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Family Structure As Correlate Of Academic Performance In English Language Among Senior Secondary School Students In Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated family structures as correlate of academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School (SSS) Students in Rivers State. The correlational research design was adopted. The population of this study consisted of 57,669 SS II students from 353 public SSSs spread across the 23 local government areas of Rivers State. The sample of the study consisted of 397 SS II students. The multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the participants. Family Structure Scale (FSS) and English Performance Test were used for data collection for the study. The English Language Performance test was validated by an English teacher. The pilot testing approach was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instruments. Cronbach's Alpha test was used to analyse the data, the coefficient of FSS = 0.80 with subsets Single-Parent Family Structure Scale = 0.75, Intact Family Scale = 0.84. The research questions and hypotheses were answered and tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at the 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that there is a very strong and noteworthy correlation between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs, and there is a very strong and noteworthy correlation between intact family structure and students' academic performance.

Keywords: Family Structure, Intact Family, Single-parent, Correlate, Academic Performance, English Language

INTRODUCTION

English Language serves as the official language and the primary medium of instruction across Nigeria's educational system, including SSSs where it is central to both communication and academic progression. Outside of Mathematics, English Language is a compulsory subject in schools at all levels. Aina and Olanipekun (2023) described English Language as a very important tool for communication, social interaction, and academic success. Proficiency in English is essential for understanding curriculum content, completing examinations, and accessing opportunities in tertiary education and the labour market (Adekola et al., 2015). Given its status, students' performance in English Language not only reflects individual achievement but also has broader implications for educational standards and human capital development in contexts such as Rivers State.

Empirical evidence suggests mixed outcomes regarding student performance in English across Nigeria. The 2025 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results indicate that only 38.32% of candidates, out of nearly two million students who took the examination, achieved a minimum of five credits, including English Language and Mathematics. This represents a substantial decline in core subject performance (West African Examinations Council, 2025). Although the Council later revised the

figure to 62.96% after correcting grading errors in English and other subjects, the initial low pass rate underscores ongoing concerns about learning outcomes in essential subjects such as English Language (Abubakar, 2025). These statistics indicate that a substantial proportion of Nigerian secondary school students continue to struggle with English, highlighting the need to examine non-instructional influences such as peer group dynamics on students' academic achievement (Adeniyi et al., 2015; Adeniyi & Jinadu, 2021; Lanre-Babalola et al., 2024).

Peer groups play a critical role in adolescent development and academic outcomes. Peer group refers to social clusters of individuals of similar age or status whose shared behaviours and norms can significantly shape attitudes and actions (Steinberg, 2015). Within peer group dynamics, cliques small, often exclusive subgroups and gang affiliations represent distinct forms of social alignment in school settings, each potentially influencing study habits, motivation, and school engagement (Brewer, 2014; Baumeister & Leary, 2015; Sial et al., 2019). For example, positive peer influence might encourage collaborative learning and participation, whereas association with gangs that prioritise non-academic activities could detract from students' commitment to academic tasks and undermine classroom performance.

Theoretically, this study is anchored in social learning perspectives that posit behaviour and attitudes are acquired through observation and interaction within social contexts (Bandura, 1965). Peer groups serve as influential social systems where norms are modelled and reinforced, impacting individual academic behaviour and outcomes. Despite substantial research on educational predictors, limited studies in Rivers State have specifically examined how different dimensions of peer group affiliation relate to senior secondary students' performance in English Language (Hawkey et al., 2016; Cialdini et al., 2017; Glaeser et al., 2020). Given the socio-cultural diversity and educational opportunities in the region, understanding these relationships is timely for informing targeted interventions that support positive peer influences and educational achievement.

Statement of the Problem

The APSs in English Language remains a significant concern for educators, parents, and policymakers due to its vital role in educational success and future opportunities. Despite English Language being a compulsory subject and the primary medium of instruction across Nigerian schools, many students continue to exhibit poor proficiency, characterized by inadequate comprehension, limited expressive abilities, and low examination scores. This persistent underperformance points to the influence of non-instructional factors on learning, especially during adolescence a period marked by increasing social interactions and peer influence that can shape students' attitudes and engagement with academics.

In Rivers State secondary schools, family structure is a critical social factor that potentially affects students' academic outcomes. Students from different family backgrounds such as single-parent and intact families may experience varying levels of emotional support, supervision, and stability, which can significantly impact their motivation, concentration, and overall performance in English Language. While intact families may offer a more stable and encouraging environment conducive to academic accomplishment, single-parent families might face challenges related to economic constraints and psychological stress that could hinder students' learning. These family-related influences are further complicated by broader socio-economic and cultural factors prevalent in Rivers State, necessitating a focused investigation into how family structure correlates with academic achievement.

This study is therefore prompted by the need to empirically examine family structure as a key correlate of academic performance in English Language among SSS students in Rivers State. By specifically investigating the relationships between single-parent and intact family structures and students' English Language performance, the research aims to generate evidence that can inform interventions and policies designed to support students' educational development within diverse family contexts.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study examined family structures as correlate of academic performance in English Language among SSS Students in Rivers State. The specific objectives were to:

1. investigate the correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs.
2. ascertain the correlate between intact family and English Language APSs.

Research Question

1. What is the correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs?
2. What is the correlate between intact family and English Language APSs?

Hypotheses

1. There is no noteworthy correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs.
2. There is no noteworthy correlate between intact family and English Language APSs.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a correlational research design to examine family structures as correlate of academic performance in English Language among SSS Students in Rivers State.

The study population included 57,669 SS II students from 353 public senior secondary schools located within the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Among these students, 34,183 were female and 23,486 were male (Source: RSSSSB, 2022/2023).

A sample of 397 SS II students was selected from selected schools that were drawn from the three senatorial zones of Rivers State. The sample size was derived from the Taro Yemen Sample determination formula. The selection of the sample was done using a multi-stage sampling technique involving census selection of senatorial districts, random selection of Local Government Areas and schools, and simple random sampling of students, ensuring broad representation across the state.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and an English Performance Test. The questionnaire, titled Family Structure Scale (FSS), measured as single-parent and intact family variable using a four-point Likert scale, while academic performance was assessed with a 20-item multiple-choice English Performance Test based on the SS II syllabus. The instruments were validated by experts in measurement, evaluation, and English Language education to establish face and content validity. Reliability was determined using the test-retest method. The FSS recorded a coefficient of 0.80, comprising Single-Parent Family Structure Scale (SFSS) = 0.75 and Intact Family Scale (IFS) = 0.84, through Cronbach Alpha Statistics. The English Performance Test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.886 using the Kuder’s–Richardson method.

The instruments were administered with the support of trained research assistants after obtaining approval from school authorities. All questionnaires and tests were properly administered and retrieved, resulting in a 100 percent response rate. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: *What is the correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs?*

Hypothesis 1: There is no noteworthy correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs.

Table 1: PPMC analysis of the correlate between single-parent family and English Language APSs Correlations

		Single-Parent Family	Academic Performance
Single-Parent Family	Pearson Correlation	1	0.85**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
	n	397	397
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.85**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	n	397	397

** . The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 1 shows the correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs. This result implies that the single-parent family structure correlate with English Language APSs is very strong since the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.85$) is within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.80$ to ± 1.00 .

Table 1 shows the correlate between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs. The result revealed that there is a very strong and noteworthy correlation ($r = 0.85$, $r \geq \pm 0.80$ to ± 1.00) between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs, with a p-value = $0.00 < 0.05$, leading to the rejecting of null hypothesis one at the 0.05 significance level.

Research Question 2: *What is the correlate between intact family and English Language APSs?*

Hypothesis 2: There is no noteworthy correlate between intact family and English Language APSs.

Table 2: PPMC analysis of the correlate between intact family and English Language APSs

		Intact Family	Academic Performance
Intact Family	Pearson Correlation	1	0.93**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00
	n	397	397
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.93**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	
	n	397	397

** . The correlation is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 2 shows the correlate between intact family structure and English Language APSs This result implies that the intact family structure correlates English Language APSs is very strong since the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.93$) is within the range of $r \geq \pm 0.80$ to ± 1.00 .

Table 2 shows the correlation between intact family structure and English Language APSs. The result revealed that there is a very strong and noteworthy correlation ($r = 0.93$, $r \geq \pm 0.80$ to ± 1.00) between intact family structure and English Language APSs, with a p-value = $0.00 < 0.05$, leading to the rejecting of null hypothesis two at the 0.05 significance level.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result in Table 1 revealed that the single-parent family structure correlate with English Language APSs is very strong. Furthermore, the result of hypothesis one indicated that there is a very strong and noteworthy correlation between single-parent family structure and English Language APSs. The results of this study are supported by Uwaifo's (2018) research, which identified psychological challenges such as frustration, depression, and fear of assuming family responsibilities. Additionally, the key social challenges highlighted were poverty, financial stress, conflicts, and rejection by both in-laws and the community. The study found that social challenges were the most negatively significant factors. Similarly, Anyanwu's (2023) research showed a significant difference in the APSs from single-parent families compared to those from two-parent families. Additionally, Oba-Adenuga's (2021) study aligns with the current findings, showing a significant difference in academic performance between students living with their parents and those who do not. The study also found a significant difference in academic achievement between students whose parents are employed and those whose parents are unemployed.

The result in Table 2 shows that the intact family structure correlates English Language APSs is very strong. The result of hypothesis two indicated that there is a very strong and noteworthy correlation between intact family structure and English Language APSs in Rivers State. The findings above are supported by Yennu et al. (2023), who reported a significant difference in mean scores between two groups of students, with those from intact homes outperforming students from broken homes. Additionally, Periasamy and Ayarani (2021) highlighted that the family environment contributes to significant differences among subgroups based on the medium of instruction, type of school, and educational stream. A key finding of the study is that the family environment has a positive correlation with the academic achievement of senior secondary students. Takwate et al. (2019) emphasized the

importance of parental involvement in enhancing students' academic success. They suggested strategies such as organizing parents' days at schools, holding meetings twice a year, and establishing more groups like the School-Based Management Committee to boost parental engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study has established that family structure significantly correlates with the academic performance of SSS students in English Language in Rivers State. Both single-parent and intact family structures show very strong positive correlations with students' academic outcomes, with intact family structure demonstrating an even stronger relationship. The study concluded that the family environment plays in shaping students' educational achievements. The support systems, stability, and involvement often associated with intact families appear to bolster academic success, while single-parent families, despite potential challenges, also maintain a meaningful influence on performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools and relevant stakeholders should implement targeted support programs, such as counseling services and academic mentoring, to help mitigate psychological and social difficulties that may hinder academic performance.
2. Educational policymakers and community leaders should promote and encourage parental involvement initiatives, such as regular parent-teacher meetings and the establishment of school-based parent associations, to foster a supportive home environment conducive to students' academic success.

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