

**SINGLE PARENTAGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF ISSUES  
AFFECTING THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENUGU  
EDUCATION ZONE**

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**Abstract**

The study was designed to determine Single parentage students perception of issues affecting their academic performance in Enugu Education Zone of Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design .A sample of 360 students of Single parents in Secondary Schools were drawn by multi-stage sampling technique out of a population of 3586 students in Enugu Education Zone was used for the study. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three experts; two lecturers from Educational Psychology and one from measurement and evaluation. All the experts are from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). Reliability co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha method of determining internal consistency of the instrument. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were analyzed using t=test statistics. The results of the data analyzed shows that the students perception of the issues affecting their academic performance include; the home environment, psycho-social factors and economic problems. The result of the hypotheses shows that there was no significant difference between the mean perception scores of Secondary School Students in Urban area and that of those in the rural area on issues affecting their academic performance. The findings were discussed and recommendations were made.

**Introduction:**

The family is made up of a father (a man), a mother (a woman) and their children. Any situation which results to any of the two working alone and bringing up the children single handedly, results to circumstances referred to as single-parenthood (Burgess, 2012). The children from such families if they are students are referred to as single parentage students. Some common causes of single parentage include death of one of the partners, divorce, separation in marriage, rape, as well as a female or male having a child out of wedlock. (Eddy king, 2014).

Most often single-parentage homes are not stable (Eddy king, 2014). The home environment of a child/ student must be stable for any meaningful learning which results to academic performance to take place (Dacey 2011). The home environment of the student includes the problems the student is exposed to due to the absence of one of the parents from the home.

The second variable being considered in this study is the psychological base of such students. These include the disturbances and worries that the absence of one of the parents from the home exposes the children to. Many of the students that belong to this category, lack self confidence in themselves and usually feel inferior among their mates (Epstain, 2012).

Thirdly, the influence of economic problems being faced by the students of single- parents in secondary schools is one of the variables being considered in this research work. The situation is so bad that many of them do not have money to buy many essential books while some play truancy from school to hawk goods around, in order to augment the family's meagre income (Ugonwigbo, 2009). The above economic problems are not healthy enough or conducive to bring the best of the students' academic performance.

Commins (2009) stated that the more stable a family is, the greater the chances of their children being comported and ready to learn resulting to higher academic performance. In peaceful and stable homes, the minds of the children are relaxed and they engage in useful ventures such as their academic pursuits and this enhances their academic performance.

According to Eddking (2014), the more economically viable a family is, the greater the chances of the children/students from such homes to perform better academically.

Indeed, available data and statistics show that the academic performance of secondary school students of single parents in Enugu Education Zone have remained consistently poor in both internal and external examinations (Eddyking, 2014). According to him, secondary school students of single parents have lot of worries and distractions which negatively influence their academic performance.

Education has been and continues to be used in all countries of the world for imparting skills, knowledge and positive attitude in the learner (Dacey 2009). It is because of the numerous contributions of education to both human and material development that it is given top priority the world over. In Nigeria for instance, the country's educational planners aim at achieving education for self reliance, self employment and the technological development of the nation.

Having therefore highlighted the importance of education to nations, societies and individuals, the researcher is interested in making the subjects of this study, that is, secondary school, students of single parents in both urban and rural areas to benefit maximally from the gains of education. This study has shown that secondary school students of single parents have hitherto not reaped their full benefits due to some obvious handicaps. Therefore a study set to investigate single parentage students' perception of issues affecting their academic performance in Enugu Education Zone is necessary, timely and appropriate.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main purpose of this study is to find out single-parentage students perception of issues affecting their academic performance in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. It is also aimed at identifying such issues.

**Research Questions:** The following research questions were raised

1. What is single parentage students' perception of the influence of home environment as an issue affecting their academic performance?
2. What is single parentage students' perception of the influence of psycho-social factors as an issue affecting their academic performance?
3. How do single parentage students in Enugu Education Zone perceive the influence of economic problems as an issue affecting their academic performance?

**Hypotheses:** Three research hypotheses guided the study.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of secondary school students in urban area and those in rural area on the influence of home environment as an issue affecting their academic performance
2. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of secondary school students in urban area and those in rural area on the influence of psycho-social problems as an issue affecting their academic performance
3. There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of single parentage students in urban area and those in rural area on the influence of economic problems as an issue affecting their academic performance.

**Validation of the instrument:** The face and content validity of the instrument were established by giving draft copies to one specialist in Measurement and Evaluation and two specialists in Educational Psychology, whose corrections and suggestions were effected and incorporated in the final production of the instrument.

**Research Method:**

Design: The study adopted a survey research design.

**Population of the study:**

The population for the study comprised all the 3586 students from single parent homes who attend state government owned secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** The sample for the study were selected through a proportionate random sampling technique. In this way, 360 students from single parents homes were chosen to participate in the study.

**Instrument for Data Collection:**

Data for the study were collected with a researcher interview guide titled: Academic Performance of Single-Parenting Questionnaire (APASPO). The questionnaire is made up of two sections. Section A is on personal data of the respondents while Section B is a four point response option called Summated Rating Scale (Nworgu, 2003). The construction of this scale entails generating a list of statement about what is being measured and providing a set of graduated response options: (1) Very Great Extent (VGE) has a weighting of 4 points, Great Extent (GE) has a weighting of 3 points (3) Little Extent (LE) has a weighting of 2 points while Very Little Extent (VLE) has a weighting of 4 points.

**Procedure for Data Collection:**

The questionnaires for the study were personally administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of four trained research assistants within an interval of two weeks. The researcher moved from one school to another for the collection of the questionnaire thereby ensuring 100% questionnaire return.

**Results:**

The three research questions were presented in Tables and were analyzed by mean scores bearing in mind that since the items were structured on a four point scale, mean scores of 2.50 and above were regarded as "agreed responses" while items with mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) below, 2.50 were regarded as "disagree responses".

The three hypotheses were tested using a t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance. If the calculated t value was less than the critical or table value, the hypothesis was not rejected but if the calculated value was greater than the table or critical value, the hypothesis was rejected.

**Research Question One:**

What is single parentage students' perception, of the influence of home environment as an issue affecting their academic performance?

**TABLE 1**  
**MEAN PERCEPTION SCORES OF STUDENTS ON THE IMPACT OF HOME ENVIRONMENT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

S/NO	STATEMENT	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	SD	X	S	X2	DECISION
1.	When I remember that my parents are not living together, I feel the impact so much	150	210	-	-	-	344	50	400	Agree
2.	I feel the impact of the absence of one of my parents so much	40	200	120	-	-	2,93	92	43.18	Agree
3.	My academic performance is affected by the instability in my home	210	37	113	-	-				

Grand Mean 2.84

The data on Table 1 above reveal that the respondents agreed in all the items in the cluster.

### Research Question 2;

How do single parentage students perceive the influence of psycho-social factors on their academic performance?

The data on this research question showed that the respondents agreed on all the items in the cluster. The grand mean of the cluster 3.41 shows that the respondents agree that psycho-socio factors have influence on their academic performance.

### Research Question 3

What is single parentage students' perception on the extent to which economic problems affect their academic performance?

The grand mean 2.83 for this cluster shows that single parentage students of Enugu Education Zone agree that economic problems has influence on their academic performance.

### Hypothesis One

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of single parentage students in urban area and those in the rural area on the influence of home environment on their academic performance. In testing this hypothesis, the t-test was used and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 2.

#### Table 2:

t-test Analysis comparing the mean perception scores of single parentage students in urban area and those in the rural area on the influence of their home environment on their academic performance.

Location	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Urban	210	48.33	6.10	98	1.49	1.98	Not significant
Rural	150	40.48	5.48				

$P < .05$

From table 2, the calculated t value of 1.49 is less than the critical t value of 1.98 with df of 98 at 0.05 level of significance. With the above result, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups of respondents was not rejected.

### Hypothesis two

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of secondary school students in urban area and those in rural area on the influence of psycho-social problems as on issue affecting their academic performance.



**Table 3:**

t-test Analysis comparing the mean perception scores of single parentage students in urban area and those in the rural area on the influence of psycho-social problems on their academic performance.

Location	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Urban	210	46.24	6.10	98	1.71	1.98	Not significant
Rural	150	37.4	5.48				

$P < .05$

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference between urban and rural students in their perception of the influence of psycho-social problems as an issue affecting their academic performance.

$H_{03}$ : There is no significant difference between the mean perception scores of single parentage students in urban area and those in the rural area on the influence of economic problems as an issue affecting their academic performance.

In testing this hypothesis the t-test was used and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4**

Comparison between urban and rural students on the influence of economic problems as an issue affecting their academic performance.

Location	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Urban	210	45	6.10	98	1.81	1.98	Not significant
Rural	150	40	5.48				

$P < .05$

From Table 4, the calculated t value of 1.81 is less than t value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance. With the above result, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups of respondents was not rejected.

**Discussion:**

The data collected from research question one showed that the students agree that their family/home background affected their academic performance adversely. Hypothesis one is accepted as postulated that there is no significant difference between the views of the two groups of respondents on the influence of their family/home background as an issue affecting their academic performance. The finding agrees with earlier studies by Furman (2012) and Deutsch (2013). For instance, Furman in his study concluded that the disturbance experienced by students from single parents homes dampens their morale from attaining high academic performance. The same view was held by Deutsch (2013) who agreed that the home background of single parent students had a negative impact on their academic performance.

Based on the data obtained from research question two the researcher established that psycho-socio factors of secondary school students of single parents in Enugu Education Zone affected their academic performance. On hypothesis two the fact that the opinion of the two groups of students did not differ on the extent psycho-socio factors influence their academic performance is a further proof to the finding of research question two that psycho-socio factors of secondary school students of single parents influence their academic performance adversely.

The finding agrees with earlier studies by Lindgron 2010 and Bowbly (2013). For instance Lindgron (2010) stated that measures of various characteristics of psycho-socio factors contribute strongly to the predictions of students' abilities. In the same view Bowbly (2013) contended that students' psycho-socio status must be favourable and stable for them to achieve a positive academic performance.

The result of research question three showed that the economic problems of secondary, school students of single parents in Enugu Education Zone influence their academic performance.

On hypothesis three, the fact that the opinion of the two groups of students did not differ is a further proof to the finding of research question three that economic problems of secondary school students of single parents

in Enugu Education Zone has influence on the academic performance. The present finding from research question three and hypothesis three agree with earlier studies by Burgess (2012), and Eddyking (2014). Burgess (2012) in his study concluded that the resultant effect of the economic base of most single parent students greatly affected the children's educational and social development adversely.

Epstain (2012) in his work held the view that circumstances which lead to one parent status often resulted to difficulty in meeting the children's/students' basic needs. The study has identified the home/family background, psycho-socio factors as well as economic problems of students' of single parents to be among the issues responsible for the poor academic performance of single parentage secondary school students in Enugu Education Zone.

### **Implications of the study for Guidance and Counseling/ Recommendations.**

This study has serious implications for guidance and counseling in the following ways:

- (1) Higher institutions of learning especially the universities should effectively train guidance counselors and provide for them the enabling environment for effective guidance and counseling of secondary school students.
- (2) The counsellors should identify single parentage students especially those having problems in their school work for proper management and counseling.
- (3) The Federal Government should make education free and compulsory at all levels of education.
- (4) The Federal Government should also provide educational facilities for the less privileged to enable them to benefit maximally from the gains of education.
- (5) Indigent students should be encouraged morally and financially by both the government and public spirited individuals to embrace education.

- (6) Provision should be made to post enough professional teachers and guidance counselors to all the secondary schools in the Federation to take care of students' adjustment problems.

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