

# Parent Marital Status Influence on Academic Performance in IT Subjects of in-School Adolescents in Nigeria.

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**ABSTRACT:** Globally, and for several decades, parent involvement has significant impact and influence on the child academic achievement, but children from divorced or geographically separated homes lack parental involvements that occur especially at home. This situation is worsened by the significant increase in the number of divorce cases in Nigeria over the past few years with 0.2% and 0.3% legally divorced men and women respectively and about 1% of couples being separated with a cumulative spousal separation rising to 14% across the country's population. The purpose of this study was to identify how parents' marital status (married and living together or divorced and geographically separated) influences the academic performance of their in-school adolescents in IT subjects in Nigeria. Enugu State of Nigeria was used as a case study. The Epstein Model (1987) was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. Data were collected from 720 senior secondary school students. Half (360) of the participants came from parents married and living together while the other half came from divorced or geographically separated parents. Results show that the mean academic performance in IT subjects among in-school adolescents from parents married and living together was significantly higher than those from divorced or geographically separated couples, ( $t=9.924$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). There was statistically significant dependence relationship between academic performance in IT subjects and parent marital status of in-school adolescents, ( $\chi^2 = 103.34$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Gender had no statistically significance influence on their academic performances, ( $\chi^2 = .806$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p=.977$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). The findings in this study provide direction for the future ways to close these gaps created by divorced or geographically separated homes.

**Keywords:** Parent's marital status, in-school, adolescents, IT, academic performance.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Several studies have made attempts to establish the impacts of divorce on the parents, children and close relatives. Despite the numerous research outputs, little studies attempted to establish the impact of divorce on academic performance of in-school adolescent in IT subjects, especially in Nigeria. IT is increasingly recognized as enablers of modern technological innovations and advancement. The increased and ubiquitous nature of IT innovations has further led to increased demand for good academic performances in IT subjects in schools as a necessary and sufficient pointer for continuity in the technological innovation, advancement, and societal values. Inability to maintain good relationship within the family may hinder parents' participation in their children's education thereby hindering their performance in school. Good parental relationships required to enhance excellent performances of their children in school are influenced by parents' marital status: married and living together or divorced and geographically separated (Ebong, 2015; Igbinosa, 2014). The purpose of this study was to identify if parents' marital status affect academic performance in IT subjects of in-school adolescents, and the degree of this relationship. The general IT problem postulated in this study was the poor academic performance in IT subjects of some in-school adolescents, possibly due to high incidence of divorce and geographical separation among married couples in Nigeria. The specific IT problem is that some parents lack strategies, practices, and value systems for good parenting and family children relationship which are enablers of excellent academic performances of in-school adolescents.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are addressed in this study.

- 2.1. Are there significant differences in the mean performance of in-school adolescents among the two classified marital status: married and living together, divorced or geographically separated?
- 2.2. To what extent does parental marital status affect academic performance in IT subjects of in-school adolescents?
- 2.3. To what extent does gender of in-school adolescents academic performance in IT subjects of in-school adolescents?

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

The Epstein Model (1987) was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study to provide guides and coherence in this empirical study. Epstein Model has been used by researchers to provide explanations about the phenomena (Sayer & Fine, 2011), and is based upon one or more theories that have already been tested (Cooke & Baxter, 2010; Stewart, 2013). Researchers have studied academic performance of children with the terminology and conception that reflects more of family-school relationships that included other family members and not just parents, but recognized grandparents, older siblings, and other family (Epstein, 2011; Miller, et al., 2013; Yamauchi, et al., 2017). Epstein's theory has been considered as an elaborate and ecological theory, specifically tied to family-school partnerships. Epstein (2011) claimed that her theory was based on Bronfenbrenner's and others' models of "natural, nested, and necessary connections between individuals and their groups and organizations" (Epstein, 2011, p. 26).

Epstein's theory also suggests that education should be open and involves more participation from parents and stakeholders and that schools should be educators should be willing to share responsibilities for student learning with their families. (Epstein, 2011). This theoretical framework calls for student-parents relationship that makes for good academic performances in school, and good attention to home-school communications. This home-school communication makes school more appreciated by students, families and teachers (Epstein, 2011; Fowler, 2017).

Epstein's theory can be used to establish shared responsibilities (Miller, et al., 2013) across all stakeholders, suggest methods for improved academic performance in schools, and research in the area of student-teacher-family participations. This property of Epstein's theory makes it to be the preferred theoretical model for this study which focuses on student-family relationship and

involvement in education of in-school adolescent academic performance.

### IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marital status is seen as a mediating enabler of social family condition and mental status (Wenting, et al., 2020), and considered as a significant factor that offers mental and physical conditions and social networks (Yamauchi, et al., 2017). required for good academic performance of children and in-school adolescents in IT subjects (Hilal, 2020). According to Hilal (2020), when parents are divorced or geographically separated, relationship issues in the parents' marriage may affect the father-child relationship, or cause inconsistency in the messages conveyed by mothers regarding the fathers thereby hindering maximum attention required of the child for maximum academic performances in school. Fatherhood is very vital in the academic upbringing of the child. Recent research findings claimed that mothers role either facilitate or inhibit the father-child relationship depending on the relationship that existed between father and mother (Hilal, 2020). When parents are geographically separated or divorced, the emotional bond between them becomes problematic, resulting in some negative impact on the father who is usually the guilty, thereby affecting the father-child relationship that manifests in the child's academic performance in school (Hilal, 2020).

Parents' participation in their children's education has significant impact on the academic performance of their children especially as it related to the marital status of parents (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012; Yamauchi, et al., 2017). Parents' participation in their children's education impacts their in-school adolescent students and brings about many academic, personal, and social benefits (Yamauchi, et al., 2017). Adolescent children whose parents participate actively in their education tend to have better attendance (Hatch, 2010), better academic performances in school (Daniels & Shumow, 2003), increased levels of student-teacher relationships (Pyle & Luce-Kapler, 2014), increased levels of satisfaction with school authorities (Daniels & Shumow, 2003), minimal negative behaviour reports from school (Yamauchi, et al., 2017), and higher grades especially in IT tests (Fowler, 2017). Through parents' participation, in-school adolescent members may become more productive in their school career and empowered to develop leadership and collaboration skills.

Globally, there is a rise in divorce cases. In America, a high divorce rate of 40 % was

recorded among couples marrying for the first time, while a higher rate of 60% and 70 % go for second and third marriages respectively (Khezri, et al., 2020). In Nigeria, significant increase in the number of divorce cases has been recorded over the past few years with 0.2% and 0.3% legally divorced men and women respectively and about 1% of couples being separated with a cumulative spousal separation rising to 14% across the country's population ( ). Academic performance of in-school adolescents has been found to be related to the marital status of parents (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007). Divorced and geographically separated parents have been reported to be less involved or participatory in their children education. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the academic performance of in-school adolescents is affected by the marital status of their parents: married and living together, divorced or geographically separated. Also examined in this study was whether academic performances of in-school adolescents from the two marital status classifications: married and living together, divorced or geographically separated; are affected by gender of adolescents.

Aside marital status as classified in this study, other factors that may affect academic performance of in-school adolescents such as student-parents relationship that makes for good academic performances in school, good attention to home-school communications, socio-economic status of parents, parents life satisfaction and working status. Others include parents' educational background, students' food intake or feeding habits, peer group effect, financial status of parents, unemployment, and other issues related to time availability (Pepin, et al., 2018), and other demographic factors that could account for marital status differences (Coltrane, 2000). In this study I took other influences on in-school adolescent academic performance for granted, and only concentrated on the effect of marital status. According to Denscombe (2013), such assumptions can be accepted as true, or are assumed to be true or at least plausible, without proof or verification. Also, most researchers agree that there is no correct absolute measurement to form a construct (Mood, et al., 1974). According to Mood, et al. (1974), when a coin is tossed, the probability of obtaining a head is 0.5, under the assumption that there are only two possible outcomes: head or tail. Under this assumption, mathematical systems have assumed a fair, true or unbiased coin, or a coin that will never stand on its own when tossed, thereby removing completely the third possibility aside head or tail, in the outcome space. But tossing a

coin and having the coin standing on itself is a possibility (Mood, et al., 1974). Geometry for example, deals with conceptual perfect circles, and lines with zero width (Mood, et al., 1974). But no one has ever drawn a line with zero width. Ideal situations are never exactly realized in practice, but these are common requirements in statistical, mathematical, and other systems (Kass, et al., 1974; Mood et al., 1974). Likewise, there are no absolute correct measurements to measure all influences of in-school adolescent performance in school, but measurements used are theoretically justified based on these assumptions.

## V. SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, I searched available databases for relevant research. Review was based on a literature search of online information obtained from the following international library databases: the ProQuest databases, ScienceDirect, government and nongovernmental organization reports, Crossref.org and other peer-reviewed journals. I chose quantitative methodology because this study is about measurements and generalization of relationships among variables. In qualitative methodology, data variables are numerically measured (Hesse-biber, 2016), and analyzed using mathematically based methods especially statistics to explain the phenomena (Yilmaz, 2013). Quantitative studies generally involve sampling methods that randomly select large representative samples (Abu-Auf, et al., 2016; Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016). Also, Quantitative studies are confirmatory in nature, meaning that their primary aim is to measure variables and to test hypotheses (Charalampous, et al., 2016), so as to make inferences, or generalizations, about a larger population (Kozioł & Arthur, 2011).

## VI. DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study were collected from 720 in-school adolescent students selected in Enugu state, Nigeria by simple random sampling from senior secondary classes within the strata selected using multi-stage sampling techniques. The marital status of students' parents categorized as married and living together, and divorced or geographically separated, were used as major key for random selection. Academic performance was measured using the last term average marks obtained in IT in the students' final examination. A good sampling technique is one that deploys strategies that are coherent, achievable, appropriate, and can explicitly and systematically address greater validity and stronger quality of the

study (Neuman, 2014; Robinson, 2014; Roy, et al., 2015). Therefore, to avoid bias and embarrassment, I interviewed a good number of students from each school selected, using questionnaires as the major instrument of data collection. Later I select equal number of in-school adolescents based on the two categories of parents' marital status. Probability sampling such as simple random sampling, stratified, cluster, and quota sampling etc., are characterized by well-defined sampling frame, randomized sample selection, and by the fact that each population unit has a known, calculable and non-zero chance of being included in the samples for study (Etikan et al., 2016). Probability sampling technique was adopted as much as possible. Samples showed a total of 720 students: 320 each from each of the parents' marital status categories

### VII. DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of data was facilitated by the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 20). Other widely available commercial statistical computer packages

for quantitative data analyses exist. They include (but not limited to ) Statistical Analysis Software (SAS), The Mathworks (MATLAB), R Foundation for Statistical Computing (R), and Stata. However, most researchers have utilized SPSS quantitative data analysis software to analyze and evaluate their quantitative data because of its power of case, variable capability and its flexibility of modular design. SPSS was adopted for its benefit of enhancing credibility building by making the research processes more transparent and replicable.

#### Research Question 3.1

Are there significant differences in the mean performance of in-school adolescents among the two classified marital status: married and living together, divorced or geographically separated?

Table 1 shows the t-test for equality of means of academic performance in IT subjects of in-school adolescent in Enugu, Nigeria among parents' marital status, and SPSS output generated from the analysis.

**Table 1.**

t-test for Equality of Means of Academic Performance in IT subjects of in-School Adolescent in Enugu, Nigeria Among Parents' Marital Status.

**Academic Performance Scores (%) of in-school adolescents in IT Subjects**

|                            |                          | N      | Mean | Std.  | Std. Error | Mean Diff. | Std. Error Diff. | t    | df    | Sig. (2-tailed) |      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------|------|-------|------------|------------|------------------|------|-------|-----------------|------|
|                            |                          |        |      | Dev.  |            |            |                  |      |       |                 |      |
| Academic Performance Total | Married                  | Living | 360  | 61.43 | 15.22      | .80        | 11.35            | 1.14 | 9.924 | 718             | .000 |
|                            | Together                 |        |      |       |            |            |                  |      |       |                 |      |
|                            | Divorced                 | or     | 360  | 50.08 | 15.46      | .81        | 11.35            | 1.14 |       |                 |      |
|                            | Geographically Separated |        |      |       |            |            |                  |      |       |                 |      |

(t = 9.924; mean<sub>1</sub>=61.43; mean<sub>2</sub>=50.08; p<0.01; Test is significant).

Table 1 shows that the mean of means of academic performance Scores (%) of in-school adolescents in IT subjects whose parents were married and living together was significantly higher than the mean of means from those whose parents were divorced or geographically separated.

#### Research Question 3.2

To what extent does parental marital status affect academic performance in IT subjects of in-school adolescents?

In Table 2, the relationship between parents' marital status and academic performance of in-school adolescents in Enugu, Nigeria is depicted together with the SPSS output generated from the analysis.

**Table 2.**

Relationship between Parents’ Marital Status and Academic performance of in-School Adolescents in Enugu, Nigeria

|                         |   | Academic Performance Scores (%) of in-school adolescents in IT Subjects |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------|---|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                         |   | 10-24   | 25-39 | 40-54 | 55-69 | 70-84 | 85-99 | Total |
| Parents’ Marital Status | <b>Married Living Together</b>              | 2   | 13    | 82    | 177   | 50    | 36    | 360   |
|                         | <b>Divorced or Geographically Separated</b> | 18  | 93    | 78    | 132   | 32    | 7     | 360   |
|                         | <b>Total</b>                                | 20  | 106   | 160   | 309   | 82    | 43    | 720   |

( $\chi^2 = 103.34$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; Test is significant; coefficient of variation (cv) =0.1255

Analysis results in Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant dependence relationship between in-school adolescent academic performance in IT subjects and parental marital status ( $\chi^2 = 103.34$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The computed coefficient of variation that measures the degree of dependence was calculated as 12.55%. The coefficient of variation (cv) measures the degree of relationship between the two variables and is given by the formula  $cv=\sqrt{(\chi^2/(\chi^2 + n))}$ , where  $\chi^2$  is the computed chi-

square value, and n is the sample size. From results,  $cv=0.1255$  or 12.55%, which implies that about 12.55% of the variations or dependence in academic performance of in-school adolescents can be attributed to parental marital status.

**Research Question 3.3**

To what extent does gender of in-school adolescents’ academic performance in IT subjects of in-school adolescents?

**Table 3.**

Relationship between of in-School Adolescents gender and their Academic performance in IT subjects

|       |        | Academic Performance Scores (%) of in-school adolescents in IT Subjects |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------|--------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       |        | 10-24   | 25-39 | 40-54 | 55-69 | 70-84 | 85-99 | Total |
| SEX   | Male   | 9   | 43    | 67    | 137   | 36    | 20    | 312   |
|       | Female | 11  | 63    | 93    | 172   | 46    | 23    | 408   |
| Total |        | 20  | 106   | 160   | 309   | 82    | 43    | 720   |

( $\chi^2 = .806$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p=.977$ ;  $p>0.05$ ; Test is not Significant).

Table 3 shows the relationship between of in-school adolescents’ gender and their academic performance in IT subjects together with the SPSS output generated from the analysis.

As shown in Table 3, Academic Performance Scores (%) of in-school adolescents in IT Subjects is not related or affected by gender as test of relationship between gender and academic performance was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = .806$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p=.977$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

**VIII. CONCLUSION**

The results obtained from this research attempted to establish the fact that in-school adolescents whose parents are married and living together perform better academically in IT subjects than in-school adolescents whose parents are

divorced and geographically separated. The findings of the study shows that parents who are married and are living together had significant positive influences on in-school adolescent academic performance in school. Results show that the mean academic performance in IT subjects among in-school adolescents from parents married and living together was significantly higher than those from divorced or geographically separated couples, ( $t=9.924$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). When married parents are living together, they seem to constitute essential determinants of academic performance of in-school adolescents. This findings may be helpful for the parents and teachers in understand the importance of married parents living together in order to leverage better academic success for their children. Results also show that a significant dependence



relationship or strong association exists between academic performance and parent marital status of in-school adolescents, ( $\chi^2 = 103.34$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). One of the silent variables in this study was gender. Gender had no statistically significance influence on their academic performances, ( $\chi^2 = .806$ ;  $df=5$ ;  $p=.977$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). The findings in this study provide direction for the future ways to close these gaps created by divorced or geographically separated homes. Findings may also encourage married couples to imbibe good practices within the marriage that will empower living together in marriage, thereby impacting better performances of their children in school.

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