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COUNSELLORS PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN AWKA EDUCATION ZONE

¹Ijeoma Okenwa-Fadele (io.okenwa-fadele@unizik.edu.ng)

²Ahmed Oyeyemi (ao.oyeyemi@unizik.edu.ng)

³Francisca Uju Udeagha (fu.udeagha@unizik.edu.ng)

⁴Onyinyechi Abiakwu (of.abiakwu@unizik.edu.ng)

^{1,2,3&4}Department of Educational Foundations,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Abstract

The frequent prevalence of parental divorce has drawn attention from all across the world. Governmental and non-governmental organisations have both played critical in the curbing of this hazard as a result of the psychological and social problems that lead adolescents to exhibit odd and unguided behaviours. Children and teenagers have no voice in the matter but divorce affects them just as much as it does the parents. Most people who get married have the perception that they will stay married, have children and age together. However, this is not always the case. The institution of marriage has historically faced many difficulties; and many people end up in divorce which has an impact on their children's social behaviour. In Africa, and notably in Nigeria, there is divorce here and there. This study concentrated on how counsellors in Awka education zone perceive influence of parental divorce on secondary school adolescent social behaviour. Descriptive survey was adopted for the study. Two research questions guided the study.

Two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population was 36 counsellors and no samples were taken. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The data was analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, 23); and the z-test was used for the hypotheses. The results showed that secondary school students suffer negatively when their parents divorce and it becomes difficult for them to get back on track which leads to behavioural disorder. It was recommended among other things that guidance counsellors should view themselves as parents and role models in other to guide the students that are trusted under their care.

Key words: Counsellors, Perceived Influence, Parental Divorce, Adolescents, Social Behaviour and Interpersonal Relationship.

Introduction

The institution of marriage has recently had to deal with an increase in cases of irreconcilable disagreements, which has resulted in an increase in the number of divorce proceedings. The spouse going through the divorce and the children involved in the parental separation are among the stakeholders, and in most circumstances, all of them are impacted by the changes in some manner. People get married in the hopes of having a fulfilling relationship with their spouse for the rest of their lives, claims Newman (2015). These people get married for a variety of reasons, including intimacy, financial security, a family, and companionship. Most people who get married have the perception that they will stay married, have children, and age together. However, this isn't always the case. The institution of marriage has historically faced many difficulties, and many people end up separating from their children's parents, which has an impact on their children's social behaviour.

Marriage is a social institution that unites a man's body and spirit with his wife. (Olayinka, 2014). Numerous viewpoints exist on the idea of marriage. Some people see it as a contract that has legal repercussions. If the wife is found to be at blame for the divorce or there is a contract violation, the lady's bride fee is reimbursed. Marriage is also viewed as a game that can be entered at any time and exited at the first sign of boredom. These aforementioned viewpoints do not align with Christian marriage. According to Christians, marriage is not a contract and should not be ended or separated even if one spouse loses interest. To them, marriage has a deeper, more varied meaning. According to Makinde (2014), marriage serves to enhance continuity and society perpetuation by bringing enjoyment, security, cultural growth, and the development of a sense of responsibility. A family breakup may result in a child's childhood having a lot of potential volatility and insecurity. This instability may lead to substance abuse, crime, and subpar academic achievement. The results of numerous studies show that kids from divorced families do worse than kids from intact families. According to Mohanty and Ullah (2012), stress related to the parental family structure is one of the reasons why children from divorced homes earn less as adults. Others have discovered that kids from families headed for divorce

perform worse on tests and exhibit more behavioural issues. (McLanahan, 2013). There are several ways in which parental divorce may influence the results of the children. These include the psychological effects of a change in family structure on the kid, changes in the financial means available to ensure the child's best interests, and changes in parental involvement. (e.g., guidance, amounts of direct and indirect time spent with child).

According to Amato (2012), parental separation has a significant negative effect on children under the age of 18 who are caught up in the arguments between the divorcing parents. These adolescents, who are just starting a crucial stage of their lives that leads into adulthood when adolescence is complete, are greatly impacted by parental separation. Adolescents are those between the ages of 12 and 18 who are just beginning to learn important life skills, such as managing emotions and all the changes taking place in their bodies during this stage, developing a healthy lifestyle, worrying about their future career prospects, interacting with peers, adjusting to family dynamics, learning interpersonal communication skills, and many other life skills they must develop. (Agochiya, 2019).

The increase in divorce cases that has been observed raises serious concerns about how it will affect teenagers going through this particular developmental time of life, who are already experiencing a great deal of change. This raises the possibility that their social, intellectual, and emotional wellbeing will be impacted by their parents' separation. (Adofo & Etsey, 2016). Compared to other parts of Africa, Nigeria appears to have more instances of families dissolving. (Olayinka, et al., 2012). Nigeria thus seems to be a special place for the conduct of this study. Children's responses to parental separation differ according to the family's size and makeup, the degree of conflict, the child's gender and temperament, the parents' emotional states, and the quantity of time the child spends with each parent. (Brooks, 2017). Some adolescents become aggressive and insecure as a result of parental separation, whereas others become more caring and successfully acclimatise to the new family structure, especially if they were adequately prepared for the separation or if their family environment was marked by serious conflict, spousal abuse, or violence. Such young people find relief in divorce. (Strong *et al.*, 2018).

Problems of the Study

Parental divorce is a frequent occurrence that has received attention on a global scale. Governmental and non-governmental organisations have both played critical roles in curbing of this. It leads to psychological and social problems that make adolescents to exhibit odd and unguided behaviours. For obvious reasons, children find the divorce of their parents to be a very upsetting something. It affects them in every way. The majority of children and teenagers whose parents divorced rarely have a voice in the matter they are affected by the divorce as the parents are. In some cases, a divorce affects a person's lifetime commitment to long-term partnerships, where this commitment deteriorates. (Ackerman, 2016). There are several reasons why some marriages in today's culture have failed, which has caused the institution of marriage to fall apart. The changes taking place in their families are particularly detrimental to adolescents who endure parental separation.

Since they have typically shared a home with both parents, parental separation presents difficulties and adjustments that the kids must overcome, such as having to live solely with the custodial parent and adjusting to all the physical changes that come with puberty. In order to raise a wholistic teenager, a mother and a father must be present. The adolescent's social, emotional, academic, and emotional wellbeing are seriously jeopardised by the absence of one of their parents. (Wolfinger, 2015).

Divorce by parents has negative impact on a child's behaviour in the classroom, among peers, and even in society as a whole. The family structure is altered, which has an effect. In many highly emotional parental divorce, the children may be involved in the parent-parent argument. Adolescents who are dealing with family troubles find it hard to meet the academic and social requirements at school, among peers and in society as a whole than the ones from peaceful homes. Adolescents are impacted emotionally by parent separation, which can result in feelings of worry, melancholy, inferiority complex, guilt, and occasionally aggressiveness. Adolescents positively impacted by parental interaction than by divorce. One of the consequences of parental divorce is the exacerbation of divisions within the family; and once they divorce the children are in disarray within school and outside school. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine counsellors' perceived influence of parental divorce on social behaviour and interpersonal relationship of the in-school adolescents.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How does parental divorce influence the secondary school adolescents' social behaviour in Awka Education Zone as perceived by counsellors?
2. How does parental divorce influence secondary school adolescents' interpersonal relationship in Awka Education Zone as perceived by counsellors?

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypothesis:

1. There is no significant relationship between parental divorce and social behaviour of the secondary school adolescents in Awka Education Zone as perceived by Counsellors.
3. There is no significant relationship between parental divorce and interpersonal relationship among secondary adolescents in Awka Education Zone as perceived by Counsellors.

Literature Review

The formal dissolution of a marriage occurs when parents divorce. Loss of the mother-father-child family unit is a consequence of parental divorce for children. According to Brooks (2011), divorce involves many changes for everyone concerned, including new households, financial changes, changes in the parents' attitude or behavior, and greater responsibilities. Cooperative or adversarial divorce are both possible. In contrast to an

adversarial divorce, which leads to court battles because the parents are unable to agree amicably, a cooperative divorce entails the parties getting together, discussing the concerns, and peacefully divorcing without going through legal proceedings, according to Ackerman (2016).

The adolescent stage, which lasts until the age of majority, begins with the commencement of puberty. This developmental stage serves as a phase of growth transition between childhood and adulthood. The normal duration of this developmental period is between 12 and 18 years, though it may begin sooner and conclude later. This period is marked by physical changes, cognitive development, spiritual and emotional growth, newly discovered sexual interests, and extended peer and social ties. 2015 (Newman & Newman). The adolescent's main problem throughout this period is to develop a meaningful sense of self, despite enjoying the thrills of this stage as their social networks expand, they experience new degrees of emotional intensity, obtain new intellectual talents, and learn new social skills. It is vital at this time of life development to assist the adolescent in developing a new sense of their relationship with family, friends, society, and culture, according to Newman (2015).

Social behaviour is any behaviour that has an impact on or is influenced by other individuals of the same species. So, all sexual and reproductive activities, all behaviours that tend to bring individuals together, and all hostile behaviours are all included in the statement. William (2019) defines social behaviour as interactions between people, frequently those of the same species that are typically helpful to one or more of the people involved. Social behaviour is said to have evolved because those who exhibited it had a higher chance of surviving and reproducing, which is why it was advantageous to them. Animals of all kinds, including invertebrates, fish, birds, and mammals, engage in social activity for a number of reasons.

Max Weber (1864–1920), George Simmel (1858–1918), and Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) developed the symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969), which focuses on how meanings, labels, and definitions are gained through interaction with others. While seeing divorce figuratively, people react to their perceptions of conditions rather than to the actual, objective situations. Children of divorced parents, for instance, frequently react to the societal connotations of divorce, such as "divorce is a disaster," "my parents should stay together," and "my life will be destroyed." They fail to take into account different viewpoints, such as the possibility that divorce might result in new lifelong stepsiblings or family members and that it might spare them from having to endure their parents' constant bickering. Children of divorce do not take into account the benefits of divorce until they are asked to list them. Finding benefits in one's parents' divorce is a prime example of how outcomes are socially manufactured. (Agochiya, 2019).

Parents who divorced from their partners are relieved of parenting duties. (Caye, 2016). Both divorce and separation have positive and negative effects. The child will discover that

society will still look out for him or her even if their parents do not. A legal method of ending a couple's marriage is through divorce. This breakup is both a family and a personal tragedy. According to Aprons (2017), the process presents opportunities for the stakeholders' growth as well as psychological hazards. The process is said to unfold in several stages, each of which is distinguished by qualitative distinctions in themes and degree of coping, according to the author. Separation and divorce are linked to painful feelings, unbearable sadness, despair, anxiety, and many other things. All parties concerned suffer as a result of the creation of two households rather than one, which results in higher costs.

The pleasure, life satisfaction, discomfort, and self-esteem of young adults are influenced by their relationship with their parents, according to Amato's (2012) study on young people's mother and father relationships. Low levels of affection and intergenerational connection continue to characterise the relationships between divorced parents and their grown children even after the children have grown up. Adult children of families with a custodial father perceive their relationships with their families with a mother as being of higher quality, claims Booth (2011). The child's age, family, psycho-social functioning, and the parents' ability to prioritise their child's needs and feelings while managing their own resentment, loss, and pain are all factors that affect the clinical expression of divorce in children.

When compared to pupils from intact households, adolescents who have experienced a parent's divorce experience a considerable social and emotional impact. Adolescents from divorced households experience higher behavioural issues, parent-child conflict, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health issues. (Amato, 2012). Children of divorce perform worse academically, conduct worse, have more mental health issues, and have more interpersonal issues, according to Amato. (2012). No matter when or how long ago the parents' divorced, these risk factors are still present in adolescents. Regardless of when the divorce took place in the adolescent's growth, the effect on the child's emotional health is clear. Divorce has a lasting effect on a person well after youth and well into adulthood. (Ham, 2003). According to Ivanova et al., early adolescence is the age that the dissolution of marriage has the greatest impact on and can lead to increased sensitivity to life's transformational moments (2011). Teenagers are more vulnerable than any other age group to any changes in the family structure since they are still growing and developing. It has been demonstrated that a divorce that occurs when a person is young will have the greatest impact on them as they get older.

Empirical Studies

Newman did a study in Thailand on the effects of parental divorce on adolescent children's academic achievement (2015). The study was guided by three research question, and a descriptive survey method was used. A standardised questionnaire was utilised to collect the primary data that was then employed. The data was analysed using simple percentage

analysis and the mean. Oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed with the aid of statistical tools for the social sciences to evaluate the hypotheses. The findings indicated that parental separation had a negative effect on adolescents' academic performance. Ugwu (2012) used five public schools to study how divorce affected adolescents' social relationships in Imo state, Nigeria. Two research questions served as the study's compass and a descriptive survey technique was employed. The primary data that was used was gathered via a standardised questionnaire. Simple percentage analysis and mean were used to analyse the collected data. A statistical software for social sciences was used that is, the test hypotheses. The research revealed that divorce has a detrimental impact on secondary school-aged adolescents' social relationships.

Research on the connection between parental divorce and teenagers' poor academic performance in secondary schools in Lagos was done by Makinde (2014). The study was guided by three research questions, and a descriptive survey method was used. A standardised questionnaire was utilised to collect the primary data that was then employed. The data was analysed using simple percentage analysis and the mean. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with statistical software for social sciences to test the hypothesis. The findings revealed a connection between poor teen academic performance and parental divorce, highlighting the negative effects of parental divorce on adolescent academic performance.

Method

The study used a descriptive survey design. Nwosu (2013) stated that survey methods are particularly useful for obtaining people's opinions, attitudes, and perceptions in their natural environments. The research design aims to examine how secondary school adolescents in the Awka education zone's counsellors perceive the influence of parental divorce on their social behaviour. This approach was chosen since the study collected information and guidance counsellors' opinions in a methodical manner.

The Awka Education Zone was the study location used for this investigation. The region is made up of the local governments of Anambra State's Awka South, Awka North, Anocha, Dunukofia, and Njikoka. There are 61 public secondary schools in all. 16 schools make up Anocha, 8 schools make up Awka North, 18 schools make up Awka South, 11 schools make up Dunukofia, and 8 schools make up Njikoka. (ASUBEB, 2021). Teachers, traders, professors, businesspeople, government employees, drivers, hairdressers, and entrepreneurs are known to reside in this region. The population of the study comprises of all 36 counsellors in the 61 public secondary schools in the Awka Education Zone of the state of Anambra, who are both male and female. (ASUBEB). All 36 of the counsellors in the Awka Education Zone make up the sample. This is due to the small population.

A structured questionnaire that was created by the researcher served as the study tool for data collecting. Parts 1 and 2 of the survey were separated into separate sections. Part 1 intended to gather demographic data, such as respondent names and school choices, whereas Part 2's twelve (12) pieces of questions are related to the study questions. Strongly agree 5 points, agree 4 points, undecided 3 points, disagree 2 points, and strongly disagree 1 point are the numerical values allocated to the scale. Three experts validated the instrument. Two in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the validity of the instrument; and there was 0.79 overall coefficient of reliability indicating that the instrument is adequate for the work.

Result

Research Question one: How does parental divorce influence the secondary school adolescents' social behaviour in Awka Education Zone as perceived by counsellors?

Table 1: Influence of parental divorce on social behaviour of the secondary school adolescents

Influence of parental divorce and social behaviour	Mean	Remarks
1. Parental divorce affects adolescent way of behaviour	3.0	Agree
2. Parental divorce reduces adolescent social life	3.9	Agree
3. Parental divorce affects adolescent relationship with opposite sex	3.8	Agree
4. Parental divorce affects adolescent study behaviour and interactions with others	4.1	Agree

From the analysis in Table 1, the respondents agree that Parental divorce affects adolescent way of behaviour, reduces adolescent social life, affects adolescent relationship with opposite sex, and affects adolescent study behaviour and interactions with others with a mean score of 3.0, 3.9, 3.8, and 4.1 respectively.

Research Question two: How does parental divorce influence secondary school adolescents' interpersonal relationship in Awka Education Zone as perceived by counsellors?

Table 2: Influence of parental divorce on adolescents' interpersonal relationship

Influence of parental divorce and adolescents' interpersonal relationship	Mean	Remarks
1. Parental divorce affects the emotional behaviour of adolescent	3.1	Agree
2. Parental divorce reduces adolescent value for one parent	3.4	Agree
3. Parental divorce leads to adolescent waywardness	3.6	Agree
4. Parental divorce encourages hatred and maliciousness between adolescent	3.8	Agree

From the analysis in Table 2, the respondents agree that Parental divorce affects the emotional behaviour of adolescent, reduces adolescent value for one parent, leads to adolescent waywardness, and encourages hatred and maliciousness between adolescent with a mean score of 3.1, 3.4, 3.6, and 3.8 respectively.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between parental divorce and social behaviour of the secondary school adolescents in Awka Education Zone as perceived by Counsellors.

Table 3: Result on the relationship between parental divorce and social behaviour of the secondary school adolescents.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remarks
Social behaviour	2.76	1.063	36	.970**	.000	Sig.
Parental divorce	48.77	8.605				

*Sig. at .05 level

Table 3 above shows that there was a positive significant relationship between parental divorce and social relationship ($r = .970^{**}$, $N = 36$, $p < .05$) of the secondary school adolescent in Awka education zone. The result rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis which states there is a significant relationship between parental divorce and social behaviour of the secondary school adolescents in Awka education zone.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between parental divorce and interpersonal relationship among secondary adolescents in Awka Education Zone as perceived by Counsellors.

Table 4: Result on the relationship between parental divorce and adolescents' interpersonal relationship

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Interpersonal relationship	53.79	15.72	36	.362**	.000	Sig.
Parental divorce	48.77	8.605				

*Sig. at .05 level

Table 6 above shows that there was a positive significant relationship between parental divorce and adolescents' interpersonal relationship ($r = .362^{**}$, $N = 36$, $p < .05$) of secondary school adolescent in Awka education zone. The result rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis which states there is a significant relationship between parental separation and adolescents' interpersonal relationship in schools in Awka education zone.

Discussion

The result of findings revealed that the respondents agree that Parental divorce reduces adolescent morals, leads to poor financial support of adolescent, and leads to drop out of many adolescents. This is in line with the study carried out by Makinde (2014), which states that parental separation affects the academic performance of secondary school adolescent. Again, results of findings showed that the respondents agree that Parental divorce affects adolescent way of behaviour, reduces adolescent social life, affects adolescent relationship with opposite sex, and affects adolescent study behaviour and interactions. This is in accordance with the findings of Ugwu (2012). In addition, the result shows that the respondents agree that Parental separation affects the emotional behaviour of adolescent, reduces adolescent value for one parent, leads to adolescent waywardness, and encourages hatred and maliciousness between adolescent.

Conclusion

The study centered on counsellors' perceived influence of parental divorce on social behaviour and interpersonal relationship of secondary school adolescents. Divorce was explained as a situation in which a marriage is annulled, dissolved (dissolution of marriage) and the marriage goes into extinction. In this type of situation, the children suffer. Many of them indulge in social vices such as pick-pocketing, stealing, robbery, cultism and waywardness among others. Based on the findings, the researcher draws the conclusion that parental divorce has negative influence on secondary school students' social behaviour and interpersonal relationships in the Awka education zone.

Recommendations

Given the results and analysis, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors at schools should think of themselves as parents and role models for the adolescents.
2. There should be some degree of cardinality and friendship between them in order for the students to feel comfortable confiding in them;
3. Affective relationship and marriage skill training should be made available to parents;
4. The government, community organisations, courts, and religious organisations should work together to ensure that all unhappy married couples have access to low-cost, child-focused counselling. The basis of good parenting is always having emotionally stable parents.
5. This could be achieved by making classes on marriage and relationship skills mandatory before graduation in high schools.

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