

**BROKEN HOMES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF JUNIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AWKA SOUTH:
A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE**

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Abstract

The family is a basic unit of the society and also the child's first place of socialization. The family influences the child at a time when his mind is most receptive. These influences are capable of either promoting or diminishing the child's self-worth and academic behaviour when at school and these impressions may last for a life time. Different scholars have written extensively on broken homes but this study aimed at discovering the relationship between broken homes and the academic performance of Junior Secondary Students in Awka South Local Government Area, thereby addressing the issue of broken homes with some Christian teachings (Christian response). The study adopted the qualitative approach of data collection using observation, interview and questionnaire. Therefore, it was discovered that children from intact homes perform better in their academics than children from broken homes. So, the paper encourages that couples should not push their marriage to shambles because, when the home is broken, the children are affected too.

Keywords: Broken homes, Academic performance, Junior secondary students, Awka South, Christian Response.

Introduction

The family is the basic unit of society and the child's first place of socialization. Family is also traditionally and legally formed by marriage, which is the legal union of man and woman to live together happily as husband and wife. Umunnakwe (2015) sees family as a socially approved group made up of the husband, wife and their children. From this, one can say that every individual comes from one family or another, bond together in the sense that they do everything together including in time of peace, war or problem and also protect one another. Religion and law are bedrocks of marriage as an institution that introduces family, enables spouse to build a home, and raise up their children together. In any situation where marriage as

an institution could not be upheld and its legal and divine laws tampered, the consequences therefore could be referred to in this work as broken home. In keeping the home intact. Ekwukoma (2011) sees the family as legally bound through marriages, adoptions and guardianships, including the rights, duties and obligations of those legal contracts. The family portrays the spiritual, moral and psychological development of every child. If there is harmony, peace and joy within the family, it translates into a happy and healthy home for the children. Ekanam (2004) notes that the home influences the child at a time when his or her mind is most receptive, and this impression may last throughout the child's life. Every family member and things in the home environment are seen as most significant in the life of the child and are capable of either promoting or diminishing the child's self-worth and academic behaviour when at school.

Okoro (2000) observes that a child's education is a gradual process of acquiring skills which starts in the family when the mind is still tender. When family is uttered, what comes to the mind immediately is the home. A home is one's dwelling place especially with their family members. From birth, children spend more of their times at home where they are nurtured into adults, observing the parents and living their lives in accordance with their observations, negatively or positively. When the cordial relationship of the spouses is strained, the outcome may be bearing grudges, hatred, quarrelling, fighting, or even refusal to comply in the mutual or conjugal obligations. If these are not tackled soon, they may eventually lead to separation, divorce, or single parenting. Homes are broken when members of the family are not living together either as a result of death of any of the spouse, separation, divorce or the like. Wiseman (2010) notes that broken homes may affect the development of the child in all aspects of his or her life. That is to say, children from broken homes are most emotionally, socially, religiously, morally and psychologically imbalance. According to Ayodele (2007), the environment where a child finds himself or herself goes a long way in determining his learning ability and ultimately his academic performance in school. Children from broken home are found to be not very bright in their learning skills, and these affect the children's academic performance in school. Such children also seem to find it difficult to learn morals from their parents.

Brief History of Awka South Local Government Area

Awka South Local Government Area counts as one of the twenty-one (21) existing Local Government Area in Anambra State. Awka South Local Government Area comprises of nine (9) towns. These towns include: Okpuno,

Awka, Amawbia, Nise, Nibo, Mbaukwu, Umuawulu, Isiagu and Ezinato. Awka South Local Government Area is bounded on the North by Awka North Local Government Area, on the east by Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State, on the South by Aniocha Local Government Area and on the west by Njikoka Local Government Area. It was noted that in the past, the people of Awka South Local Government Area were well known for their blacksmithing. But nowadays, the people of Awka South Local Government Area are respected and known among the Igbo people of Nigeria for their technical and business skills. Awka South is a mixed society which does not only comprises of the indigenes but also accommodates people from various towns, cities and states.

Causes of Broken Homes in Awka South Local Government Area

So many reasons have been advanced for broken homes, but the summary is that it could be due to internal and external forces. The husband and the wife constitute the internal forces while the other factors constitute the external forces.

i. Adultery - Unfaithfulness in marriage is now a universal cause of broken homes. Adultery calls for lack of trust among spouse. Adultery is an act which affects the whole personality. That is why when it is seen in marriage, there is tension, which could lead to disagreements and even separation. Adultery is a dirty game, as long as you are legally married, it is not right and it does not promote intimacy. Unfortunately, in our societies today, so many marriages are breaking up as a result of adultery. It should not be so because marriage is for life, once a couple is married, they must remain committed to the covenant and observe all the guiding rules of marriage. None is permitted to break the hedge or do anything against the success of the union not even adultery that tears the home apart.

ii. Strife: This is defined as a state of conflict, striving to have your own way irrespective of your spouse opinion or feelings. Strife is rooted in lack of understanding. Most couples misunderstand each other's motives and instead of settling down to sort out the issues involved or already existing, they allow self to come in. Thereby planning on how to revenge on each other's mistake, think on how to insult each other or even respond back roughly to each other. Strife is a destroyer of homes.

iii. Differences in background - Differences in religion, age, and race are seen as having a causative relation to the problem of broken home. Margaret (1998) opines that even though both man and woman come from good

homes, if these homes are widely and radically different in standards and in cultural backgrounds, strains may develop in later life between the couple. In terms of age, the gap between the age of the husband and the wife might pose a threat or problem to the wife or vice versa. Even in the religion of the spouses. In a case where after marriage, the husband might seem to return or engage in traditional worshipping whereas the wife is a Christian worshipper. This might turn out to be a serious problem to the couples. This also can tear the home apart. Another is when the husband and the wife are of different nationality or even from the same nation but come from different ethnic groups. Language barrier may set in thereby causing misunderstanding in one way or the other by the couple.

iv. The In-Law Factor or the Interference of relatives: The harmful interference of relatives may break a stable, happy home. For example, a couple may be too inclined to the act of quarrels just because of parents, friends, in-laws, and relatives who at all times are ready to accept or welcome their son/daughter back whenever the couple choose to stay apart or differently. These external interferences can be from those living within the couples' home and as well those outside the home.

v. Sexual Incompatibility: Sexual incompatibility in marriage contributes to the destruction of many homes today. If the sex life of the couple does not match or is not compatible, the home is set to be broken. There is no substitute for sex in marriage. That is why most people believe that once a marriage breaks down in the bedroom, the couple may eventually pack it up if nothing is done to restore their sex life. Some wives shy away from sex because they feel ashamed of demanding from their husbands, some shy away because according to them, it is boring, their spouses don't make it interesting. So any time there is a demand for sex they come up with all manner of excuses –like I am tired, I am not in the mood, I am feeling headache, let's leave it till tomorrow, do not disturb me and so on. All these can lead to separation in marriage, divorce or broken homes.

vi. Financial Issues and Poverty: If poverty is to be measured to the part of the husband, it will be identified or seen that poverty is the major factor that is responsible for broken homes. Today, many graduates are roaming around the nation without jobs to better their lives in the society. The economic system in the nation is too poor that even those with jobs (workers) have been deprived of their jobs as they now queue with the unemployed. This had made so many homes to survive from hand to mouth as a result of poverty or financial problem. Majority cannot afford a good three square meals daily, let alone meeting up other financial needs in the home. Therefore, this posits a

great problem in some marriages as some husbands and wives break up in their marriages due to hardship in the family. For instance, in a family that the husband is jobless and the wife has something doing, yet not being able to meet up with all the family needs. Life will not be easy for the man that stays home every day doing nothing. Likewise, the wife that spends and provides for the family without support by her husband. If care is not taken, this kind of life may make the wife to separate, leave or break up with the husband. Then the home is said to be broken at this very stage. The home can also be broken as a result of poverty when both husband and wife are working but are not earning much, thereby the husband cannot satisfy his wife all the needs in the family. The wife might feel not protected or provided for. So she decides to quit the marriage to search and begin a better life elsewhere.

vii. Sickness and Infertility: Ill health or sickness among couples affect them differently depending on who is sick at that particular time. In the case of the man being sick, the sickness reduces his vitality, causes irregular work (sexual functions) and keeps him unhappy. To the woman's side, she might care less in keeping the house intact (clean), not being attractive to the man (husband), and also disclamation to sexual intercourse (feeling reluctant in sexual intercourse). Continuous sickness in the husband or wife will continually consume enough amount of money in the family and no doubt causes frustration which may lead to a broken home. Infertility is one of the major issue that leads or brings about broken home in the family. Infertility in the home is inability to have children or failure to have children. This is one of the problems that shatters home or marriage, this is because having children is first of all the main purpose of marriage so as to have and build a happy marriage thereby extending life or generation. Therefore, in a situation where husband and wife live together and sharing everything together for years and still no child to prove their marriage positive, there is no doubt that problems will arise. Infertility will cause the spouse to start suspecting each other of their misfortune or unlucky life. Suspecting each other may cause misunderstanding among the couple which may lead to problem in marriage or the breaking of homes.

viii. Suspicion: Suspicious life in marriage is very wrong and brings about husband and wife quarrelling at all times. Some couple keeps suspecting each other's movement because of lack of trust between them. Suspicious life should be destroyed and put aside in every home for proper growth and lasting of the home. The only simplest way to destroy suspicion in marriage is to believe and accept all things with love in each other's life. For any wall of break down totally means or shows that, there has been a crack somewhere.

Therefore, if there is suspicion among couples, it means that, there must be a crack in that marriage if not destroyed in time. It is through the problem that will set in the family that the home can be threatened to be broken at any point in time. Therefore, suspicion should be dealt with seriously, to avoid the consequences that follows in a home.

ix. Wrong Choice of Spouse: This can also be called wrong basis of marriage. Here, a man or woman makes wrong choice of partner due to one reason or the other. It can be that the woman was impregnated and had no other choice than to remain with the wrong choice of man by which they considered themselves good in friendship but not the right choice to be with in marriage. Sometimes, the fault of being in the wrong marriage comes from either parents, who forces their child or children to get married to whom they do not develop love for. When such children find themselves in the wrong hand, they naturally do not show love, peace and understanding in the marriage rather they exhibit hatred, quarrels and fights, always looking for a means to get away from the marriage. By these acts, the marriage cannot make progress and cannot stand, but breaks down. Wrong choice of partner or spouse can also be caused by early marriage (under aged), or in contrary the over aged (late marriage). In the aspect of the early marriage, some people especially girls who are not up to the age of marriage, under the age of eighteen (18) do rush into marriage thinking that marriage is full of milk and honey only. Not being knowledgeable of what marriage is, for marriage is an institution which you get admission into and never graduates from it. You can only quit in marriage at death, but in the case of separation or divorce, you can remarry. Therefore, when problems arise in the family, the person who is under aged might not be able to handle all cases in the family and she might not find the marriage easy any more, thereby looking for a way out. Or the girl in question might notice in the marriage as the year goes by that the man she is married to is not the right person for her. But in the case of late marriage, the woman in question gets married to any man that comes around due to her overdue age for marriage. Along the line in marriage, she might not be comfortable with the man, maybe she is educated and the man is not, or that she is earning a reasonable income and the man's not. She might find the man not being presentable at any point in time. These can cause the marriage to begin to collapse and may eventually end in broken home.

x. Religious Conversion: Some broken marriages or homes were as a result of religious conversion or change in religion. In this situation, the man or woman abandons or leaves the family religious root to join another.

Effect of Broken Homes on Academic Performance of the Children in Awka South Local Government Area

Broken home adds to the stress that children undergo both in the home and in school (academics). Broken home makes children unsafe. For instance, children who always watch their parents fight severally, watch their father strike their mother (his wife) feels unsafe, unprotected, insecure and helpless because they fear that something bad might happen to them at any point in time. Since their mother is being strike so hard, theirs will not be an exception. Therefore, these children have developed the spirit of fear in them, that scene of striking at all times has been in them that they don't feel free both in home and in school. Thereby not having relaxed mind to learn and perform better academically.

Also children from broken homes in Awka South Local Government Area in the course of not performing better in academics are not likely to be in school and in class thereby missing some lessons which had been taught before their arrival in school. This is because the parents or guardians' cares less about the good of the child in school. At the same time these children are also less likely to have a help in their homework (assignment) given to them by their tutor to keep their brain busy at home. Adding to the effect of broken homes on the academic performances of children in Awka South, it is noticed that children are born with some psychological, emotional and intellectual needs like need for live, need for security, need for or to obtain new experiences, need for praise and recognition and need for responsibility. Therefore, when these needs are not met or offered to the children, they are likely to be seriously lagging behind in their performances. So many broken homes in Awka South are not and cannot provide or meet up with these needs for their children. This is because the family or home might in one way or another be effected with some factors like the socio economic status of the family to meet up with their responsibilities towards the children like buying of learning materials and paying of the children's tuition fees. Some broken homes are also affected by the parent's attitude towards the children as the children observe their parents' attitudes to be good. A child that watch his/her parents quarrel always could be a quarrelsome child both in school and in the society. Also, the absence or presence of parents in broken homes affects the social and intellectual learning experiences of children in school. This is because when parents are separated in a home, it might be that the present parent is not knowledgeable enough to handle the children in their academic life that will boost their positive performance. On the other hand, the absence of one parent

in the home affects the children's academic performance because, the absent parent may be the one that gingers the children to study always whom the children respect and fear more when he/she is around.

Another effect of broken home on the academics of children in Awka South is that it makes children to feel different in the eyes of their peer group, friends and fellow students. When investigation is made among students, children that are involved in broken homes, feel embarrassed and ashamed of the ill situation. Therefore, by feeling different among their colleagues, they therefore do not like to associate much in the group discussion and reading that helps so many students to understand their courses better thereby performing well during examinations because they hardly forget what they discussed among them. For instance, a child who hardly have enough time to study at home to be brighter in his/her academics may participate in the group discussion or reading among students and performed excellently in his/her academics at the end of the session, meaning that the child in question would not have done well if not for his/her participation in the group reading and discussion. Therefore, it can be said that the failure of parents in Awka South L.G.A. to modify, rectify and improve their homes to be better affects the academic performances of their children. That is to say, a child in Awka South that is from a broken home have challenges in his/her academic performances. The problem of such child can be traced to be psychological, economic, social and emotional instability because children differ accordingly as a result of differences in home background which makes them to perform positively or negatively in academics. These differences in children solely depend on parents' attitude to the children, parents' child training techniques, and the socio-economic status of the parents. So, these parents' status contributes to the performance of children in academics either positively or negatively.

Christianity and the Stability of Marriage

Again Chiegboka (2015) quoting the Fathers of Second Vatican Council says that marriage is:

An institution confirmed by divine law and receiving its stability even in the eyes of security, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other, for the good of the partners, of the children and of society, this sacred bond no longer depends on human decision alone. For God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and with various

ends in view: all of those have a very important bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of every member of the family on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family and of the whole human race. (p.65).

It is good to note that the stability of every marriage in the society should be based and channelled towards God. This is so, because marriage is so close to God's heart as marriage is the first and the oldest institution in the world which attracts God's attention from the beginning. God is committed to marriage as an institution and the human person must also be committed to God for Him to make the marriage to work. In this light Abioye (2015) notes marriage as the coming together of a man and woman for harmonious living, a covenant agreement between a man and a woman (couple) and God. By the covenant agreement, it is believed that God established marriage for his concept not man's concept. This is seen in Genesis 2:18 which reads "And the Lord said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him". Therefore, marriage is never a set trap as some people see it today, truly marriage is a covenant, an institution established by God for the betterment of mankind (the human person).

Marriage as an institution can be equalled to a learning environment where you begin to adjust yourself within the new environment to improve better in that learning institution for a better result after each examination at any point in time. Therefore, every couple undergo one examination or another at any point in time. So husband and wives are to be ready, praying without season in other to overcome any marital challenges that might come across them any day, any time. This is because marriage is a life time affair for there is no date or year of graduation in marriage. Once a man and woman is welcomed into marriage, there is no going back, they must be committed to each other and never to break the hedge or should the couple welcome anything or anyone that will work against the success of the union. In this institution the involvement of the body, soul, and spirit of the couple is highly required to make the marriage and their life great and complete.

Toward Cushioning the Effects of Broken Homes in School Children

The effect of broken home on the school children as observed by the researcher is worthy to note that it poses a serious threat to the academic performance of the children and also the future of these children. Then the question is what are the things that can be done to address the challenges faced by these children from broken home? There are different ways in which

these children from broken homes can be taken care of. They are as follows: Christians as a religious body or organization should take cognizance of families within the organization that have broken up. For example, churches can create a welfare department within the church that should be taking care of the poor, the needy, children from broken homes, the sick and so on. The church can provide them with money, food, shelter, clothes and so on. These children's parents can now use the money given to them by the church to attend to the needs of the children in school and at home. The church can also embark on evangelism and charity works. By evangelism, the church is now reaching out for souls not only in the church but in the society too. Converting someone to your faith needs some charity works, therefore, almsgiving to these people in the society is needed to attract them to the church. This is to be done continuously because religion was built on the foundation of good works.

The church can also take care of these children from broken homes through the mission schools owned by the church. In these mission schools, these children should be given free education or a reasonable discount in paying of school fees. These children from broken homes can also be provided with learning materials, if not given to them personally, then the Mission School libraries should be well equipped with books. By so doing, the school children can have access to the learning materials to read thoroughly and prepare for any given exams. So then will the children perform better in school as many of them lack materials on their own. The priests in the church can also take home some of these children from broken homes to their vicarages, thereby assisting the parents in training and caring for them. The care given to these children have to cover spiritual, educational, financial, emotional and physical needs. By all these, the church is carrying out its task properly.

It is not only the duty of the church to take care of the children from broken homes, the government at large is not an exception. Therefore, the government should reinforce, create and pay attention to welfare scheme in the society. By so doing the children from broken home will have a place to access help in any of their needs. The government should make this welfare scheme open and known by building an office that is accessible. The government should announce and circulate the phone number to be reached in case of any report by these children. The welfare office should be one that the children from broken homes can go to the office to complain the issues bordering them. For instance, a child can go to the welfare office to report that his or her home is very much unconducive for him/her. May be the child is no more comfortable with the parents, or issues happening in his/her home.

But prefers to stay in the welfare house. Then, the child can be accepted after consulting the single parents and also be cared for.

Again, the government should create a department in the school that take notices of these children to take care of their needs. Just as the governor of Anambra State, Dr. Willie Maduaburochukwu Obiano stated earlier on, by feeding the primary pupils twice a week. Food were cooked and served in government primary schools. So should the government do the needful for the children from broken homes in particular. This government agency to be created in different schools should at least visit the school twice or once in a month to know the welfare of these children.

The government should also come to the aid of the children who are involved in broken homes by taking them away from their single parents and put them in the custody of the government. The government will thereby build a structure in the school (a hostel) that the students or children will stay. When the children are sent to boarding schools, then, the government can now make provisions for them as the children are secured in a known place. Provisions like food, school uniforms, learning materials and dictionaries can be given to them in boarding house. By building the structure in schools for the children, the government has given the school children a shelter that they are longing for. Then, the children will relax to read and learn for the benefit of their future and life.

It will also be of great benefit if special attention should be given to these children from broken homes in the school. The teachers in the school can help to amend their rate of failing by calling them together at the teacher's convenient time to give them a make-up examination because some of them do miss the summative exams given to students may be when they were absent in the school because of school fees. In some cases, these children from broken home might be in school during the summative exam but do not participate because they lack materials for writing that particular subject. At the end, their scores are not recorded and that marks their failing point. Therefore, special attention should be given to these children from broken home in school by their teachers before the end of the session. So, if those efforts can be put into consideration, the challenges that the children from broken homes are facing will be highly minimized.

Conclusion

By being human beings we all have limitations and shortcomings. Family filled with mutual love and care is the ideal for all humans. But because of the

human incapacity, we cannot succeed it. Therefore, problems and conflicts arise which cause broken homes. However, it is to be noted that when there is problem and impact, there is also the solving idea. Broken family can also be solved and at the same time broken homes can be prevented. This is because the children are the ones who suffer most in any broken home. When a couple split up, it is the children that are greatly affected, scaring them physically, emotionally and socially. Children's future and growth lies in a healthy family where they could receive love, care and support from their parents.

The members of the family constitute the child's first environment and are the most significant people during the early years of life. The kind of family in which children grow up affect their development by determining the kind of relationship they share with different family members. These are essential for personal and social adjustment. Anything that interferes with those feeling of security and stability by the children is hazardous for them. However, the children from broken family/home are normally growing up with having low and bad manner. Also slowed academic development is another way that broken home affects the children. The emotional stress of broken home can be enough to stunt a child's academic progress. All these show that broken home is one of the major problem of the society just as in Awka South Local Government Area that should be given enough attention, for more broken families produce more negative effects in the society.

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