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Original paper

Effects of Broken Marriage on Primary School Pupils' Academic Performance in Goronyo Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the impact of broken marriages on the academic performance of primary school pupils in Goronyo local government area of Sokoto State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional study was conducted involving 500 pupils aged less than five to over twelve years. A sub-sample of 39.2% were from families affected by parental separation or divorce. Data were collected on the students' personal and family information, academic performance, emotional and social impact, support system and additional responses from teachers and parents. The results indicated a noticeable effect of family break-up on pupils' academic performance. About 70.4% of the students acknowledged their family situation as affecting their school performance, with 98.6% noting a worsening effect. Additionally, an overwhelming 97.4% experienced difficulties in school following their parents' separation or divorce, largely related to issues of focus, emotional disturbances, and absenteeism. In addition, students reported significantly altered relationships with their teachers (44.9% negatively affected), friends (42.3% negatively affected) and siblings (7.8% negatively affected). Teachers reported observing negative changes in academic performance (73.7%) and behaviour (59.6%) among students from broken homes. However, despite the perceived willingness to support these students (100%), the study shows that there are no adequate support systems in place at school (54.4% reported no such systems). The study provides an evidence-based plea for more effective support mechanisms in schools and at home to address the emotional, moral and financial needs of students from broken homes in order to improve their academic performance and overall well-being.

Keywords: Academic performance, broken marriage, emotional impact, primary school pupils

INTRODUCTION

The structure and dynamics of the family unit are instrumental in determining the holistic development of a child. Over the past few decades, several factors have resulted in changes to the traditional family structure, one of which is divorce or separation of parents, a phenomenon that has been on the rise globally (Amato, 2001). One of the vital aspects to be considered in the face of this change is the academic performance of children coming from broken homes. Children's academic performance is not solely determined by their intellectual abilities or classroom environment but is influenced by a multitude of factors. An important component of these factors is the family context, which includes the parents' marital status, socio-economic conditions, and family structure (McLanahan, 1997; Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000). The surge in the rates of divorce and separation has led to increasing interest in understanding the potential impact of these family changes on children's academic outcomes.

Broken homes can result in significant changes in the children's lives, such as changes in living arrangements, economic instability, and increased stress and emotional turmoil (Hetherington, 1999; Amato, 2000). These changes often lead to various adverse effects, including lower academic performance, behavioural problems, and poor socio-emotional wellbeing (Amato and Keith, 1991;

Sun and Li, 2002). Moreover, studies indicate that children from broken homes are more likely to experience difficulties in school and have lower educational attainment compared to their peers from intact families (Astone and McLanahan, 1991; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). Despite these global studies, there is a gap in the literature concerning the Nigerian context, especially regarding specific regions such as the Goronyo Local Government Area of Sokoto State. Given the cultural, economic, and socio-political differences, it becomes crucial to explore and understand the impact of broken marriages on primary school pupils in this region. It is equally critical to identify the support systems in place both at home and at school to cope with such situations.

This research aims to fill this gap by providing insights into the effects of broken marriages on primary school pupils' academic performance in Goronyo, Sokoto State, Nigeria. We also aim to uncover the support systems available for these pupils and to understand from the perspective of pupils, teachers, and parents/guardians how the school environment could be improved to better support these children. By doing so, this study intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of this issue, thereby informing policies and practices to better support children from broken homes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. This design allows for the collection of data at a specific point in time (Creswell, 2014). The choice of this design was informed by its suitability in assessing the pupils' academic performance and the status of their parents' marital relationship. The population of this study included all primary school pupils in Goronyo Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select 10 primary schools in the LGA. From each school, a random sampling technique was employed to select 50 pupils, resulting in a total sample size of 500 pupils. Eight-seven teachers and 80 parents/guardians were also recruited for this study. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire with three sections. The questionnaire was subjected to content and face validity checks by educational and psychological experts to ensure its suitability and relevance to the study's objectives. To establish reliability, a test-retest reliability method was used. The questionnaire was administered twice within a two-week interval to a group of 30 students not part of the main study. A high correlation coefficient ($r = .85$) demonstrated the instrument's reliability.

Data was collected over a period of four weeks. The study adhered to ethical standards in educational research. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and their informed consent was obtained. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher, with assistance from the class teachers.

Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic information and present the students' academic performance. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 25 (IBM, 2017).

RESULTS

The survey results provided in the tables above represent a comprehensive examination of the experiences of primary school students with divorced or separated parents. The data comes from various respondents, including the students themselves, their teachers, and their parents or guardians.

In (Table 1), we saw the basic demographics of the 500 students included in the study. The majority of the students are aged 5-9 years, with slightly more females than males. The distribution across school classes (Basic 1-6) is fairly even, though little more students are found in Basic 4. Importantly, 39.2% of the students indicated that their parents had separated or divorced.

In (Table 2), we further explore the 196 students whose parents are separated or divorced. The majorities of these children live with their mother post-separation (55.6%) and see their other parent occasionally (59.2%). The length of time since the separation or divorce varies, with most students experiencing it within the last 3 years (63.3%).

Table 3 explores academic performance. 70.4% of students feel their family situation affects their school performance, with the majority indicating a negative impact. The table also indicates that many students struggle with school after their parents' separation, with difficulties mainly concerning focus, emotional issues, and absenteeism. Furthermore, a significant number (39.8%) have had disciplinary action taken against them.

In (Table 4), the emotional and social impact of parental separation or divorce is addressed. Notably, most students (86.7%) report that the separation or divorce has negatively affected their mood or emotions. Furthermore, the majority have noticed changes in their behaviour or mood since the separation. Table 5 provides information on students' support systems. A significant majority of the students have siblings (71.9%), and most feel they can talk to their mother about their feelings (54.1%). Emotional support is the most desired type of support that students wish they were receiving to better cope with their situation.

Table 6 contains responses from the teachers of these students. A significant proportion of teachers noticed negative changes in both academic performance (73.7%)

Table 1: Personal information of pupils.

Personal Information	Frequency (n = 500)	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
Less than 5	35	7.0
5 – 7	189	37.8
8 – 9	226	45.2
10 – 12	42	8.4
Above 12	08	1.6
Gender		
Male	227	45.4
Female	273	54.6
Class		
Basic 1	44	8.8
Basic 2	89	17.8
Basic 3	74	14.8
Basic 4	119	23.8
Basic 5	88	17.6
Basic 6	86	17.2
Have your parents separated or divorced?		
Yes	196	39.2
No	304	60.8

Table 2: Family information of pupils from broken homes.

Family Information	Frequency (n = 196)	Percentage (%)
How long have your parents been separated or divorced?		
Less than a year	46	23.5
1 – 3 years	78	39.8
4 – 5 years	61	31.1
More than 5 years	11	5.6
Who do you presently live with?		
Father	73	37.2
Mother	109	55.6
Guardian/Relative	12	6.1
Others	2	1.0
How frequently do you see the parent with whom you don't primarily live with?		
Never	14	7.1
Rarely	28	14.3
Occasionally	116	59.2
Frequently	31	15.8
All the time	7	3.6

and behaviour (59.6%) in students from broken homes. Many teachers also observed that these students often miss school (49.1%) and participate less in class activities (47.4%). Finally, (Table 7) shares insights from the parents or guardians of these students. Of the 80 parents or guardians surveyed, 40% have experienced a separation or divorce. A large majority (71.9%) of those parents have noticed changes in their child's academic performance since the separation or divorce. It is also noteworthy that 48.8% of parents or guardians said that teachers or school officials have communicated concerns about their child's performance or behaviour.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the impacts of broken marriages on primary school pupils' academic performance in Goronyo Local Government Area of Sokoto State, Nigeria. Data were collected from a sample of 500 pupils, with the majority falling within the age bracket of 5-9 years, and a slightly higher female representation (54.6%) compared to males (45.4%). The distribution across classes was fairly even, with the most significant proportion of respondents being in Basic 4 (23.8%). Interestingly, nearly two-fifths of the sample (39.2%) reported experiencing parental separation or divorce. These demographic details are essential as they provide context for the subsequent findings and discussions. Research shows that academic outcomes can vary significantly depending on variables like age, gender, and even grade level (Flouri, 2006; Amato and Keith, 1991). Therefore, this distribution provides an essential backdrop against which the study's main findings can be understood. The prevalence of parental separation or divorce in this sample is noteworthy.

Table 3: Academic performance of pupils from broken homes.

Academic Performance	Frequency (n = 196)	Percentage (%)
What is your current average grade in school?		
Below 40%	11	5.6
40 – 49%	54	27.6
50 - 59%	59	30.1
60 – 69%	34	17.3
70% and above	38	19.4
Do you feel your family situation affects your school performance?		
Yes	138	70.4
No	58	29.6
If yes, how?		
Improved	2	1.4
Worsened	136	98.6
How has your interest in school and school activities changed since the separation or divorce?		
Increased	10	5.1
Stayed the same	29	14.8
Decreased	157	80.1
Have you had any difficulty in school since your parents separated/divorced?		
Yes	191	97.4
No	05	2.6
If yes, please specify (select all that apply to you) (n = 358)		
Focus	178	49.7
Emotional issues	123	34.4
Absenteeism	57	15.9
Others	00	0.00
Has there been any disciplinary action taken against you at school?		
Yes	78	39.8
No	118	60.2
How often do you complete your homework/assignments on time?		
Always	70	35.7
Most of the time	86	43.9
Occasionally	40	20.4
Rarely	0.00	0.00
Never	0.00	0.00
How would you rate your academic performance?		
Excellent	31	15.8
Good	123	62.8
Fair	36	18.4
Poor	6	3.1
If your parents were together, would you have performed better?		
Yes	145	74.0
No	13	6.6
I don't know	38	19.4

* = multiple response

Table 4: Emotional and social impact of broken marriages on pupils.

Emotional and Social Impact	Frequency (n = 196)	Percentage (%)
How has the separation or divorce affected your mood or emotions, if at all?		
Positively	0.00	0.00
No change	26	13.3
Negatively	170	86.7
How has the separation or divorce affected your relationships with friends, if at all?		
Positively	87	44.4
No change	26	13.3
Negatively	83	42.3
How has the separation or divorce affected your relationship with your teachers, if at all?		
Positively	66	33.7
No change	42	21.4
Negatively	88	44.9
Have you talked about the changes in your family with any adult in school (like your teacher or counselor)?		
Yes	105	53.6
No	91	46.4
Have you felt stressed or anxious because of your family situation?		
Yes	103	52.6
No	93	47.4
Have you noticed changes in your behavior or mood since your parents' separation or divorce?		
Yes	124	63.3
No	72	36.7

Table 5: Support system for pupils from broken homes

Support System	Frequency (n = 196)	Percentage (%)
Do you have any siblings?		
Yes	141	71.9
No	55	28.1
If yes, how has the family status change affected your relationship with them?		
Positively	79	56.0
No change	51	36.2
Negatively	11	7.8
Who do you feel you can talk to about your feelings?		
Father	52	26.5
Mother	106	54.1
Guardian/Relative	00	0.00
Teachers	25	12.8
Friends	13	6.6
Others	00	0.00
What kind of support do you wish you were receiving in school or at home to better cope with the situation? (Select all that apply to you) (n = 391)		
Financial	103	26.3
Emotional	162	41.4
Moral	93	23.8
Other	33	8.4

* = multiple responses

Table 6: Responses from the Teachers.

Variable	Frequency (n = 57)	Percentage (%)
What Class do you teach?		
Basic 1	9	15.8
Basic 2	10	17.5
Basic 3	10	17.5
Basic 4	8	14.0
Basic 5	10	17.5
Basic 6	10	17.5
How long have you been teaching?		
Less than one year	8	14.0
1 – 5 years	24	42.1
6 – 10 years	16	28.1
more than 10 years	11	19.3
Have you noticed any negative changes in the academic performance of students coming from broken homes?		
Yes	42	73.7
No	11	19.3
Not sure	4	7.0
Have you observed negative behavioral changes in these students?		
Yes	34	59.6
No	23	40.4
Not sure	00	0.00
Do these students participate less in class activities?		
Yes	27	47.4
No	30	52.6
Not sure	00	0.00
Do these students often miss school?		
Yes	28	49.1
No	20	35.1
Not sure	9	15.8
Are there support systems in place at school for students dealing with family disruptions?		
Yes	22	38.6
No	31	54.4
Not sure	2	3.5
Do you feel adequately prepared to support these students?		
Yes	57	100.00
No	00	0.00
Not sure	00	0.00

Table 7: Responses from the parents/guardian.

Variable	Frequency (n = 80)	Percentage (%)
How many children do you have in primary school?		
None	2	2.5
1	18	22.5
2	33	41.3
3	16	20.0
More than 3	11	13.8
Has there been a separation or divorce in your family?		
Yes	32	40.0
No	48	60.0
If yes, have you noticed changes in your child's academic performance since the separation or divorce?		
Yes	23	71.9
No	9	28.1
Have teachers or school officials communicated concerns about your child's performance or behavior?		
Yes	39	48.8
No	41	51.2
Has your child received any additional support (e.g., counseling, tutoring) since the family disruption?		
Yes	13	16.3
No	19	23.8
Not Applicable	48	60.00
How do you think the school could better support your child cope after separation/divorce?		
Yes	21	26.3
No	11	13.8
Not Applicable	48	60.00

A significant proportion (39.2%) reported having parents who had separated or divorced. This percentage is relatively high compared to global averages, which have been estimated at around 22% (Raley and Bumpass, 2003). This elevated rate suggests that a sizeable number of pupils may be at risk of the potential adverse effects of marital breakdown, which can include academic underachievement (Sun and Li, 2002), psychological distress (Strohschein, 2005), and behavioural issues (Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan, 1999). This relatively high prevalence aligns with recent trends of increasing divorce rates globally, as well as in Nigeria specifically (Amato, 2010; Dada and Idowu, 2020). The prevalence of broken homes in this sample, therefore, affords a valuable opportunity to explore the potential implications of marital dissolution on children's academic performance.

However, it is essential to note that parental divorce does not uniformly result in negative outcomes for children. The effects vary greatly depending on numerous factors, such as the amount of parental conflict pre and post-divorce, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and the socio-economic status of the family (Amato, 2001; Hetherington et al., 1998). Thus, while the present study's findings highlight a potentially high-risk group, it is important to interpret this data in light of these other determining factors, which the study may not fully account for.

Previous research has established a link between broken homes and children's academic performance, often revealing negative effects (Amato and Keith, 1991; Astone and McLanahan, 1991). This may be due to the potential emotional distress and instability associated with marital breakups, which could affect children's concentration, motivation, and overall learning capabilities (Sun and Li, 2002). Moreover, socio-economic factors may also play a role in the observed academic outcomes, as marital dissolution often results in financial hardship and changes in living conditions that could adversely affect children's education (Kim, 2011).

The pupils' current living situations and interactions with noncustodial parents further illustrate the diversity of the children's experiences post-separation or divorce. The most common duration for parents' separation or divorce appears to be between 1-3 years (39.8%), followed by 4-5 years (31.1%). This suggests that a substantial proportion of children are living through the relatively early stages of their parents' separation, a period often characterized by instability and adjustment to new family structures (Amato, 2001). It is also notable that only 5.6% of the children experienced a parental separation or divorce more than five years ago, indicating that the majority of children are dealing with the effects of their parents' broken marriage in the more immediate aftermath.

Regarding living arrangements, more children presently live with their mothers (55.6%) than with their fathers (37.2%). This is consistent with global trends where, post-separation, children are more likely to reside with their mothers (Seltzer, 1991). This statistic could have

significant implications for children's academic performance, as literature shows that the quality of the custodial parent-child relationship plays a crucial role in children's educational outcomes (Hetherington et al., 1998). Previous research indicates that children's living arrangements following parental separation or divorce can influence their academic outcomes. For instance, living with the mother may provide better emotional support, which in turn could impact academic achievement (Vanassche et al., 2014).

The frequency of contact with the noncustodial parent varies significantly. The majority of children (59.2%) only see their noncustodial parent occasionally, with smaller proportions rarely seeing their noncustodial parent (14.3%) or never seeing them at all (7.1%). Contact with nonresident parents has been found to contribute to children's well-being and academic success (Fabricius et al., 2016). Prior research has shown that maintaining a relationship with the non-residential parent can be essential for children's academic performance and overall development (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999). Therefore, the limited interaction could potentially have a negative impact on children's academic performance.

The results of this present study provide evidence for the claim that parental separation and divorce have negative implications for children's academic success and wellbeing (Amato, 2001). The vast majority of respondents (70.4%) reported that their family situation affects their school performance. This high prevalence signals a clear association between family structure changes and the ensuing academic difficulties experienced by pupils.

An overwhelmingly large proportion (98.6%) of those who felt affected said that their performance had worsened since their parents' separation or divorce. This resonates with previous research indicating that family transitions, such as parental separation and divorce, often lead to adverse academic outcomes (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale and McRae, 1998).

The decreased interest in school activities post-separation or divorce was reported by 80.1% of the students, which might be an indication of emotional distress that influences their academic engagement (Størksen et al., 2005). Similarly, a considerable number of students (97.4%) reported experiencing difficulties in school post-separation, including focus issues (49.7%), emotional issues (34.4%), and increased absenteeism (15.9%). These findings corroborate prior research that suggests parental separation or divorce often leads to declines in academic performance due to emotional turmoil, disrupted routines, and less parental involvement (Kim, 2011).

Interestingly, nearly 40% of the students reported having faced disciplinary action at school, which may suggest an impact on behaviour, possibly due to emotional upheaval associated with the broken marriage (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001). Though it is unclear if disciplinary action at school is directly linked to the divorce situation, research has suggested that children from disrupted families have higher rates of problem behaviour at school (Burt et al., 2008)

Students' self-rating of their academic performance shows that while a majority (78.6%) consider their performance good or excellent, there is still a noteworthy portion (21.5%) who think their performance is fair or poor. This finding may point towards a gap between perceived and actual academic performance, a common phenomenon in academic self-concept literature (Marsh, 1990).

Yet, when they were asked whether their performance would have been better if their parents were together, a significant proportion (74%) responded affirmatively. This indicates that while many students are managing to maintain relatively good academic performance, they perceive the family instability as a barrier to their academic potential (Sun and Li, 2002).

Although the findings of the study reveal an overall negative impact of parental separation or divorce on children's academic performance, it is crucial to note that individual experiences may vary based on various factors, such as the child's age at the time of separation, the level of conflict between parents, and the quality of the parent-child relationship (Hetherington, 1999).

The results of this study underscore the significant emotional and social impact of parental separation or divorce on primary school pupils. It highlights a critical facet of academic performance that often remains overlooked in traditional discourse, namely the influence of familial disruption on learners' emotional stability and social behaviour. The data indicates a majority of the respondents (86.7%) reported a negative effect on their mood or emotions as a consequence of the broken marriage. This is consistent with recent research (Amato, 2021), which indicates that divorce can lead to substantial emotional distress among children, with potential implications for their academic achievement. This emotional stress might stem from the unstable family environment, coupled with the lack of continuity and security. These findings align with previous studies asserting that family structure is a key determinant of children's educational outcomes (Amato, 2001; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Astone and McLanahan, 1991).

Moreover, 63.3% of pupils have noticed changes in their behaviour or mood since their parents' separation. This is consistent with studies highlighting behavioural changes, such as aggression and withdrawal, following divorce (Lansford, 2009). These changes may interfere with their school performance and overall well-being. This concurs with past studies that have consistently found that parental divorce can lead to emotional distress among children (Amato, 2010; Pedro et al 2017). The emotional instability can, in turn, affect their concentration and commitment to academic activities, thereby

affecting their academic performance.

In terms of the impact on relationships with friends, there is a more balanced spread. Interestingly, a significant portion of students (44.4%) reported a positive impact on their friendships. It is plausible that these children are benefiting from an enhanced support network of friends in response to the changes in their familial environment (Sandler et al., 2022). Meanwhile, a similar proportion of students (42.3%) reported a negative impact, possibly due to the emotional strain translating into less efficient social interactions. These divergent findings align with the research by Størksen, Røysamb, Moum, and Tambs (2005), which identified a complex interplay between the process of parental divorce and children's relationships with their peers. While some children may deepen their relationships with friends as a coping mechanism, others may find it challenging to maintain positive friendships due to the emotional turmoil they are experiencing. It could be speculated that the observed improvement might be due to increased empathy or understanding from peers, or a strengthened reliance on friendships as a source of emotional support. Yet, the negative impact on a sizable proportion underscores the importance of addressing this issue, as positive peer relationships have been shown to improve children's academic engagement and outcomes.

Similarly, the effect on the relationship with teachers shows a fairly even distribution. While 44.9% of pupils reported a negative effect, a substantial 33.7% perceived a positive influence. Teachers play an important role in the educational and emotional wellbeing of children (Hattie, 2009), and a disturbed relationship may have significant implications on the pupils' academic performance. This might suggest that some students find solace in their relationship with teachers or other adult figures at school, viewing them as additional sources of support (Kim, 2022).This is also reflected in the fact that over half of the students (53.6%) reported having talked about their family changes with an adult at school. Prior studies have reported similar findings (Lansford, 2009).

Stress and anxiety are prevalent, with 52.6% of students confirming they have felt stressed or anxious because of their family situation. These results indicate the need for school environments to be adequately equipped to handle emotional discussions and provide psychological support. This aligns with research highlighting the high incidence of anxiety disorders among children experiencing divorce (Størksen et al., 2021). These mental health concerns, if unaddressed, can affect concentration, motivation, and overall academic performance. These findings echo the assertion of many researchers that parental separation can result in increased stress, depression, and anxiety in children, affecting their ability to focus on their studies (Størksen et al., 2008).

The study findings underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive approach in educational environments to support pupils dealing with the fallout from a broken marriage. The insights shed light on the necessity of incorporating a robust psychological support system within schools, along with targeted educational strategies to counter the potential negative impacts on academic performance.

This research shows that a majority of the respondents have siblings (71.9%), and a significant proportion of these students (56.0%) reported a positive change in their relationship with their siblings post the family status change. This could be interpreted as the siblings finding solace and comfort in each other amidst the disarray caused by the disruption in their family structure (Patterson, 2002). Inversely, a small percentage (7.8%) reported a negative change, indicating that the family change may exacerbate existing tensions or generate new ones, possibly contributing to stress and emotional turbulence that might hinder academic performance. Previous research by Milevsky (2005) has suggested that siblings can serve as a source of support during parental separation, which might help explain the predominantly positive or neutral changes reported in this study.

In terms of emotional support, it is worth noting that a majority of the students (54.1%) expressed that they felt comfortable discussing their feelings with their mothers. This statistic may underscore the essential role that mothers often play as a source of emotional support in the context of family instability (Simons and Gordon, 2021). This preference could be because mothers often serve as primary caregivers in many societies, including Nigeria. Conversely, only 26.5% of pupils felt they could discuss their feelings with their fathers, which might suggest a need to encourage greater paternal involvement post-divorce (Cabrera et al., 2020). The low percentages of pupils who felt they could talk to their teachers (12.8%) or friends (6.6%) about their feelings indicate the potential for schools to increase the availability and accessibility of psychological support services, such as school counselling. This aligns with research highlighting the role of school and peer networks in children's coping strategies.

Regarding the support pupils wished to receive to better cope with their situation, emotional support was reported as the most desirable (41.4%), which underscores the psychological impact of parental separation on children (Amato, 2001). The need for financial support (26.3%) may reflect the economic challenges often faced by families after a marital breakdown. Respondents' wish for moral support (23.8%) might indicate a desire for guidance and ethical reinforcement in their changed family circumstances. The "Other" support (8.4%) option could encompass a range of needs not listed, which future research should seek to identify and explore. It implies that schools and other social services should consider both the psychological and economic needs of students from broken homes (Haveman and Wolfe, 1995). It may be beneficial to

provide targeted mental health support and perhaps financial assistance programs to these students to address the multifaceted challenges they face.

The majority of respondents (73.7%) noticed negative changes in the academic performance of students from broken homes, indicating a significant relationship between family structure and academic achievement. This is consistent with past research that suggests marital disruption often results in decreased academic performance (Amato, 2001). It could be hypothesized that the upheaval and instability caused by a broken marriage might affect a child's focus and motivation towards their academics. This aligns with existing literature that suggests children from broken families tend to struggle academically compared to their peers from intact families (Amato, 2001).

However, this negative impact on academic performance is not the only issue. A substantial number of teachers (59.6%) reported observing negative behavioural changes in these students, which again, is consistent with previous research suggesting that divorce can lead to several psychological, behavioural, and social problems in children (Lansford, 2009; Pryor and Rodgers, 2001). This could be attributed to the emotional stress and lack of structure or stability that students may experience in the event of a broken home (Kim, 2011). This result suggests that children may express their emotional distress through negative behaviours, which could potentially affect their academic progress and social interactions at school.

Interestingly, teachers had mixed observations about students' participation in class activities and their school attendance. While around half of the teachers reported that children from broken homes participate less and miss school more often, a significant proportion disagreed. This finding might indicate that the impacts of family disruptions on a child's school engagement and attendance can vary widely, depending on other mitigating factors such as individual resilience, the presence of supportive relationships outside the family, and community resources.

Alarmingly, more than half of the teachers (54.4%) reported a lack of support systems in place at school for students dealing with family disruptions. This lack of institutional support may exacerbate the challenges these children are facing and make it harder for them to succeed academically (Masten and Coatsworth, 1998; Cohen et al., 2002).

It is noteworthy that all the teachers felt adequately prepared to support these students, suggesting a high level of awareness and willingness among teachers to intervene and support students from broken homes. This indicates a potential gap between teachers' perceived competence and the actual resources or support available at the school level. This gap may lead to teacher burnout and decreased effectiveness in supporting these students. This finding points to the importance of teacher training and school-based interventions in helping children navigate the challenges of a broken home and underscores the need for more resources and policies that support teachers in this role.

From the respondents, 40% of parents/guardians reported having experienced a separation or divorce in their family (Table 7). This is higher than the national average in Nigeria, which, as of 2021, was around 30% (Oyebode, 2021). This could imply a greater prevalence of marital disruption in this region, potentially associated with socio-economic, cultural, or environmental factors specific to this area.

Among those who reported having experienced a separation or divorce in their family, a significant majority (71.9%) have observed changes in their child's academic performance following the family disruption. This finding aligns with previous research that suggests a link between parental separation or divorce and diminished academic performance among children (Amato, 2001; Biblarz and Gottainer, 2000; Potter, 2012).

Although close to half (48.8%) of the respondents reported that teachers or school officials have expressed concerns about their child's performance or behaviour, only a small proportion of parents (16.3%) indicated that their child had received additional support, such as counselling or tutoring, after the family disruption. This suggests a significant gap between the needs of these students and the support they are currently receiving. The need for schools to offer more robust post-separation support to pupils is further underscored by the fact that 26.3% of parents believed the school could do more to help their child cope following a separation or divorce.

The results align with existing research emphasizing the need for effective interventions in schools to support students dealing with parental divorce (Størksen et al., 2005). Notably, not all children from divorced families suffer academic setbacks (Hetherington, 2003), suggesting that individual and contextual factors, including the quality of parental care post-separation and the availability of school and community resources, may influence outcomes (Cavanagh and Huston, 2006).

In addition, this study emphasizes the need to provide more support to parents as they navigate their own emotions and help their children adjust during a difficult time. The fact that nearly 60% of parents indicated that additional support wasn't applicable could suggest that many parents are unaware of the available resources or do not believe their child needs such assistance, further highlighting the need for enhanced communication and outreach.

Conclusion

Broken marriages significantly impacted primary school pupils' academic performance and emotional well-being. It is therefore imperative to establish effective support

systems, both at home and school, to mitigate these effects and provide children with the necessary emotional and academic support. It is also crucial to bridge the gap between teacher perception and student experience to ensure the provision of adequate and necessary support to these students. Furthermore, considering the considerable percentage of students who feel their academic performance would have been better if their parents were together, it is important to involve parents/guardians in the process of creating supportive environments for the students.

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