

Research Article

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TEACHERS' PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF DIVORCE ON PUPILS' MENTAL HEALTH IN ASA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE

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Abstract

The study examined teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study.The population of the study comprised 1,167 primary school teachers across 205 public primary schools in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. Specifically, the study involved only public primary school teachers in the study area. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 primary schools and 300 primary school teachers as the sample size for the study. One research question was raised, and two research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significant. An instrument tagged Questionnaire on Teachers Perceived Influence of Divorce on the Pupils' Mental Health" (QTPIDPMH)was used to elicit pertinent information for the study. The instrument was validated and subjected to reliability study using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)with reliability coefficient of 0.76. The data collected were analysed using percentage, mean, and independent sample t-test statistics. The result of the study showed that teachers' perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State was negative with a mean score of 2.83; there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health based on gender (t-value 1.94; $p > 0.05$); and based on marital status (t-value = 1.62; $p > 0.05$). Based on the findings, it was concluded that teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State was negative. It was recommended among others that Government should implement teacher training and retraining programs for teachers that focus on identifying and managing the mental health, challenges faced by children from divorced families.

Keyword: Divorce, Mental Health, Pupils

Introduction

Teachers play a critical role in the mental health of their pupils, especially those affected by divorce. Exploring how teachers perceive the influence of divorce on pupils' mental health is essential, as it highlights their unique insights and concerns. Teachers often witness the immediate emotional and psychological challenges that children face during and after their parent's separation. These challenges can manifest as anxiety, depression, behavioral issues, and academic struggles. Moreover, understanding teachers' perceptions sheds light on the interplay between divorce and its effects on pupils' mental health.

One crucial component of health is mental wellness, the World Health Organization (2021) it also refers to a condition of wholeness and well-being in the physical, mental, and social sense. This suggests that mental health encompasses more than just treating mental illnesses or impairments. A condition of mental health is characterized by self-awareness, the ability to operate well, and the capacity to contribute positively to the community and workplace (WHO, 2012).

Boyle (2011) stated that mental health is a state of psychological well-being in which one has successfully integrated one's innate desires and interests in ways that are socially and personally acceptable, a proper balance of work, leisure, and romantic pursuits the absence of a mental or behavioural disorder and a state of emotional, behavioural, and social normalcy or maturity.

An individual's relationships, physical health, and daily living can all be impacted by their mental and emotional well-being. The ability to enjoy life by striking a balance between day-to-day activities and efforts to develop psychological resilience is another way to characterize mental health (Strohschein, 2012). Divorce is one of the variables that can have an impact on school-age children's mental health.

Divorce is a legal dissolution of the marriage relation, any formal separation of a man and his wife according to established custom a complete separation of any kind" is how Ukpong (2014). The term was once used to describe the dissolution of a legal marriage, but it is currently also used to describe the division of two institutions or circumstances from one another, (Ubong, 2018). It is noteworthy that there cannot be a divorce unless there is a valid marital relationship. According to the laws of the nation in question, as reported by (Elegbeleye, et al., 2018) divorce is the dissolution of a married couple's matrimonial bonds and the annulment of their legal obligations and responsibilities as a married pair (Elegbeleye, et al., 2018). Financial stability, housing arrangements, household jobs, routines, parenting, and the children's results can all be negatively impacted by divorce. Without a consistent model from their parents, the children must navigate every developmental stage from childhood to maturity. This could create a foundation for a future when mental disease is more likely to occur (Ubong, 2018).

There are numerous effects of parental divorce on school pupils' mental health,(Ibrahim, Abubakar, & Dange 2021) listed a few detrimental effects on children's education, such as the inability to pay for school fees, a decline in academic performance, a failure to focus during class activities, a higher risk of expulsion, and eventually dropping out of school. According to Ben and Bath (2019), divorce is linked to lower academic achievement, absenteeism, and a lack of support from the school system. Divorce has a detrimental behavioural impact on children, as it can lead to increase in violence, criminal activity, antisocial conduct, anxiety, and drug misuse (Ibrahim, Abubakar, & Dange 2021) which can affect their mental health.

Furthermore, marital discord can result in worsening health outcomes, a decline in overall welfare, lower educational attainment for children, and a rise in school dropout rates. Compared to children who live with both parents, children from divorced households are almost five times more likely to experience harmful mental health issues (Ahiaoma, 2013). This demonstrates that raising healthy children with two parents is far more effective than with one. Children from dysfunctional families will probably face more challenges in their lives, compared to their peers who benefit from living with parents who are not divorced, children of divorced parents are approximately twice as likely to drop out of school (Ibrahim, Abubakar, & Dange 2021). Young people from divorce homes exhibits delinquent conduct in their communities, drop out of school, struggle with addiction, and have sex before getting married (Ben & Bath, 2019). As observed by Mussarat, et al (2021), children from divorced homes perform poorly in classrooms, exhibit aggressive behaviors with fellows, and lowers self-confidence; and teachers were indifferent in their observation of the influence of divorce on pupils' mental health. Many people think that this is because children who grow up in turbulent and chaotic homes are more likely to experience emotional disturbance and develop a negative sense of self.

Children of divorced parents may grow up to abuse drugs or engage in other bad habits, it is a fact that all children require and merit the affection and support of a mother and a father (Mekonen, 2014). A contented household is the ideal setting for children. Acquire the develop, self-discipline, and moral instruction necessary for their whole personal development in a

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solid family home. Children who go through a painful divorce may begin to doubt their value, and feel unwarranted sadness, remorse, or bewilderment. Particularly young children find it difficult to comprehend the reasons behind their parents' divorce (Laoye-Balogun, 2015). Children find it hard to feel secure in marriage because history has shown them that what was once solid and stable crumbled and left them feeling empty (Oniye, 2016).

There are many factors influencing teachers' perception regarding the influence of divorce on the mental health of pupils. Among the factors are gender and marital status of teachers. The influence of gender on teachers' perceptions of the impact of divorce on pupils' mental health is an area of research that underscores the role of gendered expectations and biases in educational settings (Malaby & Ramsey, 2011). Research has it that male teachers and female teachers give different perspectives of the consequences of divorce despite the variations having potential origins in culture and experience. Female teachers might better notice the signals of emotional disturbances in children of divorce, for instance, if the children look sad or anxious, and, thus, female teachers might have a stronger focus on this aspect (Douwes et al., 2024). On the other hand, male teachers might target external symptoms including aggression or withdrawal signs which may be easy to observe within classrooms. Such shift in emphasis can result in differences in defining a child's state/condition and the perceived requirements of the child; aspects that can have implications in the kind of assistance and assistance offered to the pupils (Sánchez-Cabrero, et al., 2023; Douwes et al., 2024). Such expectations regarding the roles of boys andgirls in children's social relationships can also reinforce gender biases that dominate modern society, in which boys are seen as invulnerable children who cannot and should not cry, while girls are presented as fragile individuals who easily become victims of their peers' cruelty (Kågesten et al., 2016). These biases can definitely affect the way male and female teachers diagnose and respond to the student's mental health from divorced families; it underlines the significance of awareness and training for creating a more objective outlook and to be a useful support for all of the pupils.

Studies involving the influence of teachers' marital status and their sensitivity toward the effects of divorce of learners' psychological well-being implies that personal experiences influence students' perception toward marriage and divorce (Lan & Mastrotheodoros, 2024). Teachers that have possibly gone through a divorce themselves or are associated with persons who possibly went through this experience can be more sensitive to children in similar situations. Some of these teachers may understand that parental separation can cause such mental symptoms as anxiety, depression, and feelings of insecurity (Erden, et al., 2023). On the other hand, the teachers who never went through divorce may use more stereotype, or theoretical knowledge which might put them in an inferior position of the teachers who have gone through divorce in terms of understanding the effect of divorce on children's mental health (Mahony, 2024). The differences across these variables in terms of marital status can also be applicable in terms of, and impact on the ways, and extent to which students are supported, where teachers who are divorced may be more likely to be proactive in other areas, including more emotional ones (Çetinkaya & Erçin, 2015). This dynamic underline the necessity of training and awareness raising for all educators, including the married ones to become ready to address different emotional and psychological issues faced by pupils scarred by divorce (Çetinkaya & Erçin, 2015).

In this study, the researcher investigated teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. It has been observed from the literature that a study of this nature does not exist to the best of the researcher's knowledge therefore, this study meant to fill the gap, requiring empirical evidence on teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa local government area of Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

Divorce is a significant life event that can profoundly impact the mental health of pupils, particularly those in their formative years. In Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State, the incidence of divorce has been on the rise, prompting concerns among teachers and mental health professionals about its effects on pupils. Teachers, who interact with these pupils daily, are in a unique position to observe changes in behaviour, emotional stability, and academic performance. However, there is limited empirical data on how these teachers perceive and address the mental health challenges faced by pupils experiencing parental separation. This gap in knowledge underscores the need for a comprehensive examination of teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health. The potential impact of divorce on pupils' mental health includes increased anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and difficulties in concentrating on academic tasks. Teachers may notice these symptoms manifesting as behavioural issues, declining academic performance, and strained peer relationships. Despite these observations, this inadequacy worsens the challenges faced by pupils, as their primary environment for growth and learning becomes a place of additional stress rather than support. Understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial to developing targeted interventions and support systems within schools to lessen the negative effects of divorce on pupils' mental health. Given the critical role teachers play in the lives of pupils, this research investigated the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area.

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Research Question

One research question was raised and answered for the study

1. What is teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance for the study.

Ho_1 There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers 'gender.

Ho_2 There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' marital status.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised1,167 public primary school teachers across 205 public primary schools in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State, (Annual School Census Report 2018/2019). The sample size for this study was 300 primary school teachers (Research Advisor) simple random sampling technique was used to select 30 schools from the study area, also simple random sampling technique was used to select 300 primary school teachers who served as respondents in the study. Ten teachers were picked from each of the selected schools. In this study, the researcher designed an instrument for data collection. The instrument was tagged "Questionnaire on Teachers' Perceived Influence of Divorce on Pupils' Mental Health" (QTPIDPMH). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using test re-test method, and the reliability coefficient index was 0.76 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The observed reliability coefficient justified the appropriateness of the instrument for the study. The data collected were analysed using percentage, mean, and t-test. The formulated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State?

Table 1

Analysis of teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	The divorce of parents have a significant negative impact on the mental health of pupils	102	117	39	42	2.93
2	Pupils who experience their parents going through a divorce often display higher levels of anxiety and depression	99	93	65	43	2.83
3	The emotional turmoil caused by divorce lead to a decline in the overall mental well-being of pupils.	108	92	61	39	2.90
4	Pupils whose parents divorce are more likely to struggle with low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy	98	97	73	32	2.87

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5	The trauma of divorce can disrupt a pupil's ability to concentrate on their academic	91	83	72	54	2.70
6	Pupils who experience divorce often face changes in their living arrangements, which can disrupt their sense of stability and impact their mental health	101	92	45	62	2.77
7	The stress of living in a broken home due to divorce contribute to poor mental health in pupils	92	69	71	68	2.62
8	Pupils whose parents divorce may experience feelings of isolation and lack of support, which can negatively impact their mental health	99	87	82	32	2.84
9	The uncertainty and instability caused by divorce lead to increase levels of stress and anxiety in pupils	99	84	62	55	2.76
10	Divorce disrupts the sense of security and stability that pupils need for their mental health and well-being	95	111	62	32	2.90
11	Pupils who witness their parents divorcing may develop trust issues and struggle with forming healthy relationships	87	91	73	49	2.72
12	Divorce creates a sense of loss and grief in pupils, which can contribute to long-term mental health challenges	104	92	62	42	2.86
13	Pupils with divorced parents have difficulty expressing their emotions and seeking help for their mental health concerns	109	95	64	32	2.94
14	The financial strain associated with divorce lead to additional stressors on the mental health of pupils	111	99	58	32	2.96
15	The disruption and upheaval caused by divorce affect pupils' ability to cope with stress and manage their mental health effectively	121	57	88	34	2.88
	Grand Mean					**2.83**

Keys: 2.50 – 4.0 = Negative Influence; 1.00 – 2.49 = Positive Influence

Table 1 show teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State. The observed grand mean of 2.83 was within the benchmark of "Negative Influence." This means that teachers' perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State was negative.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers'gender. To test the hypothesis, responses obtained on the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' gender were coded and analysed using independent t-test. The outcomes of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

ISSN: 2354-3930 | https://kwasuspace.kwasu.edu.ng/handle/123456789/1186

Table 2

Summary of t-test analysis on difference in the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers'gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std.	t-value	Df	p-value	Remark
Male							
	118	45.55	5.47				
				1.94	298	0.06	Not Significant
Female	182	46.82	6.17				

Results in Table 2 showed the t-value of 1.94 and p-value of 0.06 in which the p-value is greater than 0.05 (0.06 > 0.05). Since 0.06 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on gender. This means that both male and female teachers in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State seem to be similarly affected by divorce when it comes to their mental health.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' marital status. To test the hypothesis, responses obtained on the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' marital status were coded and analyzed using independent t-test. The outcomes of the analysis were presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of t-test analysis on the difference the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State

Marital Status	N	Mean	Std.	t-value	df	p-value	Remark
Married	196	47.03	5.55				
				1.62	298	0.07	Not Significant
Single	104	45.34	6.09				

Results in Table 3 showed the t-value of 1.62 and p-value of 0.06 in which the p-value is greater than 0.05 (0.07 > 0.05). Since 0.07 is greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' marital status.

Discussion of Findings

The results of the study showed that teachers' perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State was negative. This means that the sampled teachers were of the view that divorce negatively influenced the mental health of pupils. This result is possible where divorce of parents could exert significant negative impact on the mental health of pupils. This result is in line with the observation of Ben and Bath (2019) that children of divorced parents exhibit delinquent conduct in their communities, drop out of school, and struggle with addiction. The result also corroborates the observation of Mekonen (2014) that children of divorced parents may grow up to abuse drugs or engage in other bad habits.

The result of the Hypothesis also revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' gender. This means that gender did not affect teachers' perception about the influence of divorce on the mental health of pupils. This result is possible when both male and female teachers are of the view that divorce negatively influence the mental health of pupils. This result supported that of Mussarat, et al. (2021) who observed that children from divorce homes perform poorly in classrooms, exhibit aggressive behaviors with fellows, and lowers self- confidence; and that teachers were indifferent in their observation of the influence of divorce on students' mental health.

It was further revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State based on teachers' marital status. This means that marital status did not affect teachers' perception about the influence of divorce on the mental health of pupils. This result is possible when both married and single teachers share relatively the same view about the negative influence of divorce on the mental health of pupils. Teachers, irrespective of their marital status, share relatively the same view regarding the influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health (Mussarat, et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that teachers' perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health in Asa Local Government Area of Kwara State was negative. It was also concluded that there was no significant difference in the perceived influence of divorce on the pupils' mental health based on teachers' gender and marital status.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Schools should implement training and retraining programs for teachers that focus on identifying and managing the mental health challenges faced by children from divorced families.
2. Schools should establish robust support systems that include counseling services and peer support groups. By doing so, it will serve as an opportunity for pupils to express their feelings and receive guidance.
3. Schools should encourage open communication between parents, teachers, and pupils to foster a more cohesive support network and help children navigate the challenges of parental separation more effectively.

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