

Family Structure as Predictor of Pupils' Attitude and Performance in Mathematics in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Poor attitude and achievement in Mathematics has been consistently established among primary school pupils in Nigeria. Previous studies explored contribution of various factors to the problem to predict pupils' attitude to and achievement in Mathematics. This study therefore was conducted to examine the family structure to pupils' attitude and achievement in mathematics in Ondo State. A survey research design was adopted. Three public primary schools were selected purposively from nine LGAs. Thirty (30) pupils were randomly selected from each school. Three instruments used for this research were family structure questionnaire, pupils' attitude questionnaire and achievement test. Data was analysed using percentage and One-Way ANOVA. The study concluded that family structure play significant roles in pupils' attitude to and achievement in Mathematics. Recommendations were made that, parents and other adults should be sensitised on how they can effectively support pupils towards improved attitude and achievement in Mathematics.

Keywords: Mathematics, Pupils' Attitude, Achievement, Family Structure

1.0 Introduction

One of the aims of mathematics is the development of pupils with a solid foundation in numeracy building them as future scientists. However, the performance of pupils' in mathematics is not encouraging. Majority of them demonstrate negative dispositions to the teaching and learning of the subject. The main objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which family structure predict pupils' attitude to and achievement in mathematics in Ondo state, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to examine the extent to which family structure influence pupils' attitude to mathematics and also examine the extent to which family structure predict pupils' mathematics achievement.

Pupils in schools show non-challant attitude to schooling by absenting themselves from school. These challenges have been major concern to stakeholders in the education sector, that is why it necessitates a critical investigation of the extent to which family structure predict pupils' achievement and attitude to mathematics. This gap necessitates this study on the family structure in relation to mathematics learning attitude and achievement among pupils. This study, therefore, investigate family structure as predictors of pupils attitude to and achievement in mathematics in Ondo State, Nigeria. Two null research hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- i. H_0 1. There is no significant influence of family structure on pupils' mathematics attitude.
- ii. H_0 2. There is no significant influence of family structure on pupils' mathematics achievement.

This study would benefit the primary school pupils, teachers in early childhood centers, parents, guardians, school owners as well as the entire society because it would provide all these stakeholders with an understanding of the relationship between home factors and pupils' learning outcomes in Mathematics.

2.0 Literature Review

Mathematics is a subject which involves symbols and numbers that are very useful virtually in all subject areas. This is because all fields of study are dependent on these symbols and numbers for problems solving and prediction of outcomes. Competencies in mathematics learning is vital to any individual and any nation, in domestic and business deals, scientific discoveries, technological breakthrough, problems-solving and decisions making in different situations in life (Osokoya, 2006). According to Akinoso (2011) and Rasheed (2021), Mathematics is seen as the basis for science and technology and the tool for achieving scientific and technological development. It is against this background and other vital usefulness of mathematics that the Federal Government of Nigeria in recognition of the essence of mathematics made it a core and compulsory subject at all the levels of the 9-3-4 system of education, as contained in the National Policy on Education (F.R.N., 2013).

Agada (2017) and Akanmu (2017) supported the assertion by stating that mathematics is the generalized arithmetic which every economic sector needs as the medium through which economic challenges, either in words or mechanical are semantically and syntactically translated, written and manipulated to give the desired logical answer that is being interpreted for the given situation. Mathematics, as a subject, affects all aspect of human life at different levels. It is seen as the foundation of critical thinking that is vital in the socio-economic development of a nation. The subject encompasses a body of knowledge, skills and procedures that can be applied in a variety of ways like description, illustration, interpretation and prediction to explain patterns and relationships in number, algebra, shape and space, measurement and data organization. It helps to convey and clarify meanings of concepts. These qualities and features project Mathematics as an essential instrument for the pupils' understanding of the world around them.

Cognisant of the importance of Mathematics would be more rewarding for pupils to have a good level of performance in the subject. The achievement of learners is the outcome or output of every educational programme; it is an indicator of the extent to which the educational objectives have been achieved. It is measured through examinations and, at times, continuous assessment tests (Shoaga & Rasheed, 2019). Adeogun et al. (2022) acknowledge that to evaluate students' performance, test and examination are good measures of students' performance or academic achievement. Pupils' achievement in a subject is very important as it is a yardstick for the academic progress of learners or its lack of it thereof.

In spite of the great importance attached to Mathematics, the subject is known to be the most dreaded by learners among all subjects offered in schools (Akinoso, 2011). Opara and Nwaukwu (2016) opine that as important as mathematics is, it is worrisome that there is poor performance in it because students attitude to it, considered the subject as a difficult one. In spite of the research efforts made in the past, the problem of poor attitude and low performance in mathematics still lingers on especially at the lower primary school level especially in Ondo State, Nigeria. This gap in the existing literature is a propelling factor for the researcher to examine the predictive influence of family structure on pupils learning attitude and achievement in mathematics.

Ajasa (2019) and Olaniran et al., (2016) adduce attitude to learning to poor achievement of pupils in mathematics education. Moreover, the poor performance and attitude of students resulting in the poor

performance in mathematics is not peculiar to Nigerian pupils alone, it is a global phenomenon. According to Famuagun et al. (2019) poor performance in mathematics is due to non cooperativeness of the learners and large class size. It is, therefore, reported that large class size affects preparatory training such as students' interest to further the learning of mathematics. Poor performance or achievement in mathematics in Nigerian primary schools could be attributed to pupils' negative attitudes towards learning the subject. The general poor achievements in mathematics in primary schools in Nigeria are evident in a National Report of Monitoring of Learning Achievement Project 2003 titled "Assessment of Learning Achievement of Primary four and Primary six pupils. It is revealed that part of the factors responsible for poor performance in Mathematics could be attributed to poor parenting care, family support, poor funding, and lack of instructional materials and non-availability of textbooks. Imoko and Isa (2015) attributed this ugly trend of poor performance in mathematics to a very weak mathematics foundation which was laid at the primary school level and carried over to the junior secondary school. It peaked at the senior secondary school level.

Attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience; exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. According to Ajasa (2019) and Ojo (2016), attitudes are acquired through learning and can be changed through persuasion using a variety of techniques. Although attitudes change gradually, people constantly form attitudes and modify old ones when they are exposed to new information and new experiences. Ojo (2016) stated that learners bring into the classroom acquired attitudes which could hinder or facilitate learning.

The attitude that learners bring to the classroom that hinder learning could be traced to the home factors. Furthermore, they are considered to influence choices to attend response to values, participate in and make a commitment to educational activities. Shah et al. (2012) stated that considerable evidence demonstrates that attitudes play an important role in determining behaviour. The report of Ajasa (2019) stated that parent's contributions to their ward's performance do a lot in their life. Since the parents and the child are part of the home, the home goes a long way in fulfilling the progress of the child. Home factors are the support received at home such as provision of mathematical manipulative instructional materials that stimulate cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in readiness for learning Mathematics. The home has a great influence on the child's psychological, emotional, and social disposition.

Olaniran et al. (2016) asserted that the state of the home affects individuals since the parents are the first socializing agents in an individual's life. This is because the family background and context of a child affect his reaction to life situations and his level of performance. The home, as rightly said, has great influence on the child's holistic development; therefore family structure is very essential.

Family structure in terms of single parent, nuclear family, step family, extended family and grand parent family has been noted in literature to have a significant influence on students' learning achievement and mental development. Family structure refers to the combination of relatives that comprise a family. Family structure is the most important influence in a child's life and research has shown that teenagers living outside of two biological parents have a tendency to do less well in their life (Eweniyi, 2016). Attitudes, interests and values are central to the learning process both as ends and as means, depending on whether they are positively or negatively directed towards a particular object (Eweniyi, 2016). Incessant poor achievement in mathematics at the Nigerian primary school level has also been attributed to pupils' negative attitudes towards learning the subject.

Bronfenbrenner ecological system theory, also known as human ecology was developed in 1979 by Urie Bronfenbrenner, microsystem theory would be suitable for this study because it has a direct contact with the child in their immediate environment, such as parents, siblings, peers, teachers and the school. Relationships in a microsystem are bi-directional, meaning the child can be influenced by other people in their environment and is also capable of changing the beliefs and actions of other people too. Furthermore, the reactions of the child to individuals in their microsystem can influence how they are treated in return. The interactions within microsystems are often very personal and crucial for the child's development. If a child has a strong nurturing relationship with their parents, this is said to have a positive effect on the child, whereas, distant and unaffectionate parents will negatively impact the child.

Attitude, in literal terms, means state of mind and its tendency to respond to a certain situation or a person. It is also a predisposition that guides individuals and their responses, in the context of education, to a certain learning activity. Ajasa (2019) defined attitude as a psychological and mental state of mind where individual responses are influenced by a person's life experiences and is regarded as a primary building stone in the construction of social psychology. Olowe (2019) explained that attitude has to do with a positive or negative evaluation which a person holds towards people, events, ideas, objects or any other thing within the person's environment. He emphasised the important role that life experiences play in determining attitude.

Academic achievement of student is the ability of the student to study and remember facts and communicate his knowledge orally or orthographically even in an examination condition. However, different people have explained different factors responsible for the academic achievement of students. Factors that influence students' academic achievement at the senior secondary school are not conclusively known and could be multivariate in nature. They might include students' attitudes towards school, interest in learning, study habit, attribution, self-efficacy, intelligence, and motivation. Ekine, et al., (2016) maintained that the academic performance of students is a phenomenon that has educational, psychological and sociological connotations. Thus, students' academic achievement cannot be completely accounted for by only one or two variables but a number of them. Since students' academic performance depends on a number of variables, performance could be enhanced through the identification and manipulation of each of such variables.

Beyond students' perception of how well school will prepare them for life, their overall attitude to school and to all the school-related activities could be important. For some students, school is central to their daily life. They view schooling as essential to their long-term well-being, and this attitude is reflected in their participation in academic and non-academic pursuits. Students with such positive attitude tend to have good relations with school staff and other students. However, many youths express negative attitude to school as they do not tend to believe that the school and success in it will have a strong bearing on their future. Such negative feelings and attitudes may result in their becoming disaffected with school. They may withdraw from school activities, and in some cases, participate in disruptive behaviour and display negative attitudes towards teachers and other students.

Highly positive attitude towards school increases intrinsic motivation, for it fosters self-confidence and investment in the community. It is only with positive attitude towards school that a student can develop a good sense of belonging and engagement in school which eventually affect their achievement. Achievement is when you are successful with effort, skills or courage. It is the ability to perform better in a task given by an instructor. Achievement can be good or poor, depending on performance. The incessant

poor achievement in mathematics in the Nigerian primary and post primary schools levels may be attributed to students' lack of interest in learning Mathematics.

2.1 Family Structure

Researches on family structure have risen over the span of recent decades. Researchers have inspected living plan outlines and their suggestions for the wellbeing of children (Eweniyi, 2016). Teenagers living outside of two biological parent families have a tendency to do less well than those in a sound family structure. The progressions among children in single-parent and intact parent families are moderately minor. Concerns on influence of family structure on a child's academic attainment have been reflected some dynamism throughout the years. One key measure of a child's wellbeing and academic success is the family structure.

Studies conducted by researchers on academic performance have shown that family structures are significant in determining children's educational achievement. Olaniran, et al., (2016). in a cross-country investigation testing the impact of family structure on academic accomplishment, found that in all nations the impact of family structure declined by a quarter and a half when considering a family's financial foundation. Amato (2010) affirmed that children from single parent families are additionally undermining, hyperactive and forceful in nature. The broad extent of the issues single parent families have is relative as compared to those for two parent families.

Similarly, Ortesse in Olaniran, et al., (2016) found that most children whose fathers have been missing while they were at ages one to five of life are mentally unstable, psychopathic and criminalistic in nature than those whose guardians were accessible during this period. Numerous studies have documented that growing up with a single parent is negatively associated with children's educational outcomes (McLanahan et al., 2013). Previous studies found that children in single-father families demonstrated low academic performance, as did those in single-mother families. Family structure is the most important influence in a child's life and numerous researches have been conducted that showed a direct relationship between family demographics and student achievement.

Ekine et al. (2016) researched into how the family structure affects a student's performance in both the classroom and standardized test scores. The researchers discovered that family structure does indeed affect a students' performance. They used family structure as a significant factor that affects student achievement both positively and negatively. They realized that family structure or demographics was not enough an explanation as to what actually makes the difference in the students' achievement.

It was discovered that negative relationship between single parent involvement and student achievement as showed by further investigation into the impact of family structure on pupils' achievement particularly in mathematics. Adeogun et al. (2022) in their examination of the association between family structure and educational attainment found a negative association between educational attainment and family structure.

Mathematics is a subject that prepares an individual for academic excellence and useful living in the society. Any society that is preparing an individual for useful living must develop a strong mathematical foundation at the basic school level. Malik and Salman (2018) expressed that Mathematics is a concenter subject which serves as foundation for pupils' level of thinking, skill development and problem solving. This position reaffirms Malik's (2017) earlier opinion that it is also a unifying subject that prepares pupils for a useful and meaningful living and that Mathematics is a language and key to everyday activities of

mankind in science and technology. Mathematics embraces many important ideas about numbers and space which involves problem solving activities and a very powerful way of communication.

Ojo (2019) worked on the impact of family environment relationship, adjustment, anxiety, achievement, motivation, self-concept and academic achievement and concluded that family relationship played a determining role in promoting the adjustment of the students. It was reported that the punishment aspect of environment has negative impact on achievement among girls. It was also found that a positive affective relationship between parents and children increases the likelihood that the child will initiate and persists in challenging and intellectual task.

Akanmu (2017) asserted that mathematics is the study of numbers, symbols, counting, measuring, number patterns and relationships of quantities. Nneji and Alio (2017) observed that mathematics as a subject does not only deal with the manipulation of numbers, but also goes further to explain the relationships between the numbers, attributes of the number and application of the numbers to solving day to day practical life problems. Imoko and Isa (2015) posited that mathematics provides the bedrock and foundation for creative thinking and cognitive development and should, therefore, be emphasised early in the academic life of the nation's citizenry.

In spite of the global downward trend in education, mathematics still maintains a noteworthy position inside and outside the classroom. However, attitudes and beliefs about this subject may affect pupils' understanding of its significance in their lives and hamper or support their interest and learning of the subject. Be it physics, chemistry, computer sciences, or any other subject, there is a significant chance that pupils who do not acquire an understanding of basic mathematical concepts could be ultimately restricted in their academic achievements. Therefore, knowledge of Mathematics is an essential tool in the society.

2.2 Family Structure and Pupils' Attitude to and Performance in Mathematics

In recent decades, divorce rates have risen and the number of children growing up with a single parent has increased in Japan. According to a Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions conducted by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the proportion of single-mother households among all households with children aged less than 18 years nearly doubled from 3.4% in 1988 to 6.8% in 2010. While lower than single-mother households, the proportion of single-father households also increased from 0.6 to 0.8% during the same period. The increase in single-parent families is almost entirely due to the increased number of divorces. Vital statistics compiled by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare indicate that the number of divorces drastically increased from 166,640 in 1985 to 226,215 in 2015. As a result, the proportion of single-mother households formed through divorce increased from 49.1% in 1985 to 80.8% in 2011 (McLanahan et al, 2013).

Single parenthood can seriously affect children because families play an important role in socialization. Numerous studies have documented that growing up with a single parent is negatively associated with children's educational outcomes in the United States and western European countries (Amato, 2010 & McLanahan et al., 2013). Owing to the fact that academic achievement is an important determinant of later educational attainment, it is an especially important educational outcome. Academic achievement also plays an important role in the Japanese educational system, which is characterized by selection based on student academic achievement.

It is important to examine the influence of family structure on children's academic achievement because single parenthood is closely associated with poverty. In recent years, children's poverty has received much

attention in Japan (Abe, 2008). According to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Family database, the child poverty rate-the relative poverty rate among households with children aged less than 18 years in Japan was 16.3% in 2014, the 10th highest among 33 OECD countries. Although the relatively high child poverty rate is a serious problem, still more importance is that single-parent households tend to face serious economic difficulty in Japan. For example, the relative poverty rate among households with children and a single working adult in Japan was 56.0% in 2014, the highest among 33 OECD countries, greatly exceeding the OECD average of (23.2%).

The difficult economic circumstances of single-parent households in Japan mainly concern single mother households, which make up a large proportion of these households. Furthermore, the mother households are more likely to be economically challenged than single father households (Ajasa, 2019). For these reasons, earlier researchers focused on the (negative) impacts of the absence of fathers (father absence) on child well being. However, it is now recognized that the absence of mothers (mother absence) also negatively affects children. Previous studies found that children in single-father families demonstrated low academic performance, as did those in single-mother families. .

3.0 Research Method

The research employed the survey research type. The sample size for this study is eight hundred and ten (810) respondents. Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed in the selection of sample for the research. The three senatorial districts were used for this study. From these, simple random sampling technique was used to select three local government areas each, making a total of nine LGAs in all. From the sampled local government areas, simple random sampling technique was employed to select three schools each, making a total of twenty-seven primary schools. From the schools, proportional stratified sampling technique was employed to select thirty (30) pupils. Three research instruments were used and administered with the assistance of some research assistants and the class teachers. The data were analysed using percentage and ANOVA.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1.

Descriptive Table of Pupils Profile by Family Structure

Family Structure	Frequency	Percent
Nuclear Family	63	7.8
Single Parent Family	179	22.1
Step Family	432	53.3
Extended Family	77	9.5
Grand Parent Family	59	7.3
Total	810	100.0

Source: Authors' Computation with SPSS (2022)

Table 1 shows the pupils' profile based on their family structure. The table shows that a proportion of 63 representing 7.8% of respondents among the pupils were from nuclear family, a total proportion of 179 which represent 22.2% were from single parent family while a larger proportion of 432 representing 53.3% were from step family. The table reveals further that a proportion of 77 representing 9.5% of respondents

were from extended family while the remaining 59 representing 7.3% were from grand parent family. The result from this table implies that more than half of the pupils were from step family.

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of family structure on pupils’ Mathematics attitude in Ondo State.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA of influence of Family Structure on Pupils’ Mathematics Performance

Family Structure	N	Mean	SD
Nuclear Family	63	31.22	4.70
Single Parent Family	179	32.19	5.35
Step Family	432	30.16	5.34
Extended Family	77	32.51	5.22
Grand Parent Family	59	31.15	5.59
Total	810	30.99	5.37

Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	X		F	Sig.	Remark
		df	Mean Square			
Between Groups	735.914	4	183.979			
Within Groups	22625.962	805	28.107	6.54	.000	Significant
Total	23361.877	809				

Source: Authors’ Computation with SPSS (2022).

The descriptive aspect of Table 2. above shows the number of pupils in each type of family structure and it shows the mean scores and standard deviation on the pupils Mathematics attitude based on their types of family structure as follows: nuclear family (N = 63, = 31.22, SD = 4.70), single parent family (N = 179, = 32.19, SD = 5.35), step family (N = 432, =30.16, SD = 5.34), extended family (N = 77, = 32.51, SD = 5.22). Further, the ANOVA result aspect of the table shows that the difference in the means scores led to a statistically significantly difference ($F_{(4,805)} = 6.546$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis 1 was rejected giving room for the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is significant influence of family structure on pupil’s Mathematics attitude in Ondo State.

In order to determine the source of the significant difference among the groups, post-hoc analysis was conducted using Bonferroni pairwise analysis. The result is shown in table 4.13 below.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of family structure on pupils’ Mathematics performance in Ondo State.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA of Influence of Family Structure on Pupils’ Mathematics Performance.

Family Structure	N	Mean	SD
Nuclear Family	63	31.18	5.69
Single Parent Family	179	32.31	4.99
Step Family	432	30.74	5.70
Extended Family	77	32.36	5.83
Grand Parent Family	59	31.58	5.36
Total	810	31.26	5.57

Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	438.812	4	109.703			
Within Groups	24675.701	805	30.653	3.579	.007	Significant
Total	25114.514	809				

Source: Authors’ Computation with SPSS (2022)

The descriptive aspect of Table 3 shows the number of pupils in each type of family structure and it shows the mean scores and standard deviation on the pupils’ mathematics performance Mathematics performances based on their types of family structure. The table shows the pupils

Mathematics performance means scores for each category of family structure as follows: Nuclear family (N= 63 = 31.18, SD = 5.69), single parent family (N = 179, =32.31, SD = 4.99), step family (N = 432, = 30.74, SD = 5.70), extended family (N = 77, = 32.36, SD = 5.83) and grandparent family (N = 59, = 31.58, SD =5.36). Further, the ANOVA result aspect of the table shows that the difference in the means scores led to a statistically significant difference ($F_{(4,805)} = 3.579$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis 2 was equally rejected giving room for the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that there is significant influence of family structure on pupil’s Mathematics performances in Ondo State.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

The research shows that pupils' that stays with the stepfather are more with the highest percentage of 53.3%. This report shows that the family structure have influence on the pupils' attitude to and achievement in mathematics.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the results of this study as highlighted above, it can be concluded that a positive and significant relationship exists between family structure of pupils' attitude and academic achievement and is statistically significant.

The study was limited to public primary schools. The results may be peculiar to the type of pupils found in public schools which limit the extent to which the study is generalized. The data gathering was tedious, hectic and time consuming as a result of the different geographical areas in which the schools were located. The researcher and her assistants explained and translated each statement into the local language over and over, to the pupils' one after the other before they filled the questionnaire.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve the mathematics achievement and attitudes of pupils. Parent especially mothers should not neglect their care and affection. School heads are to discuss the importance of family and its structure during the Parent-Teachers-Association (PTA) meeting in order to intimate parents or guardians with their roles in promoting the education of their wards if they get involved, especially in Mathematics. Parents should deem it fit to give their children every necessary material needed and ensure the children are not kept with the grandparents.

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