Effects of single parenthood on the academic performance and truancy behaviour of secondary school students in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study was conducted to investigate the effects of single-parenthood on the education aspiration and truancy behaviour among secondary school students in Dar es Salaam. The study used a survey design wherein a questionnaire was designed by the researchers to measure the effects of single-parenthood on the academic performance of students. Selection of samples performed using simple probability random sampling as chi-square was applied for analysing the hypotheses. The study gathered two hundred students which were sampled randomly. Schools were deliberately selected to accommodate both boys and girls schools. The first hypothesis showed that there is no substantial difference between the academic performance of students from single parents and those from normal families with both parents. However, the second hypothesis discovered that there is substantial difference between truancy behaviour of secondary students from single parent families and those from normal families with both parents. From the results, we concluded that there are similarities between the academic performance of single parent students and normal families with both parents, however their truancy behaviour is completely different between them. The study recommends that students from single parenthood should be counselled on self-esteem and self-concept, also divorce in marriage should be the last option when parents are in disagreement.

I. Introduction

Family can be defined as two or more persons who love and care for each other. These share resources, responsibility for decisions, values and goals and have a commitment to one another over time [1]. The modern culture has changed and outgrown the values and beliefs that were thought to be the core beliefs and values of our society. Even though, moralists and conservatives are experiencing disgust over the currently evolving belief and cultural systems. The truth is, what has been unacceptable in the olden days, is now becoming fast and rapidly rising trends. For decades and even centuries, one of the major concerning issues to the conservatives, is the issue of single-parenting. Single-parenting is already becoming a fast and rapidly growing trends in the society. Single mother families are families where the child or children live with only mother that is without a father. According to Krapp and Wilson [2] Single parent family is a family with children headed by a parent who is a widowed or divorced and not remarried or by parent who has never married. For example some children may have lost a father who died or some kids may have a mother who is separated or divorced with her husband. Now, single mother families have been increasing in Tanzania for the past several decades, this is according to UNICEF report on children and women Tanzania [3]. Experts in children development have revealed that children who are raised by single parents are likely to experience trauma and ultimately develop certain behaviours which may affect such children throughout their lives [4]. Time has really changed, many of the old customs and traditions which were taught and practised for several years are becoming obsolete now. According to McLanahan [5] and Ferrell[6] children from mother-only families have poorer academic achievement; these children tend not to attend to schools due to the hardship of their life; and to cancel out of school, these lead them to poverty. Further; they are more likely to marry early and to have children at tender age, both in and out of marriage; to divorce, if they marry; and to commit delinquent acts such as drug and alcohol usage. Then again Wendy and Kathleen [7], assert that children from mother-only family are likely to be suspended or expelled from school, are likely to have problems with their teachers in doing their homework or paying attention in class. However, something still needs attention and empirical study of influence of single parent on academic achievement of students. This research tend to look into the effects of single parent on academic performance of secondary school students. This study is very important timely due to the ongoing poor performance of students in examinations faced by secondary school.
In developing countries, the common cause of single parent family is not divorce, but abandonment, death and imprisonment produce single-parent families, primarily headed by women. Example in Uganda the largest number of single-parent families is due to diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria as the result many families living in poverty with no state welfare [8]. In Tanzania, there is a high increasing rate of single-parenthood and the negative effects of single-parented life. For example, the number of secondary school students who are living in a single parent households have increased from 149,239 in 2009 [9] to 177,465 in 2012 [10].

A. Statement of the Problem

The main problem for this study is that many people in the society, teachers and parents are complaining on bad performance and poor attendance to classes. Academic reports and attendance of students from single parent family are indicators to academic performance.

B. Research Question

The following research questions were raised based on the background to the study.
1. Is there any difference between the academic performance of students from single-parent homes and intact homes?
2. Is there any difference between truancy behaviour of children from single parents and children of intact homes?

C. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the influence of single parent family on the academic performance and truancy of secondary school students. The study also wants to know the effects of single-parenting on the academic achievement and if it causes truancy in the students of secondary schools.

D. Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested with suitable statistical techniques at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant difference between the academic performance of adolescents from single-parenting homes and those from normal families with both parents.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant difference between the truancy behaviour of students from single-parenting homes and those from normal families with both parents.

II. Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a survey method of research that is aimed at collecting data for the purpose of interesting and knowing the effects of single-parenthood on the academic performance and truancy behaviour of secondary school students.

Population

The population of this study was drawn from secondary schools in Dar es Salaam Local Government. The students used were all the students of Ordinary level Secondary School and Advanced level Secondary School in Dar es Salaam Local Government Area.

Data Collection Techniques

The major source of data was an online based questionnaire which was basically designed to seek information from the students that play truancy, from normal families with both parents and from single-parenthood family. The questionnaire is a one section questionnaire. The questionnaire seeks information on age, name of respondents, name of school of respondents, sex, name of subject, class and the family structure. The reason for adding name of subject is to be able to match the names of the subjects and the academic performance after collection and prevalent truancy behaviour. The academic performance and the rate of truancy of the students was obtained by meeting with the counsellor or the class teacher for their just concluded examination results for the academic performance and asking for the class attendance for measuring the rate of truancy of the students.

Description of Instrumentation

The instrument used for collection of data information is a questionnaire with two section (A and B). Section A of the questionnaire is about Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, and section B is about effects of single parenthood on Academic Achievement and truancy behaviour of Students.

Validity and readability

The instrument was first given to some experts of secondary education including experts in the field of psychology and test and measurement. We made sure that all have agreed the validity of the instrument. Test-retest approach was applied, that means the instrument was given atleast twice on ten teachers of one selected school around Dar es Salaam city. The scores obtained at the two occasions from those groups were correlated using Pearson’s Moment Correlation Coefficient, and value of 0.80 was obtained.

Managing the questionnaire

The questionnaire was personally managed on the respondents of the sampled secondary schools. Two to three days were given for the respondent to fill the questionnaire. Thereafter, we collect the instrument for further analysis.

Method of Data analysis

The data collected was analysed by Chi-Square on hypothesis 1 and 2 based on the following formula:
\[ X = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} \]

III. Results and discussion

A. Research Hypothesis 1 (H0)

There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students from single-parenting homes and those from normal families with both parents. Testing this hypothesis was based on questions 3, 4 and 5 of the questionnaire.

Question 5: are you living with you both parents?
Question 6: are you living with only father or mother?
Question 7: What is your level of performance in the last final examination?
Question 8: What average did you get from your last terminal examination?

About total of 590 questionnaire distributed, 189 respondents were living with their parents either both or one. 48, making 25% of the respondents were living with only their father; 29% living with their mother while 87 respondents forming 46% were staying with both parents.

The hypothesis was tested using Chi-square as in the table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of performance</th>
<th>Family Status</th>
<th>( f_o )</th>
<th>( f_e )</th>
<th>( f_o - f_e )</th>
<th>( (f_o - f_e)^2 )</th>
<th>( \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With excellent class attendance</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>-54</td>
<td>2916</td>
<td>17.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4761</td>
<td>183.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With moderate class attendance</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>-23</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With poor class attendance</td>
<td>Both parents</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-16</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>590</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>215.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Research hypothesis 2 (H0)

There is no significant difference between the truancy behaviour of students from single-parenting homes and those from normal families with both parents. In order to test this hypothesis the following question was generated and given to respondents.

Question 9: What is your level of attendance to classes? Often [ ] rarely [ ] Not at all [ ]
Question 10. Are you currently out of school? Yes [ ] No [ ]

About total of 590 questionnaire distributed, 375 respondents were living with both parents. 215, making 57% of the respondents were living with only one parent either father or mother. 110 respondents with both parents were found with excellent class attendance and other 214 respondents with moderate class attendance. But 51 respondents among those with both parents were found with poor class attendance.

The hypothesis was tested using Chi-square as in the table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of performance</th>
<th>Mode of living</th>
<th>( f_o )</th>
<th>( f_e )</th>
<th>( f_o - f_e )</th>
<th>( (f_o - f_e)^2 )</th>
<th>( \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 credit and above</td>
<td>With father</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With mother</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With both</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 3 credits but 2 passes</td>
<td>With father</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With mother</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With both</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 2 passes(fail)</td>
<td>With father</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With mother</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With both</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>189</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Discussion of the findings

From the two hypothesis tested above, it is obvious that academic performance and truancy behaviour of students are not similar of students from single-parenting homes and those from normal families with both parents, and thus there is the need for parents to settle disputes for the sake of their children development. For the deceased parents, community including teachers around those families should be responsible by taking good care and encourage them to study.

V. Recommendation

The researcher’s recommendations are strongly directed to parents, students, the potential researchers and authority of schools in general.

1) **Parents** should endeavour to solve their social problems and realize that it is the joint responsibilities of father and mother that can see their children through their education achievement. Also should improve the standard of living of homes and parenting attitudes so that children would be able to learn good behaviours.

2) **Students** should focus to what they want to be in life that should their main target. They should give less consideration other distractions from home, school and society as something that would prevent them from achieving their goal in life. They should be ready to discuss whatever the obstacles their facing in school with their teacher or school guidance counsellor.

3) **Teachers** in the school system should also made all possible efforts to identify students with abnormal behaviour arising from the students. These may include aggression, worsening temper, lack of concentration, depression and truancy. Teacher should report such behaviours to the school authority for proper investigation and action.

It can be concluded that, the school should make sure that they have students background before they enrol them. Also information of child’s home circumstances is regularly checked and updated in conjunction with the parents. When the parents have separated, they should have information of custody and access the arrangements.

VI. References


VII. Acknowledgements

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

1. What age category do fall into: 11-15 [ ] 16-19 [ ] 20 and above [ ]

2. Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]

4. Name of the respondent: _______ _______ _______

Section B: Effects of single parenthood on Academic Achievement of Students

5. Are you living with you both parents? Yes [ ] No [ ]

6. Are you living with only father or mother?

7. What is your level of performance in the last final examination?

8. What average did you get from your last terminal examination?

9. What is your level of attendance to classes? Often [ ] rarely [ ] Not at all

10. Are you currently out of school? Yes [ ] No [ ]

11. If yes, at what class did you stop schooling?