

**Family Factors and Reading Comprehension Performance among Primary School
Pupils in Uyo Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State**

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Abstract

The article centred on family factors and reading comprehension performance of Primary school pupils in Uyo senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State. The purpose was to establish how family factors; parent marital status and family size influences pupils reading comprehension. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. Ex-post facto research design was used. The population of the study consisted of 9,009 primary four pupils in Uyo Senatorial District while 420 Primary four pupils were randomly selected to participate in the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to draw sample for this study. Two research instruments were used for the study. Family variable Questionnaire (FVQ) was designed to assess the various Family variable and Reading Comprehension Performance Test (RCPT). Three research experts from the Department of English, Early Childhood and Special Education and Department of Educational Foundations validated the instrument. The reliability coefficient was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha and 0.75 and 0.67 reliability index were obtained for FVQ and RCPT respectively. These indicated high reliability of the instruments to measure what was intended to measure. The findings indicated that family variable influenced reading comprehension performance of pupils in primary schools. The results showed that pupils whose parents live together in harmony had the mean score of 72.40 while the pupils whose parents are either single, divorced, separated or dead had the mean score of 51.80. Null Hypothesis one showed that parents marital status influence pupils reading comprehension achievement. From the findings in this study, it was concluded that family factors such as parent's marital status and family size have significant influence on the reading comprehension performance of their children. It was recommended that parents should endeavor to allocate quality time to educational activities. Parents should have the number of children they can comfortably raise and take care of.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Comprehension, family factors, Parent's marital status, family size:

Introduction

. According to Ogbemudia and Aiasa (2013) reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print. Reading is not a passive skill. It requires frequent practice and exercise. Reading changes from what is primarily

called word recognition through a process of comprehension; Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text or message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text or message. Reading comprehension, which is related to students' academic performance, is a good predictor of later school performance. Dias, Montiel, & Seabra (2015). Comprehension is the goal of reading. According to Oluwole (2008) comprehension skills includes reading more accurately, following a text or story more closely, identify important events and concepts in a text, master new concepts in their content-area classes, complete assignments and assessments, feel motivated to read in school and for pleasure. Family factors takes many forms like quality parenting by both parents, providing literacy rich environment, good models of constructive and educational values. Families are not equal in their involvement as various factors such as environment, parent marital status and family size affect family involvement. The family structure which defines if both parents are living together in the student's home affects their relationship to the child. Bullock (2006) observed that children from disturbed family backgrounds such as divorce, separated single, parents in conflict and anti-social families end to be deviant and as such less reading achievement is realized. This could be true as broken homes usually result in material and parental deprivations which could affect a child's behavior and parenting style. Single parenting does not have this luxury; either parents may be forced to devote more time to the labour market. According to Edin and Kefalas (2005) the quantity and quality of time will reduce with the child this may translate to less socialization, less supervision and monitoring which will result in low academic performance.

Yeung and King (2016) opined that parent's interaction at home counts for the learning development of children. They noted that every child needs a conducive home environment to be a well-adjusted individual. A child being read to regularly from the early stage of life begins to show growing enjoyment of the experience and their attention span increases. Early home activities start children's literacy development by providing early experiences Sénéchal and LeFevre (2014) The marital status of parents plays a crucial role in enhancing the self esteem of children which would subsequently show in attitude towards their reading comprehension achievement (Fetley 2003)

Fremstad and Boteach (2015) emphasized three 'S' of family, namely, structure, stability, and strength of parental relationships in a family, and suggested that they had a positive impact on children's emotional and economic security and overall wellbeing. However, as children get older and are able to read themselves, their individual print exposure contributes to their reading comprehension as well.

Family relationships are important to pupil comprehension reading performance. This is because in a favorable relationship, parents devote more attention to educating their children and show more enthusiasm, which can provide children emotional support and in turn enhance their academic performance and reading ability. (Huat 2015) From birth children are described as communicators interested in their surroundings. Early manifestations of how children practice reading is embedded in their family structure. As children enter school, they

are differently prepared by their families to benefit from educational experiences which manifest in their reading and comprehension skill.

Parents' marital status has been found to strongly influence the amount and quality of children's reading, but the relationship is strongly mediated by other factors. Parent's marital status is the family structure which defines if both parents are living together in the student's home affects their relationship to the child. Bullock (2006) observed that children from disturbed family backgrounds such as divorce, separated single, parents in conflict and anti-social families end to be deviant and as such less reading achievement is realized. In a two-parent family, both husband and wife may work full time or one parent may choose to be responsible for child training, this will produce better behaved and high achievers due to good parent-child relationship, attention to reading and school activities (Duncan and Hoffman 2005).

Single parenting does not have this luxury; either parents may be forced to devote more time to the labour market. According to Edin and Kefalas (2005) the quantity and quality of time will reduce with the child this may translate to less socialization, less supervision and monitoring which will result in low academic performance.

Family size: Family size in this context, refers to the total number of children in the child's family in addition to the child himself. However, the family type that a child comes from either monogamous or polygamous family usually has impact on the child academic performance. Parents with extraordinary large families are not likely going to give their children the much needed attention that makes for better child rearing. Fetley (2003) argued that children's attainment depends on inputs of time and money from their parents: the more children there are in the family the less of both inputs. These inputs are not money alone, but other essential things like time, attention, resource dilution and so on. However, Booth and Kee (2006) confirmed that children from larger families have lower levels of education. The greater family size may negatively affect child outcomes through resource dilution. He further explained that in a small family a child is close touch with its parents and habitually uses more adult language and ideas that he would do if lost in a cloud of siblings. He may therefore appear to have higher intelligence that he really has especially on verbal tests. Smaller families offer greater opportunity for performance as it is easier to provide enough space, learning materials such as books, toys and other resources that aid learning than in a large family (Adesehinwa 2013).

Essien (2002) conducted a study to investigate the influence of family size on students' academic achievement in Geography in Akwa Ibom State. A total of 50 multiple choice questions were constructed validated and used to measure achievement in Geography. The sample size was 200 students. Home environment questionnaire was used to assess the student's home background. Using t-test analysis, the author discovered that family size influences the achievement of secondary school students in Geography.

Some educational theory explains interaction between pupils, learning and their environment. Bandura's social learning theory (1977) posits that people learn from one another via observation, imitation and modelling. Social learning theory combines cognitive learning

theory (which posits that learning is influenced by psychological factors) and behavioural learning theory (which assumes that learning is based on responses to environmental stimuli. In Bandura's social cognitive theory, environment and cognition are important factors in development. Bandura (1977) explained how parents, family and teachers influence children by serving as model for behavior.

The constructivist approach of Vygotsky emphasizes the way in which learners construct their knowledge by gradually processing within their zone of proximal development with the assistance of an adult (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed the cognitive development occurs through the child's conversation and interactions with more capable members of the culture-adults. The importance of this theory to parents and teachers is that learning involves sharing of ideas, the more ideas are shared, the more they are acquired.

Ability to read is vital in all learning situations Most children who are able to read tend to have much trouble with reading comprehension; that is understanding what they read. This seems to be the underlying problems behind school failure in educational institution today as more emphasis is placed on reading skills than reading comprehension skills. The lack of reading comprehensions among primary school pupils manifest when such pupils fail both internal and external examinations, they would have ordinary pass if the examinations were oral. It takes a child who understands what he reads to be able to answer questions correctly and pass his examination. The home is the informal institution; the child's initial development of intellectual potentials for success in educational process depends largely on the home background and experiences. These experiences explain the interaction between children and their parents. Apart from the relative lack of interest and poor reading habits among pupils, other common reading problems include inability to recognize sound and pronounce, inability of pupils to put sound together in pronunciation and reading of sentences, some can read, but do not understand. The low level of comprehension is evident in pupils 'inability to read for exact meaning. However, as a backdrop, inability to comprehend when reading has bred more vices like examination malpractice and drop outs from school. It therefore becomes imperative to investigate how family variables (parent's marital status and family size) influence reading comprehension performance among primary school pupils in Uyo Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of family variables on reading comprehension achievements of pupils. This study has the following objectives:

1. To determine the influence of parents' marital status on the reading comprehension performance of pupils.
2. To determine the influence of family size on the reading comprehension performance of pupils.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study.

1. What is the influence of parents' marital status on the reading comprehension performance of pupils?
2. What is the influence of family size on the reading comprehension performance of pupils?

Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated for the study.

1. There is no significant influence of parents' marital status on the reading comprehension performance of pupils.
2. There is no significant influence of family size on the reading comprehension performance of pupils.

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey and it adopted the ex-post facto research design. According to Mathooko, Mathiooko and Mathooko (2007), an ex-post facto design explores a quasi-experimental study examining how an independent variable present prior to study affects a dependent variable. Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District has a population size of 710,355 male and 652,013 females giving a total of 1,362,368 (NPC, 2006). It comprises nine Local Government Areas, namely; Uyo, Etinan, Nsit Ibom, Uruan, Nsit Ubium, Ibiono Ibom, Nsit Atai, Itu and Ibesikpo Asutan. The Local Government Areas that make up the Uyo senatorial districts have common cultural identity and linguistic heritage. Although, there are some dialectical variation found in Itu, Uruan and Etinan Local Government Areas, the Ibibio dialect seem to be the prevailing language of interaction among the people of Uyo Senatorial District. The choice of the area of study was necessitated by the fact that the literacy level in this district is high and there are many public schools within the area.

The population of this study comprises 9,009 primary four pupils in public primary schools in Akwa Ibom North East Senatorial District. (Department of Planning, Research and Statistics, State Ministry of Education and Universal Basic Education, MOE/SUBEB 2020). Multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample .420pupils out of the 16 schools from four local government area. Simple random sampling was used in each public school, 25 pupils and a maximum of 30 pupils were selected from each school. This gave a total of 420 pupils. A researcher developed instrument Family Variable Questionnaire (FFQ) and Reading Comprehension Performance Test (RCPT) was used to collect data. The family variable questionnaire (FVQ) was designed to assess parents' marital status and family size. The items were designed with simple language that the pupils would be able to understand and to tick () as appropriate. The Family variable scale (FVS) was scored based on the different categories. The Reading Comprehension Performance Test (RCPT) contained reading passages for pupils to read and answer the questions arising from the passages. It was made up of Section A, B and C. Section A consisted of five multiple choice questions Section B consisted of 10questions that required filling the blank spaces. Section C consisted of 10 questions of filling in the space with correct answers from the box. This gave a maximum score of four (4) marks each for the

twenty-five questions in Section A, B and C totaling one hundred (100) marks. To ascertain the face validity of the instruments for the study, the instruments were given to three research experts for validation. The research experts were selected from the Department of English, Early Childhood and Special Education and Department of Educational Foundations. The experts evaluated the instrument taking into consideration the curricula objective of study and adequacy of the items based on the objectives, research questions, hypotheses of the study and area of coverage of the study. Corrections and comments were noted and used to produce the final draft of the instruments.

Test-retest reliability method was used to establish the reliability of the instruments. The Instruments (FVQ and RCPT) were administered on 20 pupils who were not part of the study sample but shared the same characteristics as the population under study. After two weeks of the first administration, the same instruments were administered to the same pupils with the order of the items on the questionnaires altered. This generated two sets of data. The data generated were subjected to Kuder Richardson 21 for family variables questionnaire and Pearson product moment correlation was used for the Reading Comprehension performance Test (RCPT). The result shows a reliability coefficient of .76 and .67 for FVQ and RCPT respectively. This indicated a high reliability of the instruments to measure what it was intended to measure. The researcher visited the schools with a letter of introduction and seeking for permission from appropriate authority to use the school for the study. After permission was granted, the researcher visited the schools on the day approved by the school authorities to administer the questionnaire to the pupils. The researcher was assisted by three research assistants and class teachers in administration and collection of the instruments. The instrument was administered to primary four pupils who were respondents to the study. The Reading comprehension achievement test was administered first and after that the respondents were told to turn to the questionnaire section. Thereafter the researcher collected the instrument for data analysis. The data collected and collated were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and the Analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses at .05 levels of significance. The mean scores were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question1: What is the influence of parent's marital status on reading comprehension performance of pupils?

Table 1: Mean analysis of pupils' reading comprehension based on parents' marital status

Variables	N	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
Children of parents living together	95	72.40	5.16	
Children of single parents	37	51.80	13.80	

Table 1 showed the mean score of pupils' achievements in reading comprehension based on parents' marital status. The result indicates that pupils whose parents live together in

harmony had the mean score of 72.40 while the pupils whose parents are either single, divorced, separated or dead had the mean score of 51.80. The result shows that parents' marital status influence pupils reading comprehension achievement to a large extent. This result indicates that families who stay together enhance academic achievement of pupils otherwise the pupils may be struggling in school.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of family size on the reading comprehension performance of pupils?

Table 2: Mean analysis of pupils reading comprehension based on family size

Family Size	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
Between 1-3 children	95	70.95	5.52	1st
7 children and above	188	56.75	10.78	3rd
Between 4-6 children	137	65.36	9.14	2nd

Table 2 gave the summary of the mean performance of students in reading comprehension based on family size. The result shows that families with children between one and 3 in number had a mean performance score of 70.95, while families that have between 4 and 6 children have a mean performance score of 65.36 and families that have children above 7 in number have a mean performance score of 56.75 this indicates that family size does influence academic achievement of pupils in reading comprehension.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of parents' marital status on the reading comprehension performance of pupils.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance for pupils reading comprehension achievement based on parents' marital status

	S S	Df	M S	Fcal	fcrit	Decision
Between Groups	6184.998	3	2061.666	28.156	2.696	significant
Within Groups	30460.964	417	73.223			
Total	36645.962	420				

**significant at .05 alpha level*

Table 3 showed the summary of the analysis of variance test of significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of pupils-based parents' marital status. The result shows that the calculated f-value is 28.156 at .05 alpha level with 417 degree of freedom and the critical f value is 2.696. Since the f-cal value is greater than the f-crit value, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of parent's marital status on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils.

Null Hypotheses 2: There is no significant influence of family size on the reading comprehension performance of pupils.

Table 4: Analysis of variance for pupils reading comprehension performance based on family size

Variable	S S	df	M S	F-cal	F-crit	Decision
Between Groups	669.129	2	334.564	3.878	2.696	significant
Within Groups	35976.833	418	86.275			
Total	36645.962	420				

**significant at .05 alpha level*

Table 4 showed the summary of the analysis of variance test of significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of pupils based their family size. The result shows that the calculated f-value is 3.878 at .05 alpha level with 418 degree of freedom, the critical f-value is 2.696. Since the f-cal is greater than the f-crit the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant influence of family size on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils.

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one shows that there is a significant influence of parents' marital status on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils. The result shows that the children whose parents stay together have enhanced reading comprehension achievement while children whose parents are separated either by work, divorce or death have dwindling academic achievement therefore, performs poorly in reading comprehension. Ogbemudia and Aiasa (2013) maintained that physical and psychological conditions of the home environment affect the children academically. Ebong (2004) stated that harmonious home creates emotional stability in the child at home and subsequently throughout his school life. Hence the researcher was also concerned with the careful study of the influence of single parenthood due to broken home, death, widowhood and intact home on the learner achievement of students. This finding does not corroborate with that of Bullock (2006) that children from disturbed family background such as divorce, separated homes, tend to be deviant and as such, become backward in school work, read less and hardly achieve much academically. However, Brasell (2008) opined that this may not be completely applicable in all cases of broken homes. Some children irrespective of their parents' marital status, background or structure may work hard and become successful in life.

The finding in hypothesis two reveals that family size has a significant influence on the reading comprehension performance of pupils. The finding in hypothesis five reveals that there is a significant influence of family size on the reading comprehension achievement of pupils. This could be because with less people in the family, more resources can actually be allocated to the education of children. Also, the parents would also have time enough to be involved in

each of the child's education and development. It is less cumbersome for parents to take care of few kids than it is to manage a large family when each one needs attention and care. This finding corroborates the finding of Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) that parents' attention, love and care seem to shift from one child to a new born. This means that if a family has one child all attention, love and care are lavished on that child but the attention, love and care then shift as soon as a second child arrives. In this wise the number of children to be catered for in the family influences the amount of time, resources allotted to each child hence the one who gets the least amount of time and resource certainly performs poor in reading comprehension.

Conclusion

Parents who live together and parents with fewer number of children are more involved in their children's reading and academic activities, hence increase academic performances of their children. Parents who are more involved at home with their children's education seem to motivate their pupils for higher academic performance in school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents who live together monitor and participate in school academic activities and collaborate with teachers for improved reading activities
2. Schools should establish a daily routine and help parents to monitor home activities and provide support to their children at home
3. Parents should endeavour to have the number of children they can comfortably raise and take care of.
4. Schools can assist parents by creating family literacy programs that engage parents in helping their children become better readers in their home.
4. Governments and other non-governmental organization should provide libraries and other educational programme to enlighten parent on family involvement.

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