

Original Research Article

Effects of single parenting on students' academic performance at Nkanfoa Methodist Junior High School in the Cape Coast Metropolis

Sheila Ama Essiam¹, James Ocloo², Kwame Ofori^{3*}

¹Department of Education and Psychology, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

²Directorate of University Health Services, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

³School for Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Received: 03 July 2024

Revised: 22 August 2024

Accepted: 04 September 2024

*Correspondence:

Kwame Ofori,

E-mail: James.ocloo@outlook.com

Copyright: © the author(s), publisher and licensee Medip Academy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT

Background: Stakeholders of education are concerned about how factors such as single parenting are negatively affecting the students of Ghana, especially Nkanfoa Methodist Primary School in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The study set out to investigate the effects of single parenting on students' academic performance at Nkanfoa Methodist Junior High School (JHS) in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

Methods: Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study employed a mixed-method approach through the use of self-developed questionnaires. Eighty students selected through a proportionate stratified sampling participated in this study. Data was analysed using descriptives and independent sample t tests.

Results: The results from the study revealed that students from two-parent homes performed better than those from single-parent homes. In addition, more students were affected by parental status by way of their fees not being paid on time, all their books not being provided to aid their academic work, and their parents not reminding them to learn. Furthermore, the majority of students from single-parent homes faced challenges such as verbal abuse from parents, and their parents being more concerned with their jobs than them among others.

Conclusions: It was recommended that school authorities and community leaders should work together to organize seminars and workshops for parents to empower them to take active roles in the academic work of their children.

Keywords: Single parenting, Academic performance, Abuse, Community leaders

INTRODUCTION

The term parent refers to any adult who plays a significant role in a student's life. Parenting is the regulation of the behaviour and development of children, with the intention that they will be able to live a socially desirable life, adapt to their environment, and pursue their goals.¹

Parents play an essential role in the growth of their children. Parenting and high-standard quality education are vital in developing the right human resources to take part in the development endeavours in order to help

alleviate the problems that the nation is grappling with.² Research has shown that parents are the most accurate predictors as far as students' achievement in school is concerned. The extent to which a student's family can create a home environment that encourages learning and effective communication plays a very important role in education.³

The ecological systems theory, is of the view that children develop simultaneously both in two systems, school and family.² It is therefore no surprise that children from single-parent families are at high risk of having lower school performance and exhibiting more

behavioural problems compared to children from nuclear families.⁴ Parents are their children's first and foremost teachers, guidance counsellors and nurturers. Parents are responsible for providing the basic resources that are needed, like home, and clothing. They are also responsible for taking good care of these resources, such as ensuring that the home environment is safe and clean and that children take foods that are healthy and nutritious. Parental support is essential in maintaining a healthy relationship with children and that a positive parental attitude towards education, strong parental support and interest all contribute to a student's progress in their education.

Conversely, the Ghana statistical service indicates that over 9% of households in the Cape Coast Metropolitan assembly, where Nkanfoa is a suburb, were headed by single parents. Unfortunately, there is a lack of studies in Ghana, particularly in the Cape Coast Metropolitan assembly, that investigate the evolving family structure and its impact on children. The objective of the study was therefore to assess the academic performance of children growing up with single parents in Nkanfoa township, Cape Coast.

METHODS

Research approach/design

This study employed a mixed-method approach with a survey design. A mixed-methods approach combines both quantitative and qualitative data, delivering a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the issues at hand, as well as a finer appreciation of the intricate factors involved. Utilising this approach, tailored interventions and support plans can be devised for children growing up in single-parent households.

Inclusion criteria

All students, teachers and parents of students who consented to be part of the study were included.

Exclusion criteria

All students below JHS level were excluded.

The target population comprised JHS students, teachers, parents of the students of Nkanfoa Methodist Junior High School from April, 2023-September, 2023, and who consented to be part of the study. The study excluded participants who were unable to participate due to physical or mental limitations. Eighty JHS students were used for the quantitative section of this study, based on unpublished baseline data previously obtained. These students formed the total number of students identified to be living under single parenting or double parenting. Employing a stratified sampling technique, students were proportionately sampled to obtain an equal number of students from single-parent homes and double-parent

homes. In all 80 students were sampled for this study. This number was deemed appropriate as it has been argued that 30 respondents are the minimum requirement of a sample or sub-sample for a study to which statistical data analysis will be applied irrespective of the population.⁶ Thus, more than 30 students per category were satisfactory and representative for the data analysis.

Questionnaires were used in collecting data for the quantitative section. It was made up of four main sections. Section A comprised the background characteristics of respondents, while section B looked at the effect of parenting status on students' academic performance. Section C elicited responses to challenges of the parental status students.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by University of Cape Coast institutional review board.

Data processing and analysis

The completed questionnaires were coded into the SPSS software (Version 23.0). Data analytical tools included descriptive statistics, independent sample t tests and cross-tabulation. Descriptive statistics were employed on the sociodemographic characteristics of the students. The independent sample t test was used to compare the mean scores of students living with single-parent and double-parents. A cross-tabulation was employed to compare students from the two homes across the spectrum of challenges identified through the literature review which comprised of parents not being able to control their wards, parents not monitoring their wards, parents abusing their children verbally, parents being more concerned with work, children feeling shy to socialise with peers, children perceiving to be happier living with both parents and parents being unable to provide all their ward's school needs on time.

Finally, cross-tabulation was used to compare the effect of parental status on the students across issues such as my fees being paid on time, parents providing all the books needed on time, parents supervising their ward's studies at home, parent always reminding their children to study and parents supporting their wards with their homework at home. Data was presented as frequencies, percentages, means and graphs.

RESULTS

The sampled JHS students were made up of 44 males and 36 females. The maximum age of the students at Nkanfoa Methodist JHS was 17 years while the minimum age was 12 years. The median age of the students was 13 years (skewness=0.546) with a semi-interquartile range of 0.5.

Table 1 presents results on the class level and the parental status of students.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the students at Nkanfoa Methodist JHS.

Variables	Subscale	N	Percentage (%)
Class level	JHS 1	30	37.5
	JHS 2	28	35.0
	JHS 3	22	27.5
Who the students stay with	Single parent	40	50
	Double parent	40	50

Table 2: Results of independent sample t test comparing between the students from single-parent homes and those from two-parent homes.

Parenting	Mean	SD	P value
Two-parent	77.48	8.20	0.00
Single-parent homes	52.48	8.89	

Performance of single-parented students as compared to double-parented students?

The results presented in Table 2 indicated that the mean scores of students from single-parent homes were statistically significant from the mean scores of students from double-parent homes. The results from the independent sample t test revealed a $t=-13.074$, $p=0.000$, $n=80$, 2-tailed. The results shown from the study suggest that students from two-parent homes are likely to perform higher (mean=77.48, SD=8.20, n=80) than those from single-parent homes (mean=52.48, SD=8.89, n=80). It was conclusive on the hypothesis that the students from

two-parent homes performed better than those from single-parent homes based on the obtained score.

Effects of single parenting on students of Nkanfoa Methodist Junior High School in the Cape Coast Metropolis

Figure 1 revealed that 28 (70%) students from double-parent homes as compared to 14 (35%) students from single-parent homes revealed that their fees were paid on time. In terms of parents providing all the books the students would need in school, the study revealed that 24 (60%) students from double-parent homes had their parents providing all their books during the year while 8 students, representing 20 percent of students from single-parent homes confirmed that their books were provided to aid them in their academic work. In addition, the majority (75%) of the students from double-parent homes maintained that their parents reminded them to study as compared to 14 (35%) of students from single-parent homes.

Challenges of single-parented pupils of Nkanfoa Methodist JHS in the Cape Coast Metropolis

The results from the study revealed that 34 (85%) and 32 (80%) of the students maintained that their single parents abused them verbally and did not monitor them while studying respectively. The majority of students from both single-parent and double-parent homes admitted that their parents were more concerned with their work than their academic life. Finally, a student from a double-parent homes revealed being shy to socialise with peers.

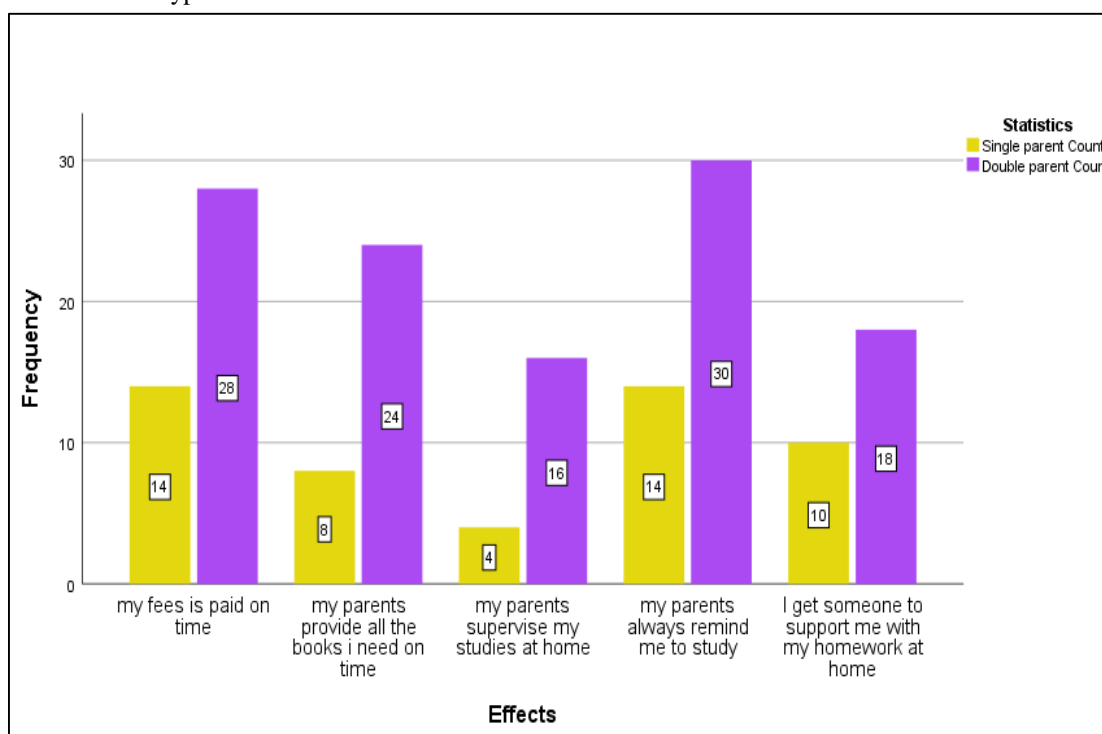


Figure 1: The effect of parental status on the performance of students.

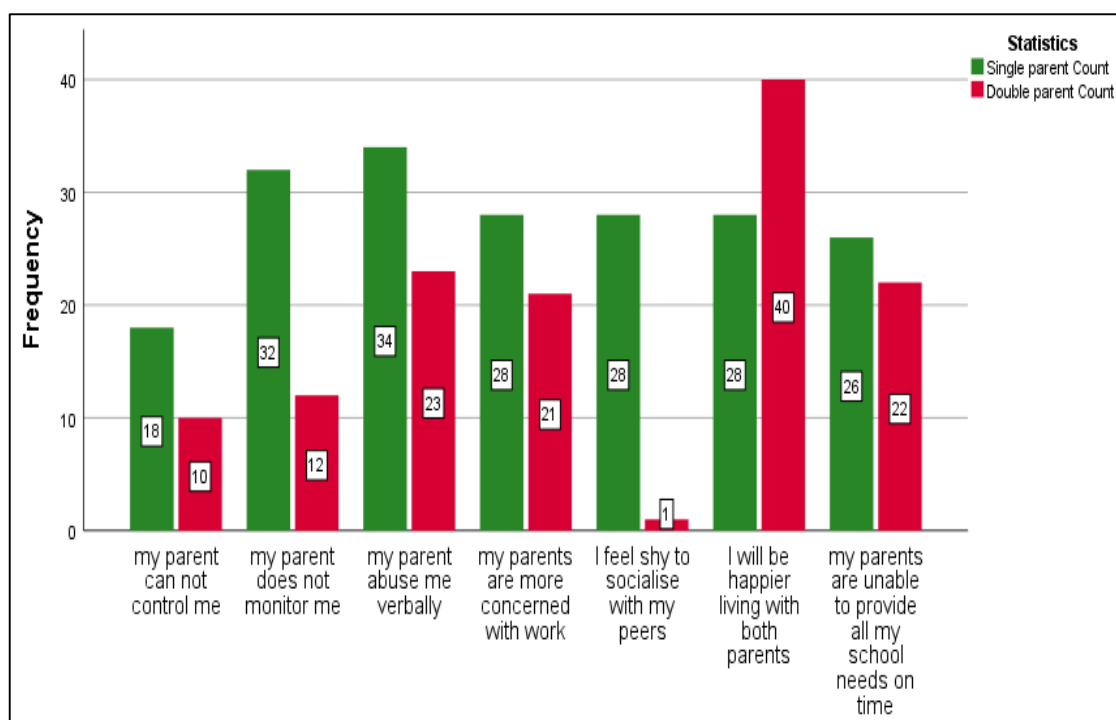


Figure 2: Challenges of parental status on pupils of Nkanfoa Methodist JHS in the Cape Coast Metropolis.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that students from two-parent homes performed better than those from single-parent homes. It has been established that children from intact families show less anxiety about their academic activities because they are emotionally more stable with fewer emotional problems. In comparison to this view, Schultz revealed that higher levels of emotional, social and academic problems are recorded among children from uneven households than from intact households.⁶ The results from our study support the empirical evidence which suggests that parental or guardian involvement is associated positively with students' performance in school.⁷ A study conducted by Abudu and Fuseini revealed that the sample from two-parent homes had most of their parents helping them in their academic work as compared to those from single-parent families.⁸ In a similar vein, married parents in Ghana are more likely to engage in their children's education than single parents.⁹ To further endorse the influence of parental involvement, literature indicates that family and parental interactions in the house are more significant to pupils' academic work than the socioeconomic background of the pupils.¹⁰ Parents who have high aspirations tend to be more involved in the education of their children to meet their set goals for the family, Undeniably, it has been found that adequate parental investments in the education of their children are a common factor in determining the level of success made by the children at school.¹¹

More students from single-parenting suffered the effects of their parental status than students from double-parented homes. More students from single-parent homes

pointed out that their school fees were often not paid on time which could affect their academic performance, their parents did not provide all the books they needed on time. In further evidence, their parents do not normally supervise their studies at home and these negatively influence their academic performance. To worsen the situation, these students were not reminded by their parents to study. The results are in line with the study of Amofa which makes clear that in some cases children in homes of separation or divorce do not always perform well academically.¹² Studies such as those of Nyarko revealed that children's academic performance improves when both parents are actively involved in their education.¹¹ In this sense, the reverse can be presumed to be true.

Students living under single parenting in Nkanfoa Methodist JHS were more challenged than students living in double-parented homes with some issues such as their parents not controlling them, their parents not monitoring them, and their parents abusing them verbally most of the time. Again, their parents are more concerned with their jobs than them, feeling shy to socialise with their peers, they being happier, living with both parents and their parents being unable to provide all their school needs on time. The results of this study confirmed the study by Agbo and Salami.^{13,14} These authors were of the view that adolescents from broken homes were usually associated with anti-social behaviour and poor academic records. There was a likelihood of the child becoming a misfit in society when the remaining parent could not cope with problem of single parenthood. This finding substantiates the findings of other researchers such as Salami who found that children from single-parent homes have low

self-esteem, low achievement motivation and low tolerance for delay of gratification than those from intact families where father and mother are present.¹⁴ Further, in single-parent families, most of the affected people are confronted with several stressors and changes which prevent them from enjoying healthy lifestyle coupled with having limited human capital and financial resources.

Limitations

The study was conducted in only one school within a short time frame hence the results cannot be extrapolated or generalized to represent that of the entire country.

CONCLUSION

Students from Nkanfoa methodist JHS living in two-parent homes performed better than students from single-parenting homes and these underperforming students were confronted with several challenges that limited their academic capacity and potential.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors would like to thank to Prof. Elvis Ofori Ameyaw, Dr Douglas Arthur and Dr Esthr Eshun for their guidance.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

REFERENCES

1. Bradley RH, Caldwell BM. Caregiving and the regulation of child growth and development: Describing proximal aspects of caregiving systems. *Developmental Rev*. 1995;15(1):38-85.
2. Bronfenbrenner U. *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press. 1979.
3. Khan FN, Begum M, Imad M. Relationship between Students' Home Environment and Their Academic Achievement at Secondary School Level. *Pak J Distance Online Learning*. 2019;5(2):223-34.
4. Usakli H. Comparison of single and two parents children in terms of behavioral tendencies. *Int J Humanities Social Sci*. 2013;3(8):256-70.
5. Ghana Statistical Service. 2010, Available at: https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/2010_PHC_National_Analytical_Report.pdf. Accessed on 15 April 2024.
6. Bailey KD. *Methods of social research*. 4th edi., Simon and Schuster. 2008.
7. Nyarko K. Parental school involvement: The case of Ghana. *J Emerging Trends Educat Res Policy Studies*. 2011;2(5):378-81.
8. Abudu AM, Fuseini MN. Influence of single parenting on pupils' academic performance in basic schools in the Wa Municipality. *Int J Educat Learning Develop*. 2013;1(2):85-94
9. Chowa G, Ansong D, Osei-Akoto I. Parental involvement and academic performance in Ghana. *YouthSave Research Brief*. 2012;12-42:1-9.
10. Kellaghan T, Sloane K, Alvarez B, Bloom BS. *The home environment and school learning: Promoting parental involvement in the education of children*. Jossey-Bass. 1993.
11. Gershoff ET, Aber JL, Raver CC, Lennon MC. Income is not enough: Incorporating material hardship into models of income associations with parenting and child development. *Child Development*. 2007;78(1):70-95.
12. Amofa RA. Effects of single parenting on adolescents academic performance. University of Cape Coast Faculty of Social Sciences Institute for Development Studies. 2013:1-23.
13. Agbo JA. Effects of delinquent environment on academic achievement of primary six pupils in army children's school aware. *Niger Teacher Today J Teacher Educat*. 1997;5(21):105.
14. Salami SO, Alawode EA. Influence of single-parenting on the academic achievement of adolescents in secondary schools: Implications for counseling. Ibadan: Department of Guidance and Counseling University of Ibadan. 2000.

Cite this article as: Essiam SA, Ocloo J, Ofori K. Effects of single parenting on students' academic performance at Nkanfoa Methodist Junior High School in the Cape Coast Metropolis. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2024;11:3765-9.