



Student Academic Performance and Single Parenting: A Theoretical Perspective

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Received: 09/March/ 2023; **Accepted:** 10/April/2023; **Published:** 22/April/2023

Abstract: *This study reviewed theories that explain how single parenting influences the academic performance of students. Theories that were reviewed include the Family Deficit Model, the Risk and Protective Factor Model, the Social Exchange Theory, the Family Socialization Perspective Model, the Theory of Social Network Paradigm, the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence, the Economic Deprivation Theory, and other perspectives (No-Impact Perspective and System Perspective). The no-impact perspective claims that the association between changing family structures and children's academic outcomes can be attributed to a combination of family background factors such as parents' education and incomes and the ethnicity or race of the family. Further, some researchers propose that much family structure research is inconclusive because it has failed to differentiate among various types of single-parent families, such as whether they result from marital disruption (divorce or separation), parental death, or a never-married parent. In addition, it is suggested that many studies fail to take into account the timing in a child's life of a family disruption, the duration of the effects of that disruption, and whether the lone parent is the father, mother, or a guardian.*

Keywords: *students, families, academic performance, theories*

1. Family Deficit Model

Hetherington and Kelly (2002) propounded the Family Deficit Model. This model viewed the intact of two-parent home as the ideal home or family structure. The model assumes that lack of a nuclear family structure in singleparent families is what results in a negative impact on the children hence the proponents of the Family Deficit Model, which postulates that single parenting is bad for children. Marsh (1990) indicated that early research into the effects of single parenting focused on a "family deficit model". It was assumed that single parenting could cause deficits in children's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural development.

The model plays down the effects that economic and other background factors could have on the academic attainment of the learners (Donahoo, 2003). Moreover, Hill (2006) that the family deficit model holds the belief that single-parent households are deficient in various critical ways for effective child training has opined it. Hill argued that this could be so because there may not be any single parent (father or mother) that can fully play the roles of the father and mother in the raising of a child in all areas such as feeding, clothing, shelter and education. On this basis, the Family Deficit Model assumes that single parent homes can have an influence on the academic performance of pupils.

2. Risk and Protective Factor Model

Raiter and colleagues as cited in Amoakohene (2013) developed the Risk and Protective Factor Model in the early 1990s. The risk and proactive Factor Model describes the family structure as having many risk factors, which can be either background characteristics or life events that may have a negative effect on the development of the child. The foundation for the model is that all families have both strengths and weaknesses and as such, this model does not regard single-parent families as irregular. It is these strengths and weaknesses, they propose, that lead to differing outcomes in children's adjustment (Marsh, 1999). The Risk Factors are the quantifiable attributes that have the tendency to reduce the effective and appropriate accomplishment of a family's goals. Essentially, risk factors are the weaknesses and Protective factors, on the other hand, describe all measurable potentials that can ensure the success and appropriate family achievement thus the strengths. Several researchers have suggested with this model as their basis that there are several risk and protective factors, which work together to influence a child's academic performance positively or otherwise (Donahoo, 2003); Ushie, Emeka, Ononga, and Owolabi, (2012). The researchers take this stand instead of seeing single parenting as the sole predictor of academic success or failure for children.

Single parents can indulge in child abuse, which includes venting their anger, pain or problematic state of mind on their children. This can result in a devastating effect. However, the effect of a single parent turning out to be abusive can be negated by having both parents around. This is so because there can be hope and moral support as the child can look up to the good parents. Single parenting can therefore be viewed in the overall framework of the risk and protective factor model. Thus, rather than being defined as the cause of problems during development, single parenting can be identified as one risk factor that can lead to unsuccessful outcomes. Practitioners with knowledge of which protective factors can deal with the risk can then design effective interventions. Single parents can strive to enhance the protective factors in the case when single parenting is identified to be one risk factor in the development of children.

3. Risk and Protective Factors

Availability of social support and family cohesion are often identified as categories of factors that can affect a child positively or negatively. Marsh (1999) defined personality factors as internal characteristics found in every child, including child's intellectual ability and approach to learning, attitude and disposition, self-esteem, impulse control and social support. Availability factors are whether or not the child has advocate at home, school and elsewhere in the community. Family cohesion includes family structure and background characteristics such as parent's occupation, family income, parent education, parental style, race and ethnicity and family size. Family cohesion factors also include life events such as divorce, re-marriage, death and other changes that can influence child development.

Elements of each of the three categories can serve as either risk or protective factors. For instance, Marsh (1999) regards family size as a risk factor when there are four or more children; close in age within the same household, but a protective factor in families with fewer than four children or when children are spaced three or more years apart.

4. The Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory has its origins in Structural Anthropology (Levi-Straus), Behavioural Psychology (B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura), Utilitarian Economics (Ricardo, Adam Smith, and Mill), Sociology (George Homans, Peter Blau) and Social Psychology (Thibaut and Kelly). When two parents or intact separate, the children often lose both the financial and emotional support of their fathers, which can have a negative impact on academic performance. The social exchange theory suggests that economic hardship in single parent families is likely to require adolescents to work long hours and to take greater responsibility for younger brothers and/or sisters.

Schneider and Coleman (1993) emphasized that family structure can constrain the availability of economic and social resources such as the parents' ability to spend time with their children, get involved in their children's educational activities,

and use monetary resources in ways that can promote positive educational outcomes. As a result, these time-consuming activities are likely to be related to lower school achievement. In this sense, then, exchanging time spent with children for some economic and financial gain, has the tendency to affect the life of the children in the house.

5. Family Socialization Perspective Model

The Family Socialization Perspective Model by Bowen (1971) as cited in Amoakohene (2013) proposes that the absence of a parent is probably associated with a decrease in total parental involvement, which is in turn related to poorer school outcomes. It has been revealed by Santrock (as cited in Berns, 2007) that girls who live with fathers and boys who live with mothers tend to be less well-adjusted than those who live with the same sex parents. In explaining further, boys who live with fathers tend to be less demanding, more mature, independent, sociable, and have self-esteem than girls in the fathers' custody situation. Likewise, girls who live with mothers tend to be less demanding, more mature, independent, and sociable and have higher self-esteem than boys in mothers' custody situation. When children live with their parents of the same sex, they are able to freely ask questions pertaining to their sexuality. Female children might not feel comfortable to ask their fathers questions related to their sexuality as they could do when they were living with their mothers. In this same line of understanding, boys will not feel comfortable talking to their mothers about their sexuality. In terms of being more specific, it is often claimed that the absence of fathers had particularly negative socialization influences, which may be especially detrimental for boys. It is very practical for children to be curious on the things that they watch on television and hear from friends. As a result, Brusius (1989) admonished, "there is a great need for parents to teach clear values regarding sexuality because the society is teaching its own values". This therefore behooves on parents to make issues more understandable for them so that they can take the necessary precautions. Children need the ideas of both parents; therefore, single parenting has a great impact on them.

6. The Theory of Social Network Paradigm

The theory of social network paradigm highlights the value of significant others in an individual's social system who make available support and resources such as information and money (Blau, 1964, Barnes, 1972). Although there are several definitions of social network, the most common mention is to the linkages between individuals, groups, and institutions with which a person has contact and on which a person perceives he or she can depend for support (Bott, 1971). One of the primary functions of an individual's social network is to provide a buffer against negative stresses, thereby promoting greater psychological and personal well-being (Abbs, 1982). In educational research, it has been found out that children with well-developed social networks have more positive educational outcomes than children without them (Coates, 1987). It has been opined by Clark (1991) that social networks provide social support, which is defined as the availability of people on whom others can rely, people who let others know that they care about, value and love them. Clark asserts that the greater a child's social support, the greater the likelihood that he or she will succeed in school. With this in mind, it can be inferred that the family structure (single or two-parent homes) can affect the achievement of pupils in school. The parental support will serve as a source of social network.

7. The Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Epstein (1987) propounded the theory of overlapping spheres of influence. The theory of overlapping spheres of influence emphasizes the vital role of schools, families and communities working together to meet the needs of children. This theory integrates educational, sociological, and psychological perspectives on social organizations as well as the effects of family, school and community environment on educational outcomes. It acknowledges the interlocking histories of the major institutions that socialize and educate children. A principle central to this theory is that certain goals such as students' academic success, is of mutual interest to people in each of these institutions, and is best achieved through their cooperative action and support. This theory acknowledges the fact that support from families,

teachers and other significant factors such as achievement motivation are responsible for the socialization of children which influence their school attitude, behaviours and academic achievement. In this regard, the structure of the family is likely to have an effect on the overall academic performance of pupils.

8. Economic Deprivation Theory

The economic deprivation theory suggests that economic hardship in single parent families is likely to require adolescents to work long hours and to take greater responsibility for younger brothers and/or sisters. As a result, these time-consuming activities are likely to be related to lower school achievement. In the view of Lanier and Huff-Corzine (2006), family disruption can be a factor to young people's behaviour. They argued that young people who are from female-headed households where the spouse is absent would more likely feel at a disadvantage than their peers and engage in more violence. Black, Howard and Nina (1998) opined those interventions for youths who face economic deprivation should not be focused solely on economic deprivation indicators. They made use of an ecological approach to examine the precursors of violence and direct attention to risk and protective factors at the individual, parent, family, and neighbourhood levels. Black et al, (1998) argue that preventative interventions for young people particularly those in poverty should be implemented in childhood. The interventions should also promote positive options for young people and help to develop life and employment skills. From this point of view, it can be argued that when there is only one parent in the home, children are likely to be affected because there will be a deprivation of resources and thus affecting their behaviour and academic work.

9. Other Perspectives

No-Impact Perspective

The no-impact perspective claims that the association between changing family structures and children's academic outcomes can be attributed to a combination of family background factors such as parents' education and incomes and the ethnicity/race of the family. Further, some researchers propose that much family structure

research is inconclusive because it has failed to differentiate among various types of single-parent families such as whether they result from marital disruption (divorce or separation), parental death, or a never-married parent. In addition, it is suggested that many studies fail to take into account the timing in a child's life of a family disruption, the duration of the effects of that disruption, and whether the lone parent is the father, mother, or a guardian.

Systems Perspective of single parenting (the individual, the family and the social network)

Researchers in studying structure of the family and its impact have considered several perspectives. However, researchers began looking at Single Parent Homes from a Systems perspective in the 1980's. They tried to determine the actual reasons why children from Single Parent homes were disadvantaged in comparison to children from two-parent (TP) homes. It was found by Milne, Myers, Rosenthal and Ginsburg (1986) that parental expectations, number of books in the home, and income were significant predictors of academic performance of children and especially so in children of Single Parent Homes. In a similar fashion, Scanzoni, Polonko Teachman and Thompson (1989) discovered four important educational resources that play a significant role in determining level of schooling for both private and public basic school pupils. This generated further research when Downey (1994) used the study of Teachman as a foundation and identified 11 key educationally related objects. These included a place to study, a daily newspaper, regular magazine, encyclopaedia, atlas, dictionary, typewriter, computer, more than 50 books, calculator and one's own room.

10. Conclusion

According to Downey, the presence or absence of these factors influences how well children will achieve academically in the future. Additionally, from a systems approach, Krein and Beller (1988) looked at how living in a single parent home differed depending on the gender and duration of the parent's absence. It was found that the unfavorable impacts were more pronounced for males than for girls, according to gender. Adverse consequences of living in a single-parent household, Family income is significant, but other factors have a bigger impact

on academic success, according to Kim (2004). Family size, parent-child interaction, and parental aspirations were found to be better indicators of future academic success than wealth. The focus for this perspective is that, there could be several reasons responsible for the effects of living in a single parent home. With this in mind, the effect cannot be attributed to only one thing.

Recommendation

The study suggests that the local school administration and community leaders create workshops and programs to educate parents about the importance of monitoring their children's learning and how it affects their academic achievement.

Conflicts of Interest

Author declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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