



Single parenthood and its effects on students' lifestyle: A study of selected public secondary schools in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined single parenthood and students' lifestyle among selected public secondary school students in Nigeria using a comparative cross-sectional design. The study sample comprised 270 students drawn from Lagos, Oyo, Rivers, Enugu, the Federal Capital Territory, and Kano, with equal allocation to two-parent, single-mother, and single-father households. Outcomes included academic performance, disciplinary issues, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being, and a composite lifestyle risk score, while parental supervision, parental education, and parental income were considered as relevant family and socioeconomic characteristics. Verified preliminary analysis of the first 135 observations showed marked unadjusted differences across family structures. Students from two-parent households recorded a mean academic score of 81.9%, a mean lifestyle risk score of 1.4, and 0% reported substance use, compared with 46.2%, 7.2, and 48.9%, respectively, among students from single-mother households, and 51.3%, 6.2, and 31.1% among students from single-father households. The descriptive pattern further suggested that stronger parental supervision accompanied more favourable academic, behavioural, social, and emotional outcomes. The study concludes that family structure is associated with multiple dimensions of student lifestyle, while parental supervision and socioeconomic circumstances are important accompanying factors. Because the design is cross-sectional, the findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Keywords: Single parenthood, family structure, students' lifestyle, parental supervision, academic performance, substance use, emotional well-being, public secondary schools, Nigeria

Introduction

The family constitutes one of the most influential social environments in the development of children and adolescents. It provides the primary context within which young people acquire behavioural norms, emotional security, social values, educational aspirations, interpersonal skills, and patterns of interaction that may persist into adulthood. During adolescence, when young people experience substantial physical, psychological, social, and cognitive transitions, the quality and organization of the family environment may be particularly important. Parents and caregivers provide material resources, supervision, discipline, emotional support, educational guidance, and models of behaviour. Consequently, changes in family structure can alter the resources and relationships available to adolescents and may have implications for their academic, behavioural, emotional, and social adjustment.

Family structure broadly describes the composition and organization of individuals occupying parental and caregiving roles within a household. Although families assume diverse forms, an important distinction in educational and social research is between two-parent and single-parent households. A two-parent household generally involves a child residing with two parents or parental figures who share responsibilities for caregiving and household management, whereas a single-parent household involves one parent assuming primary responsibility for the child's upbringing. Single parenthood may arise through divorce, marital separation, death of a spouse, non-marital childbearing, migration, abandonment, or other social and economic circumstances. These pathways are analytically important because single-parent families are heterogeneous.

The growing scholarly interest in family structure reflects concern about the mechanisms through which household circumstances may influence adolescent development. However, single parenthood should not itself be regarded as synonymous with deficient parenting or adverse child development. Many single parents successfully provide stable, nurturing, and developmentally supportive environments for their children. Rather, research suggests that differences observed across family structures may operate through interconnected mechanisms such as household income, parental education, availability of time, parental supervision, family conflict, residential instability, social support, and parent-child relationships. Family structure therefore needs to be examined together with the socioeconomic and relational processes occurring within families rather than treated as an isolated causal determinant.

This distinction is particularly important in Nigeria, where children and adolescents develop within a complex socioeconomic environment. The Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning and UNICEF (2024) ^[6] report that Nigerian children and adolescents continue to experience major challenges involving poverty, educational access and quality, child protection, violence, and inadequate social protection. These broader socioeconomic conditions provide an important context for investigating the relationship between family structure and adolescent lifestyle.

Within the school system, academic performance is one potentially important outcome associated with family circumstances. Students require not only formal classroom instruction but also an enabling home environment that

supports regular attendance, homework completion, access to educational materials, adequate rest, motivation, and appropriate monitoring. Where a parent has to combine income generation with caregiving and household management without another resident parent, the amount of time available for direct educational supervision may be constrained. Financial pressure can similarly influence access to textbooks, digital resources, transportation, private lessons, adequate nutrition, and other resources relevant to learning.

A broader concept particularly relevant to the present study is student lifestyle. Lifestyle in adolescence encompasses behavioural, social and psychosocial patterns through which students conduct their everyday lives. Within the present investigation, this multidimensional concept includes academic performance, disciplinary behaviour, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being, and an overall lifestyle risk profile. Examining these outcomes simultaneously provides a more comprehensive perspective than focusing exclusively on examination scores.

Parental supervision represents one of the mechanisms through which family circumstances may be associated with lifestyle. Effective supervision involves parents knowing where their children are, with whom they interact, how they spend their time, their school attendance and performance, and their exposure to potentially risky situations. Parental monitoring may also involve establishing behavioural expectations, communicating rules, enforcing reasonable boundaries, and maintaining sufficient parent-child communication for emerging difficulties to be recognized early.

Single parents may face distinctive constraints in maintaining such supervision, especially when they are simultaneously responsible for household income, domestic work and childcare. Yet these constraints vary substantially among households. A single parent with adequate income, extended-family assistance, supportive community networks and a strong relationship with the child may provide more effective supervision than some two-parent households characterized by conflict or disengagement. Thus, the relationship between family structure and student lifestyle should be understood probabilistically rather than deterministically.

Parental income and education are also potentially important explanatory variables. Household economic resources determine, in part, whether families can adequately provide food, school materials, transportation, healthcare, communication facilities and other necessities. Economic strain may indirectly affect young people through parental stress and reduced availability of time for supervision. Parental education may influence educational expectations, knowledge of school systems, communication practices and access to occupational resources.

Behavioural adjustment, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour and emotional well-being are additional dimensions of adolescent lifestyle. These outcomes arise through complex interactions among individual characteristics, family relationships, peer networks, school climate, socioeconomic circumstances and community conditions. Family instability or inadequate supervision may increase vulnerability for some students, but it would be inappropriate to attribute such outcomes automatically to single-parent status.

A further methodological issue concerns differences between single-mother and single-father households. Much of the discussion of single parenthood treats single-parent families as a homogeneous group, thereby potentially concealing important differences in resources, parenting arrangements and adolescent experiences. Single mothers and single fathers may encounter different economic demands, caregiving expectations, social networks and cultural pressures. A three-group comparison involving two-parent, single-mother and single-father households therefore provides greater analytical specificity than a simple dichotomy.

Similarly, the cause and duration of single parenthood warrant consideration. Divorce, separation, death and never-married parenthood represent substantially different family transitions. Duration may also matter because adolescents recently exposed to family transition may experience different adjustment patterns from those who have lived in a stable single-parent household for many years.

Despite existing Nigerian literature on family structure and educational outcomes, several gaps remain. Many studies have concentrated principally on academic performance rather than adopting a multidimensional conceptualization of adolescent lifestyle. Several investigations have also been conducted within a single state or local government area, while comparatively fewer studies explicitly distinguish between single-mother and single-father households or simultaneously consider parental education, income and supervision.

The present study addresses these issues through a comparative cross-sectional investigation involving 270 public secondary-school students drawn from Lagos, Oyo, Rivers, Enugu, the Federal Capital Territory and Kano. The sample consists of equal comparison groups of 90 students from two-parent households, 90 from single-mother households and 90 from single-father households.

The study evaluates student lifestyle using multiple indicators: academic score, disciplinary issues, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and a composite lifestyle risk score. It additionally considers parental education, parental income and parental supervision, while documenting the cause and duration of single parenthood among relevant respondents.

Accordingly, the study seeks to examine the relationship between single parenthood and students' lifestyle in selected public secondary schools in Nigeria. Specifically, it compares academic performance, disciplinary problems, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and overall lifestyle risk across students from two-parent, single-mother and single-father households. Given the comparative cross-sectional design, associations identified by the study should be interpreted as relationships rather than definitive evidence that family structure causes particular student outcomes.

By approaching single parenthood from this broader perspective, the study contributes to the Nigerian literature on family structure and adolescent development. Its emphasis on multiple lifestyle dimensions and three distinct family-structure groups provides an opportunity to identify not merely vulnerabilities but also potentially protective factors. Evidence should be used to identify modifiable conditions such as inadequate supervision, economic hardship, weak school-family communication, negative peer

exposure and insufficient psychosocial support rather than stigmatizing particular family forms.

Review of Related Literature

1. Concept of Single Parenthood

The family is a fundamental social institution responsible for the socialization, protection, education and psychosocial development of children. Single parenthood describes a family arrangement in which one parent assumes primary responsibility for the upbringing and day-to-day care of a child. It may result from divorce, marital separation, death of a spouse, non-marital childbearing, abandonment, migration or other circumstances.

Single-parent families are heterogeneous and should not be treated as though they represent a single social experience. The circumstances of a widowed household may differ from those created through divorce, separation or never-married parenthood. Family structure alone therefore does not determine children's developmental outcomes; parenting quality, economic resources, parental education, social support and family relationships can influence adaptation.

2. Single-Mother and Single-Father Families

Single-mother and single-father households may differ in socioeconomic circumstances, parenting practices, gender-role expectations, social support and parent-child relationships. Single mothers may face particular pressures in combining economic provision, domestic responsibilities and direct supervision, while single fathers may experience different caregiving and communication demands. These circumstances vary widely and should be examined empirically rather than assumed.

3. Concept of Students' Lifestyle

Lifestyle refers broadly to patterns of behaviour, social interaction, daily practices and psychosocial functioning. Among secondary-school students, it encompasses academic engagement, peer relationships, social conduct, emotional adjustment, disciplinary behaviour and exposure to health-risk behaviours. The present study operationalizes lifestyle through academic performance, disciplinary issues, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and a composite lifestyle risk score.

4. Family Structure and Academic Performance

Academic performance is one of the most extensively studied outcomes in family-structure research. Proposed mechanisms include disparities in parental time, economic resources, educational supervision, family stress and access to learning materials. Two-parent households may have opportunities to distribute caregiving and income responsibilities, but the presence of two parents does not guarantee an academically supportive environment. Family structure may affect achievement through parental expectations and educational involvement. Parents who monitor attendance, communicate with teachers, supervise homework and encourage educational aspirations may strengthen school engagement. The present study therefore includes parental supervision, parental income and parental educational attainment in addition to family structure.

5. Single Parenthood and Parental Supervision

Parental supervision refers to the extent to which parents monitor and guide children's activities, relationships and

behaviour. It includes knowledge of children's whereabouts, friendship networks, school attendance and academic progress, together with appropriate behavioural expectations. Nigerian evidence indicates that stronger parental monitoring is associated with reduced adolescent substance-use risk (Odukoya *et al.*, 2018)^[9].

6. Single Parenthood and Disciplinary Behaviour

Adolescent disciplinary behaviour is influenced by interacting individual, familial, peer, school and community factors. Family circumstances may influence behavioural regulation through parental modelling, supervision, communication and discipline. However, family structure should not be equated directly with misconduct, and socioeconomic and relational conditions need to be considered when interpreting differences (Langton & Berger, 2011)^[8].

7. Single Parenthood and Substance Use

Adolescent substance use can interfere with academic engagement, interpersonal relationships, physical health and psychosocial development. Family-related factors can influence substance use through parental monitoring, behavioural modelling, communication, household rules and emotional support. Odukoya *et al.* (2018)^[9] found that stronger parental monitoring was associated with lower odds of substance use among in-school adolescents in Lagos.

8. Family Structure and Peer Influence

Peer relationships become increasingly significant during adolescence. Positive peers can encourage academic participation and responsible behaviour, whereas negative peer influence may contribute to truancy, substance use, aggression and other risk-taking. Family relationships and parental monitoring may affect both adolescents' selection of peer groups and their susceptibility to peer pressure.

9. Family Structure and Social Behaviour

Healthy social adjustment involves communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, empathy and the ability to establish appropriate relationships. Family experiences influence these patterns through modelling and socialization. The present study classifies social behaviour as withdrawn, aggressive or balanced, recognizing that adolescent difficulties may manifest through either internalizing or externalizing patterns.

10. Single Parenthood and Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being refers to the capacity to experience and regulate emotions, maintain psychological stability and cope with developmental and environmental challenges. Single parenthood may be preceded by bereavement, divorce, separation, household relocation or financial change. These experiences affect adolescents differently, and supportive caregiving and social networks can function as protective factors.

11. Parental Education and Students' Lifestyle

Parental education may influence knowledge of child development, educational expectations, communication practices and capacity to navigate school systems. It may also correlate with occupational and financial resources. Parental education is therefore a potential confounder when

comparing family structures and is included as a control variable in the present study.

12. Parental Income and Students' Lifestyle

Parental income facilitates access to food, healthcare, educational materials, transportation, digital technology and extracurricular opportunities. Economic hardship can create material deprivation and parental stress. Since two-parent and single-parent households can both experience poverty, actual economic circumstances should be measured rather than inferred from household composition.

13. Cause and Duration of Single Parenthood

Divorce, separation, parental death and never-married parenthood represent distinct pathways into single parenthood. Likewise, duration may influence adjustment because family transitions can initially disrupt routines, while longer-term stability may permit adaptation. The present study therefore records both cause and duration among students from single-parent households.

14. Lifestyle Risk as a Composite Outcome

Adolescent vulnerabilities frequently coexist. Inadequate supervision may coincide with negative peer influence, disciplinary problems and substance use, while emotional difficulties may affect academic engagement and interpersonal behaviour. The study therefore incorporates a lifestyle risk score ranging from 0 to 10, with higher values indicating greater overall risk.

15. Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory conceptualizes adolescent development as occurring through interactions between individuals and multiple environmental systems. The family and school are important microsystems, while broader socioeconomic and cultural conditions also influence development. This perspective supports a multivariable rather than deterministic interpretation of family structure.

Coleman's social capital perspective provides a complementary explanation. Family relationships generate social capital through parental attention, communication, expectations and monitoring. From this perspective, the effective relationships and resources available to the child are more informative than household composition alone (Coleman, 1988)^[3].

16. Empirical Review

Empirical evidence generally suggests that family structure is associated with some dimensions of adolescent development, although the magnitude and mechanisms vary. Langton and Berger (2011)^[8] found that associations between household structure and adolescent physical health, behaviour and emotional well-being need to be interpreted alongside socioeconomic characteristics and family processes.

Within Nigeria, Odukoya *et al.* (2018)^[9] examined 437 in-school adolescents in Lagos and found that increased parental monitoring was associated with lower odds of substance use, whereas greater unsupervised time was associated with increased risk. Other Nigerian studies have also linked family circumstances with educational and psychosocial outcomes (Azuka-Obieke, 2013; Fatoye & Morakinyo, 2002^[1, 5]; Olumide-Aluko & Olubiye, 2023)^[10].

17. Gap in the Literature

Several gaps justify the present study. Much of the literature focuses on academic performance rather than combined academic, behavioural, social and emotional dimensions. Many Nigerian studies are geographically restricted, and single-parent households are often treated as one category. Cause and duration of single parenthood, parental supervision, parental education and parental income are also not always examined simultaneously.

The present study addresses these gaps through a comparative cross-sectional design involving 270 students from six Nigerian locations, with equal groups from two-parent, single-mother and single-father households and multiple lifestyle outcomes.

18. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework proposes family structure as the principal independent variable, categorized as two-parent, single-mother and single-father households. Cause and duration are additional explanatory characteristics among single-parent respondents. Outcomes are academic performance, disciplinary issues, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and lifestyle risk. Parental supervision is a key family-process variable, while parental education and income represent socioeconomic characteristics.

Conceptually, the relationship is expressed as: Family Structure → Parental/Socioeconomic Context → Student Lifestyle Outcomes. Age, sex, class and state provide additional demographic and contextual control variables.

19. Summary of the Literature Review

The literature indicates that family structure can be associated with academic, behavioural, social and emotional outcomes during adolescence, but these relationships are neither uniform nor inevitably causal. Parental supervision, economic resources, parental education, family relationships, peer networks and social support represent important mechanisms through which household circumstances may affect young people.

The present study therefore moves beyond a binary single-parent versus two-parent comparison by distinguishing single-mother and single-father households and examining multiple lifestyle outcomes alongside parental and socioeconomic characteristics.

Methodology

1. Research Design

The study adopted a comparative cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between family structure and students' lifestyle in selected public secondary schools in Nigeria. Information on family characteristics, parental supervision, academic performance, disciplinary experiences, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and lifestyle risk was assessed within the same study period. Because exposure and outcome variables were assessed cross-sectionally, observed relationships were interpreted as associations rather than evidence of causality.

2. Study Area

The study was conducted among students attending selected public secondary schools across Lagos State, Oyo State, Rivers State, Enugu State, the Federal Capital Territory and

Kano State. The selection provided geographical and socioeconomic diversity. The study was based on selected schools and was not designed as a nationally representative probability survey of all Nigerian secondary-school students.

3. Study Population

The target population comprised students enrolled in selected public secondary schools within the six study locations. Eligible students were drawn from JSS3, SS1 and SS2 and were classified into two-parent, single-mother or single-father households.

4. Sample Size and Group Allocation

A total of 270 students constituted the analytical sample: 90 students from two-parent households, 90 from single-mother households and 90 from single-father households. Each group therefore constituted 33.3% of the sample. The equal allocation facilitated comparative analysis but should not be interpreted as the population prevalence of these household structures.

5. Sampling Procedure

A multistage comparative sampling approach was used. Six locations were included for geographic diversity, public secondary schools were selected within the locations, eligible JSS3, SS1 and SS2 students were identified, and recruitment was structured to achieve equal numbers in the three family-structure groups.

6. Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured student questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, family structure, cause and duration of single parenthood, parental education and income, parental supervision, academic performance, disciplinary issues, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and the information required to derive the lifestyle risk score.

7. Measurement and Operationalization of Variables

Family structure was coded 1 = two-parent, 2 = single-mother and 3 = single-father. Cause of single parenthood was coded 0 = not applicable, 1 = divorce, 2 = separation, 3 = death and 4 = never married. Duration was coded 0 = not applicable, 1 = less than two years, 2 = two to five years and 3 = more than five years. Age was measured in years; sex was coded 0 = female and 1 = male; class was coded 1 = JSS3, 2 = SS1 and 3 = SS2. Parental education was categorized as none, primary, secondary or tertiary; parental income as less than ₦50,000, ₦50,000–₦149,000 or ₦150,000 and above; and parental supervision as low, moderate or high. Academic performance was measured as average percentage score. Disciplinary issues were coded as none, one to two times or three or more times in the previous term. Substance use was coded no/yes. Peer influence was negative, neutral or positive; social behaviour withdrawn, aggressive or balanced; and emotional well-being low, moderate or high. Lifestyle risk ranged from 0 to 10, with higher scores indicating greater risk.

8. Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation to establish adequate coverage of the study constructs. Where multi-item measures were used, internal

consistency was assessed using an appropriate reliability coefficient such as Cronbach's alpha. The scoring direction of the lifestyle risk measure was checked to ensure that higher values consistently represented less favourable profiles.

9. Data Collection Procedure

Permission was obtained from relevant school authorities before data collection. Trained research assistants explained the study and administered questionnaires under conditions intended to provide privacy. Sensitive questions concerning family circumstances, disciplinary experiences, emotional well-being and substance use were handled confidentially.

10. Data Quality Management

Data quality procedures included checking variable ranges, missing values, duplicate identification numbers and inconsistencies between family structure and cause or duration of single parenthood. A specific integrity issue was identified for record ID 151, which contains fewer values than required by the 18-variable codebook. This record requires verification against the original data source before inclusion in analyses involving affected variables.

11. Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive, bivariate and multivariable techniques at a 5% significance level. Frequencies and percentages summarized categorical variables, while means and standard deviations summarized continuous variables. One-way ANOVA, or Welch's ANOVA where appropriate, was specified for continuous outcomes across the three family structures. Pearson chi-square tests were specified for categorical outcomes. Multiple linear regression was specified for academic score and lifestyle risk, while binary logistic regression was specified for substance use. Age, sex, class, state, parental education, parental income and parental supervision were considered covariates. Supplementary analyses among single-parent respondents were planned for cause and duration of single parenthood.

12. Ethical Considerations

Administrative permission was obtained from participating schools, and applicable parental or guardian consent and student assent procedures were followed. Participation was voluntary, responses were confidential and anonymous study identification numbers were used. Sensitive questions were handled carefully, and students were not stigmatized on the basis of family structure.

13. Methodological Limitations

The cross-sectional design limits causal inference. Some measures rely on self-report and may be affected by recall or social-desirability bias. Equal group allocation does not reflect population prevalence, and selected public schools cannot automatically represent every Nigerian secondary-school student. Family structure also does not capture all dimensions of family functioning, including conflict, non-resident-parent involvement and extended-family support.

Results and Discussion

1. Overview of the Study Sample

The study was designed to include 270 students drawn from selected public secondary schools in Lagos, Oyo, Rivers,

Enugu, the Federal Capital Territory and Kano. The comparative design specified three equal family-structure groups: 90 students from two-parent households, 90 from single-mother households and 90 from single-father households. A data-integrity check identified an incomplete

record at ID 151. Consequently, exact full-sample inferential statistics should be generated only after verification of that observation. The verified preliminary results supplied for the first 135 observations are therefore reported separately.

2. Preliminary Academic Performance and Lifestyle Risk According to Family Structure

Table 1: Preliminary Comparison of Academic Performance, Lifestyle Risk and Substance Use by Family Structure (Batch 1, n = 135)

Family structure	n	Mean academic score (%)	Mean lifestyle risk score	Substance use (%)
Two-parent	45	81.9	1.4	0.0
Single-mother	45	46.2	7.2	48.9
Single-father	45	51.3	6.2	31.1

The preliminary results reveal pronounced differences across the three family-structure groups. Students from two-parent households recorded the highest mean academic performance, at 81.9%, compared with 46.2% among students from single-mother households and 51.3% among those from single-father households. The unadjusted mean difference between the two-parent and single-mother groups was 35.7 percentage points, while the difference between the two-parent and single-father groups was 30.6 percentage points. Within the two single-parent groups, students from single-father households recorded an academic mean 5.1 percentage points higher than students from single-mother households.

These are substantial descriptive differences, but they should not be interpreted as evidence that single parenthood itself caused lower academic performance. Parental supervision, parental education and parental income may account for part of the relationship between family structure and academic outcomes.

3. Family Structure and Lifestyle Risk

A similarly strong descriptive pattern emerged for the composite lifestyle risk score. Students from two-parent households recorded a preliminary mean risk score of 1.4 out of 10, compared with 7.2 among students from single-mother households and 6.2 among students from single-father households. The mean lifestyle risk score was therefore 5.8 points higher in the single-mother group and 4.8 points higher in the single-father group relative to the two-parent group.

4. Family Structure and Substance Use

One of the clearest preliminary differences concerned substance use. None of the 45 students from two-parent households in Batch 1 reported substance use, whereas the reported prevalence was 48.9% among students from single-mother households and 31.1% among those from single-father households. If a zero cell persists in the complete dataset, conventional logistic regression may encounter complete or quasi-complete separation and a penalized or exact method may be preferable.

5. Parental Supervision and Student Outcomes

Parental supervision emerged descriptively as an important variable accompanying student outcomes. Students with high parental supervision generally showed favourable profiles characterized by higher academic scores, fewer disciplinary problems, absence of reported substance use, positive peer influence, balanced social behaviour, high

emotional well-being and low lifestyle risk. Students with moderate supervision tended to occupy an intermediate position, while low supervision frequently coincided with less favourable outcomes.

6. Other Behavioural and Psychosocial Outcomes

The supplied data also suggest descriptive variation in disciplinary problems, peer influence, social behaviour and emotional well-being. Positive peer influence and balanced social behaviour were commonly associated with stronger supervision and lower lifestyle risk, whereas negative peer influence, withdrawal or aggression and low emotional well-being appeared more frequently in higher-risk profiles.

7. Cause and Duration of Single Parenthood

The single-parent observations included divorce, separation, parental death and never-married parenthood, with duration categorized as less than two years, two to five years and more than five years. Outcomes vary within the single-parent population itself, reinforcing the need to examine cause, duration, supervision, income and education rather than treating single parenthood as a uniform exposure.

8. Integrated Discussion of the Findings

Taken together, the preliminary results indicate substantial differences in academic and lifestyle outcomes across family structures. Students from two-parent households demonstrated the most favourable unadjusted profile in Batch 1, while the single-mother group exhibited greater lifestyle risk than the single-father group. These comparisons remain unadjusted and should not be interpreted as causal effects.

The findings are compatible with Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective and Coleman's social capital perspective. Family structure represents only one component of the adolescent's environment, while parental attention, communication, monitoring, peer networks, school experiences and socioeconomic conditions interact in shaping development.

9. Implications of the Findings

The results have practical implications for schools and families. Students should not be selected for intervention solely because they live in single-parent households. Support should focus on modifiable indicators such as inadequate supervision, repeated disciplinary problems, negative peer influence, substance use, declining academic performance, social withdrawal or aggression and low emotional well-being.

10. Statistical Interpretation and Data Limitation

The preliminary Batch 1 results provide strong descriptive evidence of group differences, but statistical significance should not be inferred solely from their magnitude. Exact ANOVA, chi-square, regression coefficients, confidence intervals and p-values should be calculated from the cleaned complete dataset. Record ID 151 must be verified against the original source; missing values should not be reconstructed by assumption.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Conclusion

This study examined single parenthood and students' lifestyle among selected public secondary-school students in Nigeria, with particular attention to differences among students from two-parent, single-mother and single-father households. The study considered academic performance, disciplinary issues, substance use, peer influence, social behaviour, emotional well-being and overall lifestyle risk, together with parental supervision, parental education and parental income.

The verified preliminary findings demonstrate substantial unadjusted differences across the three family-structure groups. Among the first 135 participants, students from two-parent households recorded a mean academic score of 81.9%, compared with 46.2% among students from single-mother households and 51.3% among those from single-father households. Mean lifestyle risk scores were 1.4, 7.2 and 6.2, respectively, while reported substance use was 0%, 48.9% and 31.1%, respectively.

The study suggests that family structure is associated with important differences in students' academic and lifestyle outcomes within the study sample. However, parental supervision emerged descriptively as an important accompanying factor. Higher supervision generally coincided with stronger academic performance, fewer disciplinary problems, absence of substance use, more positive peer relationships, balanced social behaviour, better emotional well-being and lower lifestyle risk.

Family structure should therefore not be interpreted in isolation. The developmental experiences of students are influenced by the quality of parental supervision and the socioeconomic and relational resources available within the household. Students from single-parent households should not automatically be regarded as disadvantaged or behaviourally at risk.

Overall, the study concludes that family structure is associated with students' academic, behavioural, social and emotional lifestyle outcomes in the study sample, but parental supervision and socioeconomic circumstances appear to be important accompanying factors. Because the research is cross-sectional, these findings establish associations rather than proof that single parenthood causes adverse student outcomes. Final estimates of independent associations require multivariable analysis of the cleaned complete dataset.

2. Recommendations

Strengthen parental supervision and parent-school collaboration. Schools should establish structured mechanisms through which parents and caregivers can monitor attendance, academic progress, disciplinary behaviour, peer-related concerns and general well-being.

Expand school-based counselling and psychosocial support. Public secondary schools should strengthen professional guidance and counselling services to identify students experiencing academic decline, substance use, repeated disciplinary problems, negative peer influence, aggression, social withdrawal or poor emotional well-being.

Develop targeted substance-use and peer-risk prevention programmes. Schools should integrate age-appropriate substance-use prevention, peer education, mentoring, life-skills development and positive extracurricular activities into student-support programmes.

Provide additional educational and socioeconomic support to vulnerable students. Government agencies, schools, community organizations and social-support institutions should facilitate learning materials, scholarships or bursaries, mentoring and other appropriate assistance according to actual need.

Adopt family-sensitive rather than family-stigmatizing interventions. Teachers, counsellors and social workers should recognize the diversity of single-parent households and strengthen protective factors such as parental involvement, effective supervision, emotional support, positive peer relationships and school engagement.

Strengthen future research and monitoring. Subsequent studies should employ longitudinal designs, distinguish between single-mother and single-father households, examine different causes and durations of single parenthood, and investigate parental supervision, socioeconomic characteristics, non-resident-parent involvement, extended-family support and parent-child relationship quality.

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