harmful to self esteem looking at the above critically one will be correct to say that a child that has no self esteem will not be able to perform well in his academic work and as such he will not be able to perform well in English Language both for internal and external examination. Burdon (2001), has this to say 'such children without proper training due to breakage of their families or marriage are trained at the mercy of other people, turn out to be truants from this assertion, it is clear that surrogate mothers cannot monitor the education progress of children entrusted to their care. They cannot help in teaching them English Language at home since many are usually worst in terms of English Language.

As Ezewu (2000), notes, if the child from broken home fails to make necessary adjustment at school, he becomes mal-adjusted and this might make him resort to any of these course of action.

1. He may attempt to change the situation violently and as a student he would see both teachers and seniors as threat to his existence in the school and would attack them.
2. He may turn mind to other things, so as to forget his failure to adjust to the situation as student and develop hatred for participation in any school activity.
3. He may decide to avoid the unfavourable situation by refusing to go to school or become a truant.

According to Banjo (2000) 'the home influences the child at the most impressionable time of his life, at a time when his mind is most receptive it provides the first impression on while of the **child's** subsequent life. It is the home that a child learns his earliest lesson in obedience, politeness and consideration for other. If the home and the school work in the same direction towards the best development of the child, the result will be most happy, if the school pulls in one direction while the home in another, the child's true development is bound to be handicapped it is true that a family or broken home cannot be conducive for the smooth learning of the child in that, the home will only succeed in pulling down what has been learnt by the child in the school because of lack of reinforcement from the home.

Children that grow up in a broken home are unlikely to develop their academic potentials to the fullest while children brought up in a stabilized and organized home are more likely to develop to a full fledged human beings, being able to discover their academic and other attributes leading to success in life endeavour. According to Odolo (1998), a child from broken home may lead to feelings of insecurity that continues throughout his childhood to adolescence.

In a broken home where a child is left with only the fathers, the man is likely to be unable to bring up the child well for school or stay constantly enough at him to guide the child through his academic performance in English Language. There is the tendency for the father to trust the child's welfare to school. However, the school solution or alternative to the claim peaceful atmosphere and above parental love that the home gives to the child is insufficient for child academic performance.

The children living in the shadow of the broken home are often be wailed by coming and going by the more fact that essential relationship are not promoted or are broken off and disrupted verily impressionably. It is necessary that both parents should endeavour to bring up their children in an atmosphere of harmony.

In a situation where another woman than the child's mother becomes the legitimate wife of the home there is bound to be negative social stigma that might be inextricable to the child, early in life. It is observed that

children born out of wedlock should be saved the mental and physical deprivation. According to him, human existence is something different from animal existence in that, the development of the child physically, psychologically requires a roles structure such as that of the family. The stigma of the child out of wedlock should certainly not be that throughout life. It is regarded as illegitimate and the product of socially and morally reprehensible behaviour. That is not to say that once both parents live together in harmony and unity of purpose in educating the child is ensured. If they are constantly nagging and fighting certain psychological problem could occur, which will disturb the child's learning.

Levin (2001), states that parents are probably the actors with the clearest dimensional interest in a high level of their children are in academic performance. To some extent there is simple evidence to show that marital instability brings about stress, tension, lack of motivation and frustration. Obviously these manifestations act negatively on a child's academic performance most especially in English Language.

Johnson (2005), asserts that children from divorced families often fail English Language and are at a risk emotionally. However, this may not be completely applicable in all instances of broken homes. Some children irrespective of home background or structures may work hard and become successful in life. Moreover (Ayodele, 2006), stated that the environment where a child finds himself or herself goes a long way in determining his learning ability and ultimately his academic performance in English Language and other studies in school.

Bliss (2004), is of the view that many students from low socio-economic homes mostly single mother with socio-economic background respond incomprehensively to classroom teaching because their home environment has not exposed them to the kinds of materials used in school. If home environment is not intellectually stimulating some students find it difficult to cope up in school and may eventually drop out of school. Furthermore the home has been identified as an overwhelming factor affecting students' achievements in English Language. It would appear then, that broken homes may present a very real danger to the emotional, personality and mental adjustment of students. These impinge on students' academic performance.

According to Fraser (2001), psychological home conditions arise mainly from illitimacy of children, the label of adopted child, broken home divorce and parental deprivation. Such abnormal conditions of the home are likely to have a detrimental effect on the school performance of the child. He asserts that life in single parent family or broken homes can be stressful for both the child and the parent. Such families are faced with challenges of inadequate financial resources.

Schultz (2006), notices that if adolescents from unstable homes are to be compared with those from stable homes it would be seen that those from unstable homes have more social academic and emotional problems. (Roehikepartain, 2003), are of the opinion that the family and its structure play a great role in children's academic performance. Omolewa (2002), affirms that academic performance of the child could be traced to the home he comes from. Synder (2000), claimed that the family environment is the most powerful influence in determining the child's academic achievements. It is obvious that substantial influence on a child's academic achievements.

II. Conclusion

The study investigated effects of broken homes on students academic performance in English language in secondary schools. It is pertinent to note that broken homes are injurious to the academic achievements in English Language of the students of separated or divorced couples. The study found that among other things that there are causes of broken homes which affects academic performance of students in English Language which among them include' divorce, separation, prolonged absence, desertion, death, sexual incompatibility and home environment. It is on the basis of this that the seminar presents the following recommendations which affectively utilized will invariably reduce poor academic achievements of students in English Language.

III. Recommendations

Based on the issues raised on the research paper the following recommendations are made;

1. Government should institute a special scholarship to assist students of broken homes who are presently enrolled in school to caution the effect of their financial strength.
2. Parents should be very mindful of their children especially their education before contemplating divorce separation because of its effects on their academic performance in English Language
3. That society should promote her cultural values and assist the social institutions within its locality to orientate families on the benefits and odds of divorce especially as it affect students' academic achievement in English Language.
4. Government should provide the necessary framework for curriculum experts to address the needs of students who are from divorced homes during the curriculum planning and development.

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