

A Comparative Study of the Effect of Family Types on Social Adjustment of Adolescent in Aba, Abia State

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to compare the influence of family type on adolescent social behavior in Aba Metropolis of Abia State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. A survey research design was adopted for the study, 600 adolescents were purposively selected from 17 Secondary school in Aba Metropolis and used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged Single Parent and Adolescent Social Adjustment Questionnaire (SPASAQ). The instrument had four sections A – D and 32 items. The instrument was validated by three experts and the reliability coefficient of 0.80 was high enough to guarantee the instrument reliable for use in the study. Data obtained was analysed using descriptive statistics, frequency and Mean while the hypotheses were tested using t-test. Findings revealed that single parenting had negative influence on parent-adolescent relationship and sibling-sibling relationship. The result of the hypotheses showed that there is a significant difference between family type and parent-adolescent relationship and adolescent-teacher relationship. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that irrespective of the family type, parents should build healthy relationship with their adolescents to curb anti-social behaviour.

Keywords: Family type; Adolescents; Social Adjustment; parent-adolescent relationship

1. Introduction

Social adjustment is a type of relationship which involves the accommodation of the individual and circumstances in his social environment for the satisfaction of his need or motives (Day, 2002). Failure to adjust appropriately to environmental needs results in adjustment disorders. Social adjustment incorporates components such as the ability to interact with others, interpersonal and human relationships, the ability to adapt oneself to social activities, as well as the ability to cope with laid down standards of behaviour, which entails conforming to the rules and regulations of the society. Douthitte (2003) disclosed that a socially adjusted person is one who is able to master challenges, interact with parent, siblings and with his environment, and develop good moral standards and conscience, as well as deal appropriately with anxiety and conflict.

Adolescents generally are bothered with problems of emotional and social adjustment to some degree, although the problems are not usually too severe or numerous enough to produce the kind of gross disturbances that underlie or accompany chronic problem behaviour. These behavioural problems are of great concern to parents, teachers, caregivers not merely because some types are disruptive, but also because whether aggressive or passive, they are likely to interfere with family relationship and students' learning.

In Nigeria just as it is around the world, adolescents are raised in different family types from the conventional nuclear family where two parents exist to other family forms such as the single parent setting. Some families are managed by only one parent, which is described as single parenthood. This may be caused by death of spouse, separation, divorce, unwanted pregnancy and adoption (Kewswet and Dapa, 2010). Although a two-parent family does not necessarily guarantee happiness, adjustment and well-behaved children or adolescent, nor does single parent family guarantee the opposite, studies show that lack of adequate parenting has been known to result in adolescent problems; that adolescent from intact home, have model for identification, are less delinquent, exhibit less non-compliant and deviant behaviour and are better adjusted to life than those from single parent homes (Amadi, 2011; Hetherington and Stanley-Hagan, 2002 In Santrock, 2005). Researches indicate that adolescents from single parent families' show poorer adjustment, are more likely to have academic problems, exhibit high rates of antisocial behaviour and emotional disorders, indulge in sexual promiscuity, take drugs and have low self-esteem. They are also found to be easily lured into thuggery and other vices like stealing and truancy (Kembe, 2005; Nwali, 2002 In Igba, 2006).

Cobb (2000) however, observed that parental characteristics tend to influence the adolescents relationship with others. Adolescents' social behaviour and attitudes are acquired largely through identification with or the imitation of parents. An adolescent who feels loved by his parents may likely develop similar feelings when in relationship with siblings and peers (Walker, 2002) whereas, adolescents who feel neglected are likely to develop anti-social behaviour due to the feeling of insecurity. If a child feels unwanted and uncared for he/she is bound develop feelings of loneliness.

Research also reveals that a moderate level of parental closeness enhances student-teacher's relationship. Larso (2000) stated that a healthy parent-child relationship has a great significance in establishing a healthy teacher-student relationship. Therefore, if parents are close to their children, that kind of closeness may also emerge between them and their teachers. Goode (1989) revealed that substantial majority of single parents are mothers, and that the type of family structure determines the social life of the child, children from single parent families may therefore be lacking in some areas of social life which may result in some form of maladjustment. It is on the basis of the influence of family type on adolescent social adjustment that the researchers carried out a comparative study of family type on adolescents' social adjustment in Aba, Abia State of Nigeria.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the influence of family type on social adjustment of adolescents by comparing adolescents from single parent and intact families in Aba metropolis. The study specifically investigated the influence of family type (single parent and intact homes) on adolescents'

- (i) parent -adolescent relationship,
- (ii) sibling-sibling relationship,
- (iii) adolescent-teacher relationship,

1.2. Research Questions

The study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Does family type (single parent and intact home) have any influence on adolescents' parent- adolescent relationship?
2. Does family type (single parent and intact home) have any influence on adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship?

1.3. Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference on the Mean score values of adolescents from single parents and those of intact families on parent-adolescent relationship.
2. There is no significant difference on the Mean score values of adolescents from single parent and intact families on adolescent-teacher relationship.

2. Methodology

Design: The survey research design was used for this study. this design was most suitable as it allows the researchers to examine an already operative situation in the population using a representative sample.

Study Area: The study was conducted in Aba Metropolis of Abia State, Nigeria. Aba is the commercial nerve of the State and has concentration of people from other states of the Federation residing in it and participating in trading owing to the presence of Ariaria International market. The city has a current estimated population of 4 million inhabitants.

Population of the Study: The population of the study consisted of all adolescent students of Senior Secondary II, reared by single parents, and those from intact families in Aba metropolis of Abia State. There were seventeen (17) senior secondary schools with five thousand six hundred (5,600) students (Zonal Educational Management Board, SEMB, Aba).

Sample size and Sampling Technique: A total of 600 adolescents were selected and constituted the sample size for the study. Cluster sampling technique was adopted because of the geographical spread of the study area. The two Local Government Areas (Aba North and Aba South) that make up Aba Metropolis were designated as cluster 1 and cluster 2 respectively. From the two clusters, purposive sampling technique was further adopted for the selection of five senior secondary schools from each of the clusters – cluster 1 and cluster 2. The choice of these schools was informed by the fact that they have senior secondary II, which is the focus group. Consequently, a total of ten senior secondary schools were selected from the clusters – cluster 1 and cluster 2. In each of the ten senior secondary schools, three arms (A, B, C) were selected using simple random sampling technique. With the assistance of the class teachers, the researchers also selected twenty (20) adolescents from each of the three arms (A, B, C), using simple random sampling method. Thus, ten students from the single parent and ten for the intact families were chosen. From this exercise a total of sixty (60) adolescents comprising 30 adolescents from single parent and 30 from intact families were purposively selected.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire entitled "Single Parenting and Adolescents' Social Adjustment Questionnaire" (SPASAQ). The questionnaire comprised four sections A to D and 32 items. Section A had six questions which sought to determine the personal characteristics of the respondents; section B had ten statements which elicited responses on issues relating to family type and adolescents' parent-adolescent relationship. Items in section C were eight in number and were geared towards obtaining information on family type and adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship; while section D had eight items which sought to obtain information on family type and adolescents-teacher relationship. The items on the questionnaire were rated using a four-point scale of SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree; SD= Strongly Disagree and D= Disagree. Mean values above 2.00 were accepted while Mean values below 2.00 were rejected.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument: The validation of the instrument was done by three experts in cognate disciplines/departments related to the study; Home Economics, Educational Psychology and Mathematics and Statistics, University of Uyo. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.80. This value was high enough and therefore made the instrument reliable for use in the study.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis: The researchers trained three research assistants to assist in the collection of data. The Guidance and Counsellor teachers in each of the schools assisted in the distribution and collection of the questionnaire from the students, thus the questionnaires were given out and collected immediately after they had been filled. The research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and Mean. While the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistical analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

Research Question 1: Does family type (single parent and intact family) have any influence on parent-adolescent relationship?

Table 1: Influence of family type on parent-adolescent relationship

S/N	Parent-Adolescent Relationship indicators	Adolescents from Single Parent Families		Adolescents from Intact Families	
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std
1.	My parent allows me to go to school with empty stomach.	2.5	2.02	2.29	1.97
2.	My parent complains of lack of money to pay my fees.	2.19	1.95	2.15	1.92
3.	My parent always buys all my school needs.	2.15	1.91	2.79	1.86
4.	My parent exhibits love to me at home.	2.56	1.94	2.80	1.87
5.	My parent buys clothes for me at home and school.	2.70	1.7	3.00	1.67
6.	I talk to my parents.	2.36	1.93	3.30	1.63
7.	I like my parents	2.46	1.92	3.40	1.92
8.	I learn a lot of things from my parents	2.27	1.91	2.70	1.70
9.	I depend on my parents to provide all my needs.	2.40	1.91	3.50	1.00
10.	My parents use corporal punishment on me whenever I do anything wrong	2.16	1.94	2.33	1.92
	Grand Mean	2.38	1.91	2.83	1.68

Table 1 presents the Mean score values on family type and parent-adolescent relationship as perceived by adolescent of single parents and intact families in Aba metropolis. The result reveals that adolescent from single parent homes recorded a grand Mean of 2.38 (SD = 1.9) indicating a negative interaction pattern among single parent families. While adolescents from intact families had a grand Mean of 2.83 (SD = 1.68) showing a positive parent-adolescent relationship.

Research Question 2: Does family type (single parent and intact home) have any influence on adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship?

Table 2: Influence of family type on adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship

S/N	Parent-Adolescent Relationship indicators	Adolescents from Single Parent Families		Adolescents from Intact Families	
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std
1.	I enjoy sleeping and eating with my sibling(s)	1.96	1.90	3.40	1.22
2.	I believe my sibling(s) love me genuinely	2.31	1.86	3.30	1.63
3.	I share my secrets with my sibling(s)	2.19	1.95	2.56	1.90
4.	I talk freely with my sibling(s)	2.46	1.94	2.70	1.70
5.	I am not close to my sibling(s)	2.40	1.91	2.80	1.87
6.	I get jealous, envious and suspicious of my sibling(s) most times	2.56	1.90	2.56	1.90
7.	I enjoy playing with my sibling(s)	2.28	1.92	3.46	1.09
8.	My sibling(s) always stand by me when I am in trouble	2.16	1.94	3.50	1.00
	Grand Mean	2.29	1.92	3.05	1.54

Table 2 shows the influence of family type on adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship in the study area. The result indicated that the grand Mean of adolescents' from single parent families was (2.29) indicating poor adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship whereas the grand Mean of adolescents' from intact home was (3.05) showing healthy adolescents' sibling-sibling relationship.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference on the Mean score values of adolescents from single parents and those of intact families on parent-adolescent relationship.

Table 3: t-test Statistical analysis on the relationship between family type (single parent and intact home) and parent-adolescent relationship

Respondents	Parent- adolescent Relationship						Decision
	n	Mean	sd	df	t-cal	t-crit	
Group from Intact Families	300	2.83	1.67	598	3.07*	1.96	Significant*
Group from Single parent	300	2.38	1.91				

p =0.05 level of significance

Table 3 shows the t-test statistical analysis of the relationship between family type (Intact families and Single parent) and parent-adolescent relationship. The calculated t-value of 3.07 was greater than the critical t- value of 1.96 at 598 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the observed difference is real. The result shows a significantly higher Mean score in favour of the group of adolescents from the intact families than those from single parent families. This result therefore caused the null hypothesis to be rejected and the alternate one accepted that is, there is a significant difference between family type (single parent and intact home) and parent-adolescent relationship.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant difference between family type (single parent and intact homes) on adolescent-teacher relationship.

Table 4: t – Test of the relationship between family type (single parent and intact home) and adolescent-teacher relationship

Respondents	n	Mean	sd	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Group from intact Families	300	3.15	1.45	598	6.01*	1.96	Significant*
Group from single parent families	300	2.32	1.9				

p =0.05 level of significance

Table 4 shows the t-test statistical analysis of the relationship between family type (intact families and single parent families) on adolescent – teacher relationship. The calculated t-value of 6.01 is greater than the critical t- value of 1.96 at 598 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the observed difference is real. The result shows a significantly higher Mean score in favour of the group of adolescents from the intact families than those from single parent families. This result therefore, caused the null hypotheses to be rejected and the alternate one accepted which implies that there is a significant difference between family type and adolescent-teacher relationship.

4. Discussion of Findings

Adolescent is a critical period in development that requires adjustment in all areas; physical, socio-emotional, cognitive amongst others. Social adjustment during adolescent is necessary because a mal-adjusted adolescent is viewed as deviant in the society. Adolescents are reared in different family types; from the conventional nuclear family also known as intact homes to other family forms currently emerging around the world such as single/lone parents, same sex amongst others. The characteristic of the family where an adolescent is reared has a significant influence on his/her ability to interact within and outside the family setting. The result of the study shows that adolescents from single parent families have relational inadequacies with their parents, siblings and teachers. The findings of this study supports the views of Santrock (2005); Kembe (2005); Igba (2006) and Walker (2002) who posit that adolescents reared in single parent families lack role model for imitation and adequate parental care and supervision and are therefore predisposed to poor social adjustment within and outside the family setting, and are more likely to have academic problems, exhibit high rates of antisocial behavior and emotional disorders, indulge in sexual promiscuity, take drugs and have low self-esteem. They are also found to be easily lured into thuggery and other vices like stealing and truancy. The result however, showed positive inclinations towards adolescents social adjustments based on the parameters measured in the study (parent-adolescent, adolescent-sibling and adolescent-teacher relationships) thus re-emphasizing the unequivocal relevance of rearing children and adolescents in intact families to forestall social maladjustment.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that family type has significant relationship on adolescents' social adjustment. Single parenting has negative influence on adolescents' social adjustment with

their parents, sibling and teachers whereas adolescents reared in intact homes relate satisfactorily with their parents, sibling and teachers.

Recommendations

The researchers therefore make the following recommendations:

- i) Single parents with adolescent children need to show and teach their children healthy patterns of interactions so that they can bridge the gap that their status may impact on their adolescents.
- ii) Couples should strive to resolve their differences and avoid divorce which subsequently exposes their adolescent children to social maladjustment.
- iii) Adolescent from single parent families should connect themselves to mentors and role models of the gender missing in their family and learn from such persons how to be socially adjusted in the society.

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