

**IMPACT OF BROKEN HOMES ON ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study was carried out specifically to find out the commonality of students in secondary schools from broken homes, establish whether such family background had an effect on their school performance, and submit ways such students can be helped to improve their academic performance. This study employed a survey design utilizing a simple random sampling methodology. The population sample consisted of teachers and students from senior secondary schools within Mbaitoli Local Government Area, Imo State. This approach ensured that the selection of participants was unbiased and representative of the broader population, thus enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. In determining the sample size, the researcher used 266 respondents with 259 validated. A self-constructed and validated questionnaire was utilized for data collection, and statistical analysis was performed using frequency tables and mean scores. The findings revealed that broken homes tend to contribute to a negative flagging on the affected students' academic performance. It is therefore recommended that married people should think about the implications of the negative effect that broken relationship can have on the emotional, academic, social, and educational performance of their children and wards in the long and short term. The author is of the opinion that schools should provide accessible and well-resourced counselling services with trained and motivated professionals who can support students' emotional and psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Broken Homes, Parents, Senior Secondary Students

## **INTRODUCTION**

A home is defined as a place of residence, which can include a house, flat, or any other type of lodging where an individual lives with their family, whether that family is intact or broken (Hornby, 2000; Kolawole, 2019; Mayowa, 2021; Akinde & Akinleke, 2024). It is a known fact that when both spouses fulfil their supposed or agreed responsibilities towards the children or ward, it will positively affect the ward's emotional and physical wellness to a greater extent (Oladimeji, 2012). The father is expected to provide the financial resources necessary for the child's educational improvement, while the mother is expected to aid the father in accomplishing these goals (Omoruyi, 2014; Saikia, 2017). In a situation where either of the parents is dead, the youngster will be hampered in performing well in their studies, unlike in the reverse scenario where both parents live in harmony and contribute to the educational well-being of their children/wards, thereby avoiding emotional crises such as melancholy, frustration, low self-esteem, and inferiority complex (Akamolafe & Olorunfemi-Olabisi, 2011; Akinde & Akinleke, 2024).

Gender and geography can be used to analyse how a child's achievement is affected by a broken home. Both male and female children are likely to experience the negative effects of a dysfunctional home life on their academic performance. Geography affects a student's academic performance in addition to gender (Uloko, 2008). Compared to their rural counterparts, children from dysfunctional households who reside in urban areas perform better. Children form affections for their siblings, friends, classmates, teachers, and other adults in their lives when they see their parents living together in harmony. Attending school and participating in class activities will bring them great joy. As a result, happy homes produce happy kids, and happy kids help students achieve better academic results (Unimna & Okoli, 2008; Uwaifo, 2008).

In our context, it is safe to say that a broken family is one that is essentially compromised due to divorce, separation, the death of one of the spouses, or irreconcilable disagreements. According to Akomolafe & Olorunfemi-Olabisi (2011), a broken family is one wherein the dad and mom no longer stay collectively due to unresolved conflicts, thereby life becomes more challenging for the youngsters, mother, and father because of constrained economic resources, restructuring of everyday routines, and version to new dwelling patterns. The majority of youngsters from broken families have the tendency to be afflicted by emotional crises like frustration, a distraction from academics, reduced self-esteem, thuggery, examination malpractice, prostitution, and other negative social vices (Ichado, 1998; Maimuna, 2018; Nnaoma, 2018; Okpevra & Okpevra, 2022).

A student's overall performance (in class, on assignments, and on internal and external tests determines their instructional success on a chosen or popular academic assignment is measured by their academic accomplishment (Tor-Anyiam, 2004; Tenibaje, 2011). In Nigeria, a student's overall performance in class, on assignments, and on internal and external tests determines their instructional success. However, there is no universally accepted metric for evaluating students' progress in learning. It is impossible to overestimate the impact of the type of family the student comes from on their academic achievement, even though many factors influence their success in school. Tension, conflict, animosity, and instability within the home make it an antagonistic emotional haven. If it is not addressed immediately, it could escalate into hostility, conflict, and warfare leading to broken families (Yara & Tunde-Yara, 2010; Tenibaje, 2009). The ongoing emergence of those issues results in a disturbance of those children's awareness and academic proficiency (Ward, Stoker & Murray-Ward, 1996; Guler & Erkal, 2013).

Broken homes have become more common in Nigeria due to the country's fastest-growing family structure. Despite efforts by the government, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, conventional institutions, marriage counsellors, and non-secular institutions to encourage balance and stability in marriages among Nigerian households and couples generally, and Imo country specifically, no noteworthy outcomes were observed. According to Wiseman (2018), students from dysfunctional homes occasionally exhibit shallowness and a negative self-concept, as well as emotional issues (despair, frustration, and de-motivation). They also lose emotional support. According to Ebieren and Dorgu (2014), those scholars also show signs of maladaptive behaviours. Each of those factors influences college students' instructional underachievement. Breakups in families can have an impact on college students' academic achievement. Therefore, an empirical investigation of the incidence of broken families on the academic satisfaction of senior secondary college students in Imo State is the aim of this study. In an earlier work, Chineke & Chidiezie-Chineke (2023) had investigated the effect of single parenthood on the academic performance of secondary school students. According to Uloko (2008), a home is an apartment where a family resides. According to

Hornby (2000), the home is also thought of as a family living together and acting as such. Accordingly, the idea of home encompasses not only a family's living arrangements but also their behaviour as a unit. It is the smallest social institution in society, and its shared traits are further explained as shared housing, economic collaboration, and production (Akem and Ortese, 2004; Tor-Anyiam, 2004; Yara and Tundeyara 2010). A household where the family resides as a single unit is referred to as the "home.". The family, which consists of the mother, father, and kids, serves as the child's initial socialization environment.

### **Perception of Broken Homes**

Earlier workers (Achilike, 2017; Augustina, Joshua & Ojo, 2018; Okafor & Egenti, 2021) assert that dismantling a family should entail certain crises that result from misunderstandings, mistreatment, non-acceptance, etc. As a result of the crises that are occurring, parents are divorcing or separating, sons or daughters are being disposed of, and any family members are being left at home without regard for their interests or health. It is debatable whether or not every divorce is a broken family when the family is still functioning properly. Even without a mother, father, or other family members, many families manage to function conditionally and methodically (Nwachukwu, 1998). Individuals may not appreciate being labelled as "broken," particularly when considering the implications of broken homes. Such circumstances can stem from both natural and anthropogenic causes. While divorce and partner separation are human-induced factors, the death of a spouse represents a natural occurrence. In their analysis, Abrantes and Casinillo (2020) delineate several prevalent reasons for divorce, including incompatibility, the treatment of one partner as subservient, the presence of extramarital relationships, inadequate time commitment to the partnership, and unwarranted involvement from in-laws in marital affairs. Kalimaposo (2008) further elucidates the predominant causes of divorce within African societies, which include:

- i. Adultery (a nearly universally recognized issue)
- ii. Domestic violence (including cruel and inhumane treatment)
- iii. Inappropriate selection of partners
- iv. Infertility (impotence)
- v. Interference from parents

### **Frustration – Aggression Theory:**

In 1939, Dollard, Doob Miller, Mower, and Sear created the theoretical framework used in this study and shared it in their monograph on aggression. The principal hypothesis was supported by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sear (1939), who stated that aggressive behaviour always precedes it. In this context, frustration was defined as the thwarting of a goal response, which was understood to be the last reinforcement. In summary, the theory showed that (a) frustration is always the foundation of aggression and (b) aggression always results from frustration. According to the theory's context, people become frustrated when they are unable to accomplish their goals, which can lead them to look for ways to vent their frustration. This explains why frustration is the primary cause of conflict. According to Friedman and Mendel (2011), this idea is relevant to broken homes because it can prevent the impacted children from reaching necessary levels of fulfilment, which can lead to frustration with the ensuing aggression and emotional problems that may impair their ability to concentrate in class.

The key objective of this work is to scrutinise the effect of broken homes on the academic performance of senior secondary school students via:

- i. finding out the frequency of such students,
- ii. Determine whether or not such a family setting has an effect on their educational average overall performance,
- iii. Examine ways such students can be helped to improve in their academic performance.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Ho: Coming from a broken home has no negative effect on the academic performance of the student

H1: Coming from a broken home has a negative effect on the academic performance of the student

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. How many secondary school students come from broken homes?
2. Does academic performance suffer as a result of broken homes?
3. How do broken homes affect students in secondary schools?
4. How can students from broken homes be supported to succeed academically?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In determining the sample size, the researcher used 266 respondents, with 259 validated. The sample size was chosen with the study's time and resource constraints in mind. Purposive sampling and a basic random technique were used to select respondents. Through the use of a few chosen senior secondary schools in Mbaitoli LGA, Imo State, Nigeria, this study looked at the impact of broken homes on the academic performance of these students. The study's population is made up of instructors and students. The researcher used the convenient sampling method in this study to calculate the sample size (Ward, Stoker, and Murray-Ward, 1996; Ebuaram, 2009). The questionnaire was employed as the research tool in this investigation. Participants who were enrolled were given a survey with a number of questions. The questionnaire had two sections: the first asked about the respondents' personal information or demographics, and the second section addressed the research questions and was in accordance with the study's goals. Respondents had to check the corresponding column in order to respond. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire. Primary and secondary sources were employed as the two methods of data collection. In contrast to the secondary sources, which include textbooks, the internet, journals, published and unpublished articles, and government publications, the primary sources were questionnaires.

### **Data Confidentiality**

The researcher took steps to preserve the confidentiality of study participants and the data collected from them.

### Data Analysis Methodology

The response of the sampled population was analysed using the mean and standard deviation, which provided answers to the research questions.

In analysing the data collected, a mean score was used to achieve this. The four-point rating scale was given values as follows; SA = Strongly Agree (4), A = Agree (3), D = Disagree (2), SD = Strongly Disagree (1) with the decision rule arrived at using the formula:  $(4+3+2+1)/4 = 2.5$  therefore any score that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any score that was below 2.5 was rejected. The study used 2.5 as the cut-off mean score for making any decision in the study with the Chi-square statistical method used to test the hypothesis.

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Validity referred to here is the degree or extent to which an instrument actually measures what it is intended to measure. An instrument is valid to the extent that is tailored to achieve the research objectives. The researcher constructed the questionnaire for the study and submitted it to some evaluation expert colleagues who used their intellectual knowledge to critically, analytically and logically examine the instrument's relevance of the contents and statements and then made the instrument valid for the study. The reliability of the research instrument was determined. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. A co-efficient value of 0.68 indicated that the research instrument was relatively reliable. According to (Akinde & Akinleke, 2024), the range of reasonable reliability is between 0.67 and 0.87. Regarding ethical considerations, consent was obtained from all study participants before they were enrolled in the study. Permission was sought from the relevant authorities to carry out the study.

The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents as well as the interpretation of the information gathered. A total of two hundred and sixty-six (266) questionnaires were administered to respondents, of which only two hundred and fifty-nine (259) were returned and validated. For this study, a total of 259 were validated for the analysis.

### Reviewing the Research Questions

**Question 1:** How many secondary school students come from broken homes?

**Table 1:** Respondent on Question 1

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High	117	45.2
Low	106	40.9
Undecided	36	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>

From the responses obtained, as expressed in the table above, 45.2% said high, 40.9% said low, and the remaining 13.9% were undecided.

**Question 2:** Does academic performance suffer as a result of broken homes?

**Table 2:** Respondent on Question 2

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	141	54.44
No	89	34.36
Undecided	29	11.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>

From the responses obtained, as expressed in the table above, 54.44% said yes, 34.36% said no, and 11.19% were undecided.

**Question 3:** How do broken homes affect students in secondary schools?

**Table 3:** Respondents to Question 3

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	SD	DECISION
1	Students from broken homes have slowed academic development.	200	30	15	14	4	2.57	Accepted
2	Students from broken homes have scored lower in academic success	190	49	15	5	3.4	2.53	Accepted
3	Students from broken homes have lower self-esteem and are sometimes in emotional distress	175	79	5	-	3.9	2.74	Accepted
4	Students from broken homes become and end up being dropouts	155	70	24	10	3.4	2.56	Accepted
5	Students from broken homes have difficulty forming and maintaining relationships with peers.	100	130	15	14	3.9	2.53	Accepted

Table 3 above shows the effects of broken homes on students in secondary schools. All the items (item1-item5) are accepted, as the respective items (item1-item5) have mean scores above 2.50.

**Question 4:** How can students from broken homes be supported to succeed academically?

**Table 4:** responses on question 4

S/ N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	SD	DECISION
1	Pairing the students with mentors who can offer guidance and support.	170	60	20	9	3.7	2.63	Accepted
2	Providing access to school counsellors or therapists to help students manage emotional and psychological stress.	259	-	-	-	4	2.82	Accepted



3	Encouraging the student's participation in sports, arts, and clubs to foster a sense of belonging and purpose.	230	20	9	-	3.8	2.76	Accepted
4	Encouraging non-custodial parents to remain engaged in their children's education.	160	60	20	19	3.2	2.50	Accepted

In Table 4 above, on the ways that students from broken homes can be supported to succeed academically, all the items (items 1-item4) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item 1-item4) have mean scores above 2.50 and underscore how much “challenged” students can be helped to meet their goals of academic excellence.

### A Further Test of Hypotheses

**Ho1:** Broken home has no negative effect on students' academic performance.

**Table 5:** Summary of the Chi-square test on whether the broken home has a negative effect on students' academic performance.

Variables	Observed F	Expected F	df	X <sup>2</sup>	P-value
Yes	159	86.33	1	11.227	.001
No	65	86.33			
Undecided	35	86.33			
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>				

Test: At 0.05 level of significance

Table 5 shows that the p-value (.001) is less than the significance level set for the analysis ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, since the p-value is not greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that a broken home has no negative effect on students' academic performance, is rejected. The alternate hypothesis, which states that broken home has a negative effect on students' academic performance, is accepted ( $p = .001 < 0.05$ ).

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Using a few chosen senior secondary schools in Mbaitoli LGA, Imo State, as a case study, we sought to investigate the impact of broken homes on the academic performance of junior high school students. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the number of secondary school students from broken homes, ascertain whether broken homes impact student academic performance, investigate the effects of broken homes on secondary school students, and investigate strategies for assisting students from broken homes to succeed academically. This study was conducted using research questions that were developed to protect the investigation. There were 259 validated responses from the enrolled participants, all of whom were teachers and students in senior secondary schools in Mbaitoli LGA, Imo State. Improved government assistance programs, like free schooling and scholarships, can also help children from dysfunctional households perform better academically, which will lessen the burden on the single parent in these situations. The difficulties of sponsoring higher education in these households will also be lessened (Bartley, 2010). It is recommended that the government and different educational institutions provide guidance and counselling services in their respective areas in order to significantly impact children's development and future success. Adoption of

birth control methods is also safe to recommend since it can improve maternal and infant health, increase family wellbeing, give young women more educational and economic opportunities, and lower the divorce rate in society. In light of this, the husband-and-wife ought to agree on the optimal number of children for the family. Methods of birth control should be used to prevent unwanted pregnancies (Ali et al., 2013; Okorodudu, 2010; Chineke and Chidiezie-Chineke, 2023).

We can safely allude that the issue of students from broken homes in senior secondary schools is significant, with a notable high prevalence that varies. Also, coming from a broken home can significantly affect the student's academic performance and overall well-being. However, students from broken homes face a range of challenges, including emotional and psychological stress, behavioural issues, economic hardships, and reduced parental support, all of which can significantly hinder their academic success. These challenges manifest as emotional distress, social difficulties, lower self-esteem, academic decline, and an increased likelihood of engaging in truant behaviours. Additionally, targeted strategies and interventions can help mitigate these negative effects and support these students in achieving their academic potential.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. Schools should provide accessible and well-resourced counselling services with trained professionals who can support students' emotional and psychological well-being.
2. School counsellors should establish programs that pair students with mentors who can provide consistent support, guidance, and encouragement.
3. Governments should provide information and access to financial aid, scholarships, and community support programs to alleviate economic pressures.
4. Schools encourage and facilitate active participation of both custodial and non-custodial parents in school activities and their children's education.
5. Parents should think about how broken homes, particularly divorce, affect students' academic performance, emotional well-being, social skills, and adjustment, not just for their wards in senior secondary schools but at other levels of educational pursuit.

Past workers within and outside Nigeria have carried out various aspects of research on this issue (Agulana, 1999; Ali, 2006; Uwaifo, 2008; Oladimeji, 2012; Omoruyi, 2014; Maimuna, 2018), and their findings align with those from this case study. It needs to be stressed that the impact of broken homes on students' academic performance has affected not just the educational but also the social, economic, and political areas of the country.

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