

Impact of Broken Homes on Mental Wellbeing Among Undergraduate Students in Sokoto State Owned Universities: Implication for Counselling

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Abstract

The study investigated on the impact of Broken Home on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state owned Universities. It employed descriptive survey design and purposive sampling was used in selecting 370 respondents from the population of 21,338 undergraduate education students across the state owned universities. Two research objectives and two hypotheses were used and an adapted questionnaire from Schultz (2013) titled, Mental Well-Being and Broken Home questionnaire (MWBBHQ) was used to collect data for the study with validity and reliability indexes of 0.87 and 0.75 respectively. The collected data were used in testing the formulated hypotheses using statistical tool of Independent Sample t-test and the results obtained stated that, moral and social factors associated with broken homes demonstrate a statistically significant effect on the mental well-being of undergraduate students in Sokoto State, Nigeria. And it was recommended that, Undergraduate students of education should be encouraged to learn healthy coping mechanisms, such as stress management, self-care, and problem-solving skills as well as prioritize physical and emotional well-being through activities like exercise, meditation, or hobbies.

Keywords: Broken home & Mental wellbeing

Introduction

The home is the child's first place of contact with the world. The child, as the result acquires initial education and socialization from parents and other significant persons in the homes. The makeup or status of the homes has a significant role in determining how much support a student will likely receive from their homes. The worldwide data clearly show that children in broken households are likely to perform worse in university than their peers in two-parent families, even if there are numerous examples of broken homes that offer significant social, emotional, and financial support to students.

In many cultures, the stigma and social attitudes surrounding homes breakdown can further exacerbate the mental health challenges faced by undergraduate students from broken homes. The lack of support and understanding from peers, educators, and community members can contribute to feelings of isolation and shame, compounding the emotional burden of homes disruption. Mental well-being of students is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires attention from mental health professionals, educators, and policymakers. By understanding the psychological effects of parental separation and divorce on young adults, interventions and support services can be developed to address the unique needs of undergraduate students from broken homes. This background study paves the way for future research and initiatives aimed at promoting the mental well-being of young adults impacted by homes breakdown on a global scale. McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider. (2013).

Broken homes, which are characterized by the absence of one or both parents due to divorce, separation, or abandonment, have been shown to have a significant impact on the mental well-being of children and adolescents. The homes environment plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's emotional and psychological development, and disruptions in this environment can have far-reaching implications for mental health. This background study aims to explore the impact of broken homes on the mental well-being of undergraduate students in Sokoto, with a focus on the psychological effects of parental separation and divorce on this demographic setting. Numerous studies have highlighted the negative effects of broken homes on the mental well-being of children and adolescents, McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider. (2013).

In Nigeria, the prevalence of broken homes is a significant concern, with studies indicating that over 30% of households are headed by single parents

(National Population Commission, 2010). The impact of broken homes on mental wellbeing is particularly relevant in the context of undergraduate students, who may be more vulnerable to the effects of homes disruption due to their stage of development.

Children from broken homes are more likely to experience emotional disturbances, such as depression, anxiety, and behavioural problems, compared to those from intact families. The absence of one or both parents can lead to feelings of abandonment, loss, and insecurity, which can have lasting effects on a young person's emotional stability and self-esteem. Furthermore, the stress and conflict associated with parental separation or divorce can create a hostile and unpredictable home environment, leading to increased levels of chronic stress and psychological distress in children. The instability and uncertainty that often accompany broken homes can also disrupt the development of secure attachment bonds between children and their parents, leading to difficulties in forming healthy relationships and coping with stress in later life (Tenibiaje, 2011).

Dapar's 2021 study explores the significant impact of broken families on students' behavior and academic performance. The research highlights that students from broken homes often experience emotional instability, social maladjustment, and decreased academic performance. Students from broken families tend to perform poorly in academic tasks, particularly in subjects that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students from broken homes often struggle with socialization, exhibiting difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships with their peers. The study found that students from broken families tend to have lower emotional intelligence, which can affect their ability to interact with others and manage their emotions (Moneva, Bantasan and Vertulfo, 2020).

The rate at which homes are broken today appears to be on the increase. Despite all the efforts the various governments, religious organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and marriage counsellors are making to promote marital stability among couples in Nigeria, the issue of broken homes still exists in the country. Literature sources reveal that students from such homes suffer emotional trauma, depression, negative self-concept and low self-esteem. In most cases, the adolescents from such homes manifest negative tendencies in school such as truancy, aggression, lack of concentration, examination malpractice, bullying, drug abuse, stealing and other vices.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the academic effects of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto
2. To examine the social effects of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁. There is no significant difference of moral factor of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state

H₀₃. There is no significant difference of social factor of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive correlational research design, which involves gathering information from sample under study at a single point and time. A descriptive research design is chosen in order to find out the valuable information and insights into a particular phenomenon which can inform future research, policy decision, program and serves as baseline for future research.

The population of the study consists of the entire 21,338 undergraduate education students in the state universities in Sokoto State, as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Distribution of the Population of the Study

S/N	Name of school	No. of Students
1.	Sokoto State University	19,915
2.	Shehu Shagari University of Education	1,423
	Total	21,338

The study adopted Purposive sampling technique in choosing Three Hundred and Seventy (370) students who are from broken homes from the population of the study. Purposive sampling technique was employed due to fact that only students from broken homes are determined as respondents to the study.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection is adapted from Schultz (2013) titled, Mental Well-Being and Broken Home questionnaire (MWBBHQ) was used to collect data for this study. The instrument is close-ended instrument which consist of two main parts: Section A demands the participants demographic variables and Section B contains 20 items on a 4-points Likerts' types questions (ranging from 4 which means Strongly Agree to 1 which means Strongly Disagree) requires the participants to show their level of agreements with the statement in each of the items.

To ensure validity of the scale, three experts in the field of educational research were involved who served as independent judges their comments and feedbacks were used to compute the content validity index 0.87 which shows that the instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure. The original author of the instrument used Cronbach Alpha to obtain the reliability index of 0.72. the data collected were analysed using independent sample t-test in testing the already formulated hypotheses with the help of SPSS Version 20.

Results

H0₁ There is no significant difference of moral factor of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state.

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the moral factor of broken homes and mental wellbeing scores of students to Independent Samples t-test analysis and the result was presented in table 2.

Table 2: Difference in moral factor of broken homes and mental wellbeing

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
Moral Factor	370	3.48	.500	7.031	.000	H ₀ Rejected
Mental Wellbeing	370	3.09	.935			

Result of table 4.3.1 indicates that significant difference that exists between moral factor (Mean = 3.48) and mental wellbeing (Mean = 3.09) is positive and significant, $t(369) = 7.031$, $p = .000$. Thus, since the p -value is less than the .05 level of significance, H0₁ which states that there is no significant difference of moral factor of broken homes on mental wellbeing among

undergraduate students in Sokoto state was rejected. Alternatively, moral factors associated with broken homes were established to have an effect on the mental well-being of undergraduate students in Sokoto state, Nigeria.

H0₃ There is no significant difference of social factor of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state.

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the social factor of broken homes and mental wellbeing scores of students to Independent Samples t-test analysis and the result was presented in table 3.

Table 3: Difference in social factor of broken homes and mental wellbeing

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Cal	P-Value	Decision
Social Factor	370	3.37	.722	4.608	.000	H ₀ Rejected
Mental Wellbeing	370	3.09	.935			

Result of table 4.3.3 indicates that significant difference that exists between social factor (Mean = 3.37) and mental wellbeing (Mean = 3.09) is positive and significant, $t(369) = 4.608$, $p = .000$. Thus, since the p -value is less than the .05 level of significance, H0₃ which states that there is no significant difference of social factor of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state was rejected. Alternatively, social factors associated with broken homes were established to have an effect on the mental well-being of undergraduate students in Sokoto state, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer comprehensive insights into how various factors related to broken homes influence the mental wellbeing of undergraduate students in Sokoto State, Nigeria. This discussion elaborates on these relationships in light of existing research and theoretical frameworks.

Firstly, on the Moral Factors and Mental Wellbeing, the study reveals a statistically significant effect of moral factors linked to broken homes on students' mental wellbeing. This indicates that disruptions in the moral and ethical framework within the homes environment may deeply affect students' psychological health. Moral development plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals interpret and cope with stressful life events. The finding agreed with that of Babalola and Adeleke (2020) who highlighted that a strong moral

foundation nurtured through stable homes environments fosters resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms, enabling students to better manage stress and psychological challenges. The finding also is in line with that of, Chukwuma and Eze (2021) who emphasized that moral orientation influences decision-making and behavior, which can either mitigate or exacerbate the emotional consequences of familial disruption. In contexts where homes breakdown undermines moral guidance, students may struggle with feelings of uncertainty and ethical conflict, adversely affecting their mental wellbeing.

Moreover, moral factors act as internal regulators that shape emotional responses and social behaviors, thereby indirectly influencing mental health outcomes. The study agreed with Ali and Mohammed (2022) who shows that moral clarity promotes emotional stability and psychological balance, especially during formative years. Students from broken homes who lack consistent moral support may experience increased vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The significant association found in this study aligns with these perspectives, underscoring the importance of reinforcing moral education and counseling interventions within academic institutions to bolster students' mental health resilience.

Secondly on the Social Factors and Mental Wellbeing the analysis also indicates statistically significant effect of social factors related to broken homes and the mental wellbeing of students. This finding challenges the prevalent notion that social disruption from homes breakdown inherently undermines psychological health. The finding agreed with that of Usman and Okoro (2022) who highlighted that the quality and perceived adequacy of social relationships, rather than their mere existence, are pivotal for mental health. Many students may compensate for weakened traditional social bonds through alternative social networks, such as friendships, peer groups, or online communities, which provide emotional and social support.

The finding also agreed with Onyeka and Umeh (2019) who further caution that social support is complex; not all social connections are beneficial, as toxic or demanding relationships can exacerbate stress. Adamu and Musa (2021) also highlight that social resilience students' ability to adapt and maintain healthy social interactions despite adversity plays a critical mediating role. These perspectives help explain why social factors related to broken homes has significant influence on mental wellbeing in this study, suggesting

that students may have found compensatory social structures or developed resilience that buffers negative impacts.

Implication for Counselling

The counselling implications of this study suggest that group counselling treatments are essential for this category of students. They must be handled by qualified professionals, particularly counsellors, who are well-equipped with the techniques and skills to assist them in becoming productive. This involves helping them recognize negative thoughts and behaviours and learn to restructure and root out their dysfunctional psychological cognition to improve themselves in achieving positive outcomes. Therefore, counsellors should equip themselves with the knowledge of group counselling as effective technique for mental wellbeing of these students.

The government should establish 24/7 counselling service in all the high institutions in the country and only professional counsellors should be employed. This will ensure that students with personal-social problems can receive assistance, open up, and undergo counselling treatment from specialists.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of broken homes on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students in Sokoto state owned universities: implication for counselling. Based on the findings of the study as well as the discussions, the conclusions drawn were that

The moral factors associated with broken homes demonstrate a statistically significant effect on the mental well-being of undergraduate students in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Furthermore, the social factors associated with broken homes demonstrate a statistically significant effect on the mental well-being of undergraduate students in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. Undergraduate Students should always consult with mental health professionals, such as therapists or counsellors, to address emotional challenges.
2. Students should be encouraged to learn healthy coping mechanisms, such as stress management, self-care, and problem-solving skills as well as prioritize physical and emotional well-being through activities like exercise, meditation, or hobbies.

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