Impact of Family Structure on Prevalence of Behavioural Pattern of Adolescents in Umuahia Abia State

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Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the impact that the structure of the family has on the behavioral pattern (attitude) of adolescents. Specifically this paper focuses on the role/influences of the parents (intact family) on the behavioral patterns of the adolescents in the home. Also this paper explored on establishing the relationship between the rate of behavioral problems of adolescents and family structure. Two research questions were formulated. A total of 650 families were selected through stratified random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was interview schedule comprising of items, which was correctly filled and collected by the researcher. Relevant data were coded and presented in frequency distribution tables. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. The result of the data analysis was presented as follows, cut off point for agreement is ≥ 2.5. The table of result showed that all respondents rated mal-adaptive behaviors among adolescents from intact family low with a pooled mean of 1.65. Recommendations were made based on the findings from the study.

Keywords: *Family structure, Prevalence, Behavioral pattern, Adolescence.*

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Background to the Study

Some people like Richard (1982) have argued that differences in life outcomes are largely determined by the characteristics of the family. Such characteristics among others include, family composition, social and economic resources. One fundamental characteristics of the family that has significant and sustaining effects on the children in the household is its structure (Okonkwo, 1995). A family structure can constrain the availability of economic and social resources such as parents' ability to spend time with their child, be involved in educational activities, and spend monetary resources that can promote position, educational outcomes and well-being. Research has consistently shown that family structure can facilitate or limit the ways in which parents are above to positively influence the future outcomes of the children (Lyne, 1974). The research on risk for aggressive, antisocial and violent behaviors Neil (2000) explained that such forces as weak bonding, ineffective parenting) poor monitoring, excessively harsh, or inconsistent discipline, inadequate supervision) which is common in the polygamous families who are exposed to violence in the home and a climate that supports aggression and violence puts children at risk for being violent later in life. Parental discord affects adolescent's behaviors greatly; high levels of marital conflicts have deleterious effects on children. Wise (2003) have also stated that a relationship between marital discord and negative attitude towards the child, and conflict when poorly resolved or occurring in front of the child has been proved to be related to a number of child behaviors difficulties, studies have shown that the structure of the family under which a child is reared influences the child's education, attendance in school and his morals (Wise, 2003, Cairo *et al.,* 1994 and Ngwu, 1999).

Parental discord affects adolescent's behavior greatly; high levels of marital conflicts have deleterious effects in on children. Studies have shown a relationship between marital discord and negatively towards the child, more so, such conflicts when poorly resolved or occurring in front of the child, has been shown to be related to a number of child behavioral difficulties (Wise, 2003). The harsh and inconsistent parenting is main cause of maladaptive behavior among adolescence. Children with such problem are usually rather sad and frail at school. In the school playground, these children manifest difficulty in relating well within their peer at work. For instance, they lack skills for taking turns without upsetting others and becoming aggressive. Invariably, this will give rise to poor rejection and eventually associate with children having anti-social behavior who share similar acts of value (Pritchard and Kim, 2002).

Generally, children with maladaptive problems do not show evidence of contentment and meaningful adjustment. They possess low self-esteem and believe to be bad, showing signs of misery and unhappiness. The problem of this study therefore is to determine the effects of family structure and prevalence of maladaptive behavior among secondary school students in Umuahia.

Statement of Problem

The study presented existing evidence on the association and relationship between family structure and child achievement, social behavior and wellbeing. Therefore, the problem of the study is to find out the influences of family structure and prevalence. Generally, children with behavioral problems do not show evidence of contentment and meaningful adjustment. They pose low self esteem and believe to be bad showing signs of misery and unhappiness. Observation shows that the fundamental problem of these children is the structure of their family which is the number of the parent (togetherness) in the home and the relationship of the entire household.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find out the impact of family structure on prevalence of behavioral pattern of adolescence. Specifically, the study was designed to determine the role of family structure and establish its relationship with the behavioral pattern among adolescence.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of family structure on the prevalence of behavioural pattern of adolescence?
2. What are the roles, and relationship between prevalence of the behavioural pattern of adolescence and family structure?

Literature Review
Conceptual Framework

Family structure: refers to the combination of relatives that composes of family. Classification of variables, classification on these variables considers the presence or absence of legally married spouses or common law partners, and in the case of economic families.

Behavioral patterns: has to do with the characteristics ways in which a person or animal acts. Also a recurrent way of acting by an individual towards a given situation. This includes hospitality, impatience, difficulty expressing emotions, competitiveness, perfectionism etc.

Adolescence: this is the period following the onset of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult. It can as well be considered as the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood 13-19 years.

Theoretical Framework
Influence of Parents in the Family

Fathers and mothers play roles in early infancy (Okonkwo, 1995). Fathers serve proportionally more in a play mate role and less in a care giving role than mothers do. In spite of their limited involvement in care giving, evidence shows they are sensitive to infant cues that are more important to maintaining the smooth progress of feeding (Printchar and Kim, 2002). Fathers and mothers play distinctive roles in infancy and complement the contributions of each other to infant's development. Fathers influence their wives and children in a variety of indirect ways Printchard *et al.* (2002) the impact of fathers and mothers as spouses in their roles as parents, with its primary emphasis on the fathers role as a support figure for the mothers, the father as a recipient of support will also be explored. A wide range of studies of older children consistently documents a strong relationship between marital discord and parent child difficulties (Weiss, 1999). In summary, it appears that the overall quality of the husband-wife-relationship is positively related to parental competence.

Emotional Support

Chandler and Chauha (1999); Weiss (1999); Wise (2003); Printchard and Kim (2002), had explained that there is clear evidence that emotional support is positively related to maternal competence and role satisfaction. During pregnancy, a number of studies indicate that the husband's emotional support increases and, in turn, is related to adoption during pregnancy.

Similarly, Wallerstein and Blackeslef (1989) showed that the emotional support of the husband during labour and delivery reported less pain, received less medication, and fell more positive about the birth experience than women whose husbands were present only during the first stage of labour.

As Wallerstein and Blackeslef (1989) have found, the father's presence during the second stage of labour and delivery increased the mother's emotional experience at birth; mother's reported the birth as a "peak" experience more often if the father was present. The father emotional reaction to the birth was also heightened by being present at the delivery. In another study that was based on observation and interviews, Printchard and Kim, (2002) found that a more positive birth experience for the father as associated with his enhance attachment to the infant. The impact of emotional support appears not to be restricted to pregnancy and childbirth. In spite of the fact that the overall levels of emotional support that father provide their spouses decreases in the postpartum period (Wallerstein and Blackeslef, 1989; Printchard and Kim, 2002). Emotional support is related to material competence. The impact of the father's emotional support on the mother in her role as caregiver is illustrated in Nzewunah (1995) work. He summarized his results as follows:

The husband – wife relationship was linked to the mother – infant unit. When the father was more supportive of the mother, that is, evaluated her maternal skills more positively, she was more effective in feeding the baby. Then again, maybe competent mothers elicit more positive evaluations from their husbands. The reverse holds discord. High tension and conflict in the marriage was associated with more inept feeding on the part of the mother. The impact of the father on mother's feeding behavior limited to bottle – feeding contexts. The success of breast-feeding has been found to be directly related to the support an encouragement provided by the father (Whiting, 1977). Other evidence suggests that spousal emotional has a positive impact on parental competence in general and not just in feeding contexts.

Wallerstein and Blackeslef (1989) examined the relationship between parental competence based on consistency, responsiveness, warmth and pleasure in parenting. Emotional support (a measure of affection, respect, and satisfaction in the marital relationship) was positively related to maternal competence. They found that mothers' perception of emotional support from the father was related to the quality of the infant mother attachment relationship. Specifically, mothers of securely attached infants and anxiously attached/resistant infants. Even though the husband/wife relationship in Japan likely differs from spousal relationships in American (Wool *et al.,* 2001).

Just as paternal support positively to maternal competence, there is evidence that maternal emotional support is similarly linked to the father's parenting competence. Wool *et al.,* (2001) found that maternal emotional support was related to parental competence in fact, spousal support was a more important correlate of competence in fathers than in mothers. The level and low competence in fathers but failed to do so in the case of mothers. In short successful parental may be particularly dependent on a supportive inter familial environment. Clearly, support has a different effect on various families' members, and examination of the separate impact on different family agents is worthwhile.

Physical Support

Physical support as in the case of emotional support varies over time; paternal support increase through the latter part of pregnancy and physical support from the husband decreases during the postpartum period (Printchard and Kim, 2002). In contrast, physical support from the social network outside the nuclear family generally increases over times, particularly from grandparents (Printchard and Kim, 2002). The decline in father's level of physical support occurs whether or not the mothers are employed outside the home and regardless of the couple's sex-role views (Chandler and Chauha 1999; Uzoagulu, 1998).

However, wives employment status is an important determinant of father's proportionate and absolute levels of involvement in physical-care activities in the home. First, fathers increase the proportion of time they devoted to the total family. Workload when mothers work outside the home (Walker and Woods, 1982; Lyne, 1974). Yet this increase often emerges as a result of mother's reducing the amount of time they devoted to housework and child care rather than to an increase in the absolute amount of time man devoted to these tasks. These findings are not without significance, since the impact of the father's participation on either his spouse or his children is likely to be different in families where fathers and mothers care more equal in their level of family participation (Printchard and Kim, 2002).

Another set of factors that determines the extent to which fathers provide physical support derives from studies of the impact of the type and timing of the infant's birth. Two examples will illustrate. First, several investigators have found that caesarian delivery can after the father's level of participation in routine care giving activities (Wool *et al.,* 2001; Printchard and Kim, 2002). In these studies, father of the C-section babies were more likely to share early care giving responsibility with the mother than were fathers of vaginally delivered infants. Other data suggests that these shifts in roles do not persist beyond the first year (Wool *et al.,* 2001). The findings nonetheless, provide support for a system perspective by illustrating that when maternal availability is reduced (as a result of a surgical recovery period), the father's level of participation is modified.

A second illustration derived from studies of the impact of the premature birth of an infant on the father's support role. Again, the effect of this stressful even was to increase. There is some evidence for absolute increases in father's contribution to family work when mothers are employed, especially in terms of father-child contact (Lyne, 1974). However, this varies with the age of the child, with father – child, involvement in family work increasing mainly in the case of infants (Walker and Woods, 1976) and young children (Lyne, 1974). Interesting, the quality of father's support is different as well. According to Rossl (1986), fathers with employed wives spent more time assuming sole responsibility for their children compared to fathers with non-employed wives.

Finally, the impact of shift in fathers participation as a result of maternal employment on either mothers or infants are not yet well understood (Hoffman, 1984) is not yet known whether fathers support elicited as a consequence of maternal employment differs in its impact from that support arising from other causes. Other aspects of the work – family relationship merit attention as well, such as the impact of flexible schedules and shift work on the father's role in the family (Printchard and Kim, 2002).

Ideological Support

For both men and women, adoption of a definition of the parental role, which suits their own ideology and ideology of their spouse, is a major task. Evidence suggests that spousal agreement on roles is an important determinant of role satisfaction (Printchard and Kim, 2002; Richard, 1982). Ideology support can have various functions: defining and regulating the relative roles to be played by rather and mother, and allowing opportunities to engage in role behavior that is consistent with both parent's respective ideologies.

It is important to recognize that "support" in this context does not necessarily imply or dictate particular levels of involvement. Rather, it suggests that more involvement by the father is not necessary better or necessarily helpful. In fact, "in many families increased father participation may cause conflict and disruption as a result of the threat to well – established and satisfying role definitions (Printchard and Kim, 2002). Evidence of direct relevance to this issue is sparse and inconclusive. For example Whiting (1977) found that only a minority of woman endorse the notion of increased participation by their spouses in child – care. These attitudinal data are consistent with other findings that women whose husbands did actually engage in more child care were less satisfied with their own roles than were women who's participated less (Baros and Mendonca, 1997); cited by Wool, *et al.,* 2001).

Further support derives from Russell's (1982) study of role sharing families in Australia. He found (especially in the early phases of the shift toward shared roles) that there was increased conflict directly associate with the father's increased participation in child care and household tasks. These conflicts may be due in part to mothers feeding that their traditional domains of housework and child care are threatened when fathers take over these tasks (Russell and Radin, 1983). On the other hand, (Bailyn, 1974) reported that women, regardless of their employment status, were more satisfied when their spouse were family oriented.

Information Support

This type of support is available through a variety of sources outside the family, including social - network members, formal agencies, as well as books and periodicals It Clarke - Stewart 1977) within the family, the most important predicator or parental competence is the degree of agreement between spouses concerning child - care strategies. Dickies (1984) found that cognitive support an index of husband wife agreement about childcare was positively related to maternal and parental competence. However, as Nelson (1993) found in the case of emotional support, cognitive or informational support from the spouse was a more important determinant of father's parental competence.

The Multiple Nature of Support

It is convenient for purpose of analysis to discuss each of the types of intra - familial support separately. Yet we must first recognize that these different types of support interact in natural environments in complex ways and seldom occur singly (Power and Parke, 1981). Moreover, their impact when occurring along and in combination with other types of support may be different. For example, it is likely that a mother who provides emotional support for her husband does not also offer him informational support and physical assistance.

Secondly, the nature of the intra - familial support systems may after the kinds of extra- familial supports that family members receive. If the husband gives a great deal of physical support to his wife, she in turn may request it less often from relatives or neighbors; Since outside contacts

also provide her with social and informational support, she may receive less of those kinds of support as well. It is paying the-bills, and planning for the future, she probably will be a happier, more effective parent. The support a mother receives from her child's father can even help her to be more competent and sensitive when feeding her baby. Mothers seems to fain the most security when they are married and know the father is committed to a lifelong relationship to them and their children.

Empirical Framework

The effect of family structure on academic performance was also studied (Salvador, 1998). Analyzing the achievement test score of 868 black and white elementary school students in a southern city school district in second through fourth grade, the authors reported a significant correlation between achievement test score and household composition by using dummy-variables that divides families into two parents or mother only household. Conducting an analysis of longitudinal data, Printchard and Kim (2002) examined the relationship between family structure and children's educational attainment. Using data from three waves of the National longitudinal survey, they found that, over all, children who spent more time in single parent families had lower levels of educational attainment. In examining the long term effect of parents' divorce, they found that disruptions that occurred during the pre-school years, as opposed to elementary and high school years had significant negative effects on educational attainment, but only for males.

Theoretical Framework
Family Systems Theory

This theory views families as living organisms and stresses boundaries, rules, expectations, and behaviors that help the family maintain equilibrium and the status quo or homeostasis. If something changes in one part of the family, other parts will need to adjust as well. In addition, the family is part of other systems in the community, so changes in one family will create imbalance and lead to changes in other systems that surround that family. Materials that use this approach will address these interconnected units and never assume an individual can change without these other adjustments. This means that such programs need to take the surrounding environment into account, because it will try to maintain the status quo unless an intervention is aimed at the context as well.
Look for:
1. Recommendations that address several different individuals and relationships at the same time
2. Discussions of how changes in one part of the system will interact with other parts of the system
3. References to boundaries, roles, rules, and relationship patterns
4. Recognition of how a person might be responded to by others when making changes
5. Suggestions for respecting boundaries or making them stronger.

Human Ecology Theory

This theory sees development and interactions as taking place in a nested system of environments ranging from the immediate micro system (e.g., a child and a parent, or one couple) to the ecosystem, which encompasses the culture, natural environment, and global influences on individuals and relationships. It also considers the time in history and changes over time. The focus is on the fact that it is not possible to account for a person's development or relationships without looking at all the levels of influences surrounding that person or

relationship. Materials and programs based on this theory would recognize that change must address many levels and that change will be dependent on resources available in the community, societal expectations, media influences, and climate in addition to individual skills and desires.

Look for:
1. References to influences at many different levels
2. Recommendations that take into account many aspects of the environment
3. Statements mention culture, media, and global influences in addition to mentioning individual needs and skills
4. Recognition of the fact that some members of the family provide connections for other members to systems outside the family

Exchange Theory
This theory is related to theories of economic systems. It assumes that people make decisions based on the costs and benefits they perceive from those decisions; they assess how they can minimize costs and maximize benefits of their choices. Social exchange theory assumes that people try to be close to and emulate those people who possess positive characteristics or seem to be rewarded for what they do. This is similar to the parenting theory of behavior modification, but it focuses on the internal processes of decision-making and weighing of rewards and punishments rather than the external manipulation of those rewards and punishments. In relationships, exchange theory predicts that people will increase their commitment to a person if they see that they are getting more benefits than experiencing costs.

Look for:
1. Decision-making recommendations focused on costs and benefits or rewards and punishments
2. Recommendations that reflect the expectation that people will do something good for a person who has done something good for them
3. Weighing pros and cons
4. Attempts to help participants to reassess positives and negatives

Methodology
Design of the Study
A survey research design was used for the study the survey design was used because the study sought information from the respondents, as the situation exists without manipulation of any variables.

Area of the Study
The study area was conducted:- Umuahia North and South Local Government Areas are in Abia State. The two local government areas are bounded in North by Bende L.G.A in the South by Isialangwa/Oboro L.G.A in the East by Ikwuano L.G.A and in the West by Isiukwuato L.G.A. the L.G.As are the two out of the. L.G.A. Abia State. These L.G.As (Umuahia North and South) has a total population of 220,660 with 36 communities while South has a population of 138,570 with 46 communities.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises of all family heads in Umuahia North and South Local Government Areas of Abia State. These include 36,776 and 33,'095 family heads in the 36 and 46 autonomous communities in Umuahia North and South L.G.As of Abia State respectively, put together the population 3 study comprised of 68,871 intact, male headed and female headed families in the area of study.

Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments used was questionnaire and oral interviews this is so because most of them from the rural areas are not literate and cannot fill the questionnaires and this was validated by a psychologist and a home Economics expert respectively.

Mean Ratings of the Frequency with which Adolescents from intact Families' exhibit Maladaptive behaviors.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	Respondents mean ratings	Ranks	Pooled mean
1	Street fighting	1.79	5.5	
2	Smoking cigarette	1.75	9.5	
3	Stealing/armed robbery	1.71	- 1	
4	Drug abuse	1.54	14	
5	Pilfering	1.92	1.5	
6	Consumption of alcoholic drinks	1.83	3	
7	Aggression	1.79	5.5	
8	Teenage pregnancy	1.75	9.5	1.65
9	Cultism	1.79	5.5	
10	Examination malpractice	1.75	9.5	
11	Riot/violent demonstrations	1.75	9.5	
12	Truancy at school	1.92	1.5	
13	Impregnating teenage girls	1.79	5.5	
14	Political thurgery	1.63	13	
15	Rape	1.38	17.5	
16	Committing abortion or aiding and abetting	1.33	19.5	
17	Involvement in premarital sex	1.33	19.5	
18	Impersonation	1.42	16	
19	Keeping multiple sexual partners	1.38	17.5	
20	Certificate forgery	1.46	15	

Cut-off point for behavior exhibited very often is ≥ 2.5.

Results

Respondents that are from intact families rated the frequency with which their children exhibit maladaptive behavior on a four point Likert-scale, (very often, often, rarely and never). As can be discerned in the table, the mean rating for all the 20 items ranged between the lowest 1.33 for items 16 and 17 (committing abortion, aiding or abating it and premarital sex) to the highest mean rating of 1.92 for items 5 and 12 (Pilfering and truancy at school). In terms of ranking, pilfering and truancy ranked first among maladaptive behavior that adolescent from intact families' exhibit more frequently than others. These are followed by items 6(consumption of

alcohol), item 1, (street fighting), item 7, (aggression), item 9 (cultism) and item 13 (impregnating teenage girls).

The pooled mean for all the 20 items in this scale is 1.65 to the extent that pooled mean for the 20 items in this section of the questionnaire is 1.65 implies that all respondent rated maladaptive behavior among adolescents from intact families are low. The cut-off point (mean rating) of ≥ 2.5 would mean that adolescents are exhibiting these behaviors very often or frequently. Since no item was rated up to 2.5, it means that though adolescents from intact homes exhibit this maladaptive behavior, they do so rarely, or only occasionally. It can also be described that maladaptive behaviors that tops the list among adolescents from intact families are pilfering (items 5), truancy at school (item 12) and consumption of alcohol (item 6).

Findings
This finding may not be unconnected with the fact that many adolescents from intact homes are usually made to conform to acceptable social behaviors by both parents. They are not usually found in behaviors like political thugery, arm robbery, rape, street fighting, violence demonstration and the like because of restrains from both parents. The less public and more difficult to observe behavior like pilfering and truancy at school are those they find convenient to exhibit. The issue of drinking alcohol may be connected to parental carelessness. Some parents drink alcohol and even send their children to buy it for them. Adolescents from such families tend to imitate their parents.

This may explain in part, the observed phenomenon. Maladaptive behaviors that are at the bottom of the list among adolescents from intact homes are abortion (item 16), involvement with multiple sexual partners (item 17), rape (item 15) keeping multiple sexual partners (item 19), certificate forgery (item 20) and drug abuse (item 4).

Respondents rated these items the least between 1.33 to 1.54. The impact of parental care, caution, command and control from both parents for the child cannot be teased from both parents for their child cannot be teased out in explaining those phenomenon. Most children would be prevented from exhibiting those behaviors because the both parents were living together and were making joint efforts at preventing moral decadence among their children. Lyne (1974) opined that a child who has both a mother and a father benefit from increased riches of care and better morals.

Conclusion
The findings of this study revealed and concluded that the death of one parent, divorce, occupation and choice of single parenting are the causes of non-intactness of families which has gone "a long way in contributing to high level on behavioral pattern of our adolescent children which has also marred the future of these adolescents and put the entire society at risk.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, of the study the following recommendations were made. That effort should be made by husbands and wives to make sure that they live together with tolerance, understanding and love so as not to put the future of their adolescents in the family at risk, and in case of death of any partner that the other extended family members (relations) should be involved in the training of these adolescents.

The researcher is also recommending that in a situation where the husband and wife cannot live together may be based on the differences in working places or divorce, that the welfare which takes care of such marital conflicts will allow the adolescent males to live with their fathers while the female adolescents live with their mothers, because from the findings it is observed that the maladaptive behaviors are more prevalent among male adolescents from female headed homes, this is because at the age of adolescence which starts from 14 years and above they can no longer be easily controlled without the help of a man (authoritarian) with close monitoring and role model.

The government, churches and (NGOS) non-governmental organizations should enlighten families on the impact (effects) of separation on their adolescents and educate them on the possible ways of sustaining and enhancing their marriages. This could be done by conducting seminars, workshops, opening up counseling units as well as premarital counseling for youths. The government should plan more on reorientation and moral regeneration of youths as well as the church working on the spiritual reorientation of both the youths and couple.

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